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LODGE DOCTORS.

The question, whether physicians, in justice to themselves as well as in justice to their professional brethren, should accept the position of doctor to a lodge has lately raised a good deal of discussion, more especially during the last few years, during which the practice has become more and more abused. While it is quite true that the majority of workmen are unable to pay the ordinary tariff of fees, yet in most cases they could pay more than the amount which the lodge doctor at present receives, namely, one dollar per annum, including medicine. It is true also that the principle on which benefit societies are founded is that only a small proportion of the total number of members may be expected to be sick and requiring medical attendance or the financial assistance of the lodge at a time, and that the well ones will contribute towards the expenses of the sick and disabled member. So far, the principle is a good one, encouraging providence or the providing during health for a time of sickness; on the other hand, the tendency is to depreciate the value of the services of physicians in general, for when a man belonging to a lodge who only pays one dollar a year is stricken down with typhoid fever, and receives fifty visits from the lodge doctor, he will be strongly under the impression that the dollar which he has paid is an ample recompense for those services which are really worth from fifty to one hundred dollars.

Another objection to lodge work is the tyranny which the managers of lodges often exercise over the lodge doctor. As it costs no more for a night visit than a day one, the lodge doctor is often summoned at times which are most inconvenient for him to attend; and while he would probably suit his own convenience in the case of an ordinary paying patient, he might not dare to do so in the case of a lodge patient, lest the latter should complain to the lodge and thus have him dismissed. These remarks have been suggested to us by the appearance of a well written letter by Dr. R. Ovens of Forest, Ont., which appears in the *Ontario Medical Journal* for November. In this the doctor states that he felt that his remaining the court physician for the two lodges in his town was an injustice to himself and to the other physicians of the place; and feeling that it was unfair for him to thus obtain an undue advantage over the other physicians, he generously acted on his convictions, and asked each court to relieve him from being a court physician, with the result that they decided to abolish that part of their constitution which required them to have a lodge doctor. The same patients still employ him, but instead of paying him only one dollar for fifty visits, they are paying him fifty dollars at least for the same work; and as people value what they get very much in proportion to what they pay for it, it is likely that his action in obtaining the abolition of court physicians of lodges has raised the status generally of the medical men in that town. It is true that the physicians to great railway and other corporations are in much the same position as the lodge doctor, only on a larger scale, and eventually something should be done to put a stop to that; but in the meantime we believe it would be for the welfare of the profession generally to refuse to hire themselves out to lodges for less than a quarter of their proper remuneration.

This, however, brings up another point which we have discussed already several times in these columns, and that is: what are the poorer classes of laboring men to do for medical advice? It is utterly impossible for them to pay a dollar a visit for every time any member of their family is ill, and yet they must be attended by someone. The view we have always taken on this point is that the young