

"At many meetings held during the past year, I could not help being painfully struck with the often repeated mention of the very small fees which, in certain of its departments,—notably that of midwifery,—many members of our profession were forced to accept. It is not that there is anything dishonourable in accepting a small fee. Why, the very smallest fee honourably earned from and gratefully paid by the poorest workingman is a king's ransom, in moral value, compared with the great sums extorted by that prince of quacks, the fashionable London specialist. But what one could not help feeling was, that the physical labour, the mental fatigue, and the harassment and anxiety expended by many of our brethren upon their cases were utterly disproportionate to the value of the fees supposed to remunerate them. Can it be that the mercantile price of medical skill is depreciating in money value? This is not possible. The article, if one may so term it, is of far better quality than ever it was as regards intrinsic worth. Is it the general bad times?

No doubt this accounts for a good deal, but the difficulty of making a living in medicine has been steadily getting greater in the large cities and in the manufacturing districts for the last twenty-five years. Are we, as a body, falling in the estimation of the public, who are ceasing to respect us and who think our skill no longer worth paying for? Quite the contrary. As an honourable profession Medicine never took so high a rank in all its history as it does to-day. What, then, is the cause of this bitter cry from many of the rank and file of our profession, that they can only make their bread by miserable fees, earned by intolerably hard work? Gentlemen, it requires no royal commission to find this out. The simple fact is that, with us as with many other businesses and trades, there are too many of us for it. That is the sum and substance of the whole thing.

Many circumstances have contributed to this overcrowding. In former days a man of good family and social rank, but whose fortune was not very great, while his children were numerous, could often find places for a son or two in the church or in the army, through the influence of powerful friends. But the days of interest are gone, and these avenues are closed now. As for the Bar, the number of the briefless seems ever on the increase, while legal proceedings are actually diminishing in number. In business the quiet old trading days are gone, and there is nothing but hurry and conflict and cheating and risk. So that the merchant sees in Medicine a comfortable sphere of life, where a living can usually be made by any sober and industrious man. Thus the great Medical Schools have been pouring out a deluge of young practitioners, which has overwhelmed the land. One remembers the story of Abernethy's celebrated address to an audience of new-fledged doctors, which began with, "Good heavens! gentlemen, what is to become of you all?" It is a good thing