

Now, if instead of binding yourself invariably and always to this old per-visit relic of antiquity, you will begin, and, whenever possible, charge a just and feasible "lump sum" for attending the case, and never let the amount sink down to the exact number of visits, it will benefit instead of injuring your reputation, and help your pocketbook, too; and when circumstances compel you to let the fees for two or more cases run together, charge per case for each important one, and be ready promptly to disown the per-visit method, more especially when unusual time is given with the service, or an additional responsibility is placed on you by reason of the patients social position and his importance in the community, or by your having to treat him by a regular and prolonged system.

We are now living under greatly changed conditions and in prosperous times, and although a dollar is still a dollar, yet its purchasing power is vastly less than in 1847, when eggs were six or seven cents per dozen, with everything else in proportion, and it is your duty to yourself and to your dependents to drop this per visit mode of charging whenever the gravity of the case or the responsibility justifies, and in lieu thereof to do good, up-to-date work and then, unless it is an ordinary day visit or an ordinary office call, to make the abstract question of the value of your services the foundation of your charge, taking care that the amount named be sufficient to cover distance, visits, detentions, and all other legitimate features, varying the charge to different people, according to their ability to pay.

If a good patient employs you, and you charge him twenty dollars when some less wise per-visit brother would charge him but thirteen or fourteen, you will still be called when he needs you again if he believes you can do more for him than any other physician in reach, for he is not then thinking about fees, but about personal safety. Indeed, we might almost state it as an aphorism that the physician who habitually charges by the visit instead of by the case, when the services are important, constantly robs himself of both prestige and fees, and in the professional race unconsciously puts his own self in the position of an armless man in a rowing match against men with arms, or a legless one in a contest of speed against men with legs.

Prompt rendition of a just but round-sized bill for an important case begets fuller appreciation of the services, and if you will write on the face of every lump bill rendered the words "important Case," or "Surgical Case," or "Obstetrical Attention," or whatever other awakening explanatory phrase agrees with the facts, it will set the patient to thinking in the right direction.