

dispensary, such as those of general medicine or gynecology; that the neighborhood of large dispensaries is bare of physician's residences; that patients come to town from distant cities with a physician, occasionally with a relative, put up at a hotel, seek a clinic for medical advice, and when told in one dispensary that they are not fit subjects of charity, speed away in hot indignation to another; that patients are frequently sent to a clinic with a letter from the attending physician containing a modest request for diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment, inquiry eliciting that their intention is to go back to this gentleman's office and pay him for treatment; that patients in the country towns for miles around New York are quite appreciative of the excellencies of our city dispensaries for different diseases; and that patients constantly go to dispensaries in order to ascertain the best physician for their particular disease. The reason for the enormous increase in our charity work is plain to any one who has witnessed the development of our hospitals and dispensaries of late years. The public must be appealed to for money; the larger the number of patients, the more need shown for money; and no effective general regulations being strongly enforced, the growth of the abuse has been so stupendous that all methods of restriction have proved utterly ineffectual. The intentions have been altruistic in the extreme, on the part of both lay and medical members of hospital boards; indeed, it is questionable whether any one has known the full extent of the evil.

It will not be denied for one moment that a certain, nay, a liberal amount of charity work, is a necessity to the medical profession, distinguishing it in this respect from all others. The lawyer, for instance, the engineer, the minister, the architect, the litterateur, the journalist, can each perfect himself in the art of his calling without proffering his services gratuitously. But the physician must study types of disease only to be adequately observed in sufficiently large numbers either in a very large practice or in hospitals

and dispensaries—indeed, it may be doubted whether the fullest practice, in the harvest-time of a successful physician's life, can offer him such opportunities for familiarizing himself with maladies as do our hospitals and dispensaries. It must be remembered, too, that relatively few men obtain great practices, and that they can only hold them by means of the knowledge of ailments acquired in the previous years of attendance upon hospitals and dispensaries. So that these institutions are the training schools of our profession, inestimable to the men whom they bring into contact with each other in their varyingly eager and mutually stimulating pursuit of the same ideal, aided by the assistants, the instruments, the nurses, the housing, and the organization of such corporations. Then, the thousands of students who come to this city must be taught, and this cannot be done without the clinical material of hospitals and dispensaries. Any unwise restraint would therefore imperil the existence of New York as the medical centre of the country, and no man in his senses would dream of such restriction. But such manifestly indiscriminate charity as exists does not seem necessary to these purposes. It is trite to say that no suffering person should fail to receive the medical aid that may be needed in the emergencies of life, but in this city there really does not seem to be much likelihood of such a grievance when 949 physicians, out of a total of 3430, treated 737,171 patients in one year, made 1,479,609 free visits, and wrote 1,104,381 prescriptions, besides paying due attention to the other duties incidental to attendance upon twenty-six hospitals and 114 dispensaries.

In our medical profession there are gentlemen who have been so favored by fortune that it has not been their lot to come in contact with the seamy side of practice; there are others to whom fame has brought its attendant success; there are still others whose special branches obviated the necessity of general practice. To these medical men this statement of facts may seem exaggerated, but the great