

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY MEDICAL
TARIFF.

To the Editor of the CANADA LANCET.

SIR, -If too much space has not already been taken up in discussing the subject of the Great Western Railway Provident Society and its relation to the medical profession, allow me to call attention to a few points which seriously affect the profession at large. Mr. Broughton's letter regarded the matter from a commercial point of view. I propose to look at it from a medical standpoint. What shall the conduct of the profession be towards the officer of a company who, by adopting a *cutting-under* tariff, sets himself in antagonism to the tariff of fees adopted by the Division Medical Association?

All division associations which have adopted a tariff of fees, have decided on a dollar as the minimum charge for a single visit to a patient. This action by the profession has been conceded by the laity, as fair between man and man, but if the officers of the Provident Society will take the trouble to compare the old with the new *regime* they will find that the latter will not average fifty cents per visit, out of which they have to pay for medicine. In a malarial district such as the railway passes through near Windsor where quinine is so much required, it would be simply impossible to live at the company's prices. The physician would be compelled to use cheap drugs; his patient's recovery would be delayed, and instead of being a provident it would be an *improvident* society.

Railway employees are, as a rule, well informed men, and general readers; they will very soon discover that they are the victims of *cheap treatment*. One of the prospective advantages of the society's medical employee is, that if he treats the head of the household he will also be called in when other members of the family are ill. This is the point where the code of medical ethics adopted by the profession will clash with the rule adopted by the company. Here is a medical man, by virtue of a rule laid down by a railroad company, secured the *entre* of a family where, only for the fact of his being the company's officer, he would never have been employed. The society's rule has introduced him and supplanted me. Am I to accept the situation in a spirit of resignation, or am I going to

take such a stand as will protect my own interests, and by so doing place myself in antagonism to my brother practitioner? In other words, am I going to extend the etiquette of the profession to a man who is taking away my practice, by a system of *cheap charges*? I trow not.

You state the case correctly, when you say that the medical profession has itself to blame for this state of things, by its members encouraging clubs and societies to benefit themselves, principally at the expense of the doctor. It lies with medical men themselves to say whether they shall stand by one another and secure an honest fee, or lend themselves to clubs, societies, and life assurance companies, to perform the work upon which the very existence of these organizations depend, for the insignificant fee usually offered. The very spirit of the medical act, and the code of ethics instituted under it, are violated; the whole tendency of medical associations which seek to foster and secure fraternal conduct, is defeated by the introduction of such elements of discord.

Mr. Broughton has no very decided opinion of the motives which induced 26 out of 28 physicians to accept the pittance offered by the society. I can tell him that he will find the true explanation of it in the spontaneous desire on the part of medical men to aid any good work—not stopping to enquire into its merits—together with their general apathy about making money, attributes which serve to make the profession in Canada, and perhaps the world at large, poor, where they might be rich; these motives, I say, will furnish the true reasons for the hearty, though ill-considered response he met with in calling for medical assistance on such beggarly terms.

Yours very truly,

C.

Windsor, March, 1873.

To the Editor of the CANADA LANCET.

SIR,—In the March number of your journal, a case of poisoning by arsenic is reported as having been treated by dialysed iron.

After relating the history, he says:—"I administered the emetic and promoted vomiting by large draughts of warm water. After the stomach had been thoroughly emptied, I gave a tablespoonful of dialysed iron, diluted with water, which was