

theatres are like ice palaces. I have been many times in the boxes wrapped up in a warm overcoat, and even then barely warm, while the poor creatures dressed in tights and ballet dresses were blue and shivering with cold. A chorus of coughing resounded from the stage. And for this terrible exposure human creatures are paid at the rate of sixpence a dance. Hundreds of young girls must thus lay the foundation of disease that eventually proves fatal.

#### THE EVILS OF DISPENSARIES IN ENGLAND.

—At last the cry is going forth with renewed energy against the systems adopted by some of the medical profession; "the noble profession" of establishing dispensaries where the lower middle classes, who are well able to consult their family physician, obtain advice for trifling sums. The professional struggle for existence is becoming more and more severe. It is rather with feelings of disgust that one sees such an influential journal as the *British Medical Journal* countenancing a system it well knows to be ruinous. I have travelled all over England in the last few months and have met many practitioners, thoroughly competent men, who are complaining bitterly against the system. A few years since the people sent for them and paid them moderate fees, and were quite satisfied to do so. But now these same people go to the dispensaries, pay from a penny to half a crown a month, choose whom they wish to consult, obtain the advice of first-class physicians or surgeons and obtain medicine. The profession is robbing itself and lowering its standing. If a surgeon refuses to see a patient he is brought up before a miserable, supposed philanthropic committee of laymen, and reprimanded. The patient has paid for advice and must have it. Only yesterday I had a tale related to me by a man now only a consultant, who has long ceased to have any interest in such matters, except to protect his sons and friends in the profession who are now striving to make both ends meet. The wife of a butcher attended regularly one dispensary, and then, having been much benefited, subscribed £1,200 toward the institution. One celebrated man refused to

see her unless it was at her house or his. "Madam," he said, "you ask me why I refuse. Your husband sells meat and I sell brains." An eminent man whose name is well known in the profession died in London the other day, and his funeral expenses were paid by a fellow practitioner. The members of the profession are so poor that they are losing their independence and are becoming tools in the hands of the public. This fact may be interesting to the profession in Canada, where the same systems are beginning to prevail. The lodge system is at the bottom of it all, and will in the end prove a curse instead of a benefit. As yet our people have some pride left, and will send for and pay a doctor, if in their power, rather than become objects of charity. But the people in England do not feel that when they pay an absurd sum to a "provident" (save the mark) dispensary they are objects of charity; they feel that if the profession is so short-sighted as to business matters they have a perfect right to impose on them. In Canada we still have the sanction of dispensary boards to refuse aid to people who are able to pay a moderate fee. Another point raised is that regarding private wards in hospitals. I contend that if private ward patients pay three guineas a week in Guy's or any other hospital they are not objects of charity, but are paying their way to the hospital, and therefore should also pay their way with their medical attendant. A surgeon should charge just as much to do an operation on a private ward patient paying his own way as he would if the patient were at his own home. Let us hope that the matter will be taken up by the licensing boards and medical associations in Canada before it is too late. If we do not act now we will soon be in as deplorable a state as the great bulk of the practitioners in England. To me it is a pitiable sight to see an M. D. of London University struggling along in a country village, making visits for a shilling, just as it is to meet a senior wrangler filling the office of a country curate. On the formation of a medical benevolent society recently it was found that nearly one-third the members who had subscribed the guinea