

master of his profession, the better will he appear in the witness box.

Medical men are often found ranged on opposite sides, called for the purpose of contradicting each other—a degrading position, and one that should be avoided when possible. The attorney calls upon him, reports the case from his own standpoint; the medical man forms and gives a hurried opinion, based perhaps on partial information,—it suits the ideas or interest of the attorney, who books him as a witness; and when on the stand he finds himself led by subtle questioning to make unguarded statements, which, upon mature reflection and further information, he would wish unsaid. Another medical man is called, who, having made himself master of the subject, in the interest of truth and justice finds himself in the unpleasant position of being compelled to expose errors of opinion. Hence doctors get the credit of differing where no difference of opinion should exist.

The motto of the general practitioner “*semper paratus*” applies with force to this branch of his profession, for whether he resides in the town or country he cannot escape the risk of being suddenly called upon to give evidence. He may argue that a little time will be afforded him to look over his books; but let me assure him that a hurried glance at them, unless he has previously made medical jurisprudence his study, will not protect him from embarrassment when in the witness box. The accuracy of his statements may and probably will be tested by the strictest cross-examination. Let us suppose him summoned to attend a person labouring under the effects of poison. At the time he has no suspicion of the cause of the symptoms; as the case progresses, suspicion is aroused of poison having been given with criminal intent. In spite of treatment death ensues. Here the functions of the medical man end and those of the medical witness begin. He cannot now avoid giving evidence, or shift the responsibility on another; the law will insist upon his appearance at the coroner’s court, and at the subsequent trial.

Therefore knowing that he must attend as a medical witness, he cannot be too particular in his observation of every thing