

and receives it. The second doctor is accused of having "stolen" that patient. Or, a doctor tells a patient that if the latter will secure his services he will treat him more cheaply and successfully than the one he has. The patient accepts the proposition and, behold! another patient has been stolen. Having made this sufficiently clear, is it not obvious to any one that a patient cannot be stolen? A physician who is skillful in a treatment of disease, and combines with this the ordinary qualities of a gentleman can not have his patients weaned away from him. If he is at all successful in the treatment of his cases they will not desert him. They cannot be led to leave that which is good for that which is of unknown quality and for no reason whatever. There is no doubt whatever that when a patient leaves a physician he is dissatisfied with his services, either because they are too costly or because they are of no value.

Another point. When an individual calls upon a physician for treatment it is *prima facie* evidence that he wants his services, else he would not call. It is just as evident that you cannot persuade or force that patient to return to his former physician. If the latter has not been paid he should have seen to it that he was. No doctor can turn himself into a collection agency for others, nor does any one do it. If he is a business man he sees to it that he collects his own fee. But to accuse him of having stolen that patient is certainly as ridiculous as it is unfounded. Every man in the profession will lose a certain number of patients, just as there is certain to be a number of individuals who are forever changing doctors. It is an impossibility to force the likes, dislikes, preferences, or bias of people and to endeavor to achieve success by attempting the impossible is to be foolish in the highest degree. Honest work, coupled with intelligence and suavity will accomplish more than all the detective acumen that can be brought to bear upon the labors of others.

Let the physician exert himself to the utmost in every direction, in the pursuit of his profession, and he will have small opportunity to notice any defection in the ranks of his patients. They will not only stand by him and do all in their power for him, but others will be gained by him through his work and the esteem in which he is held by his patrons.

Now let us examine the individuals who are continually whining about the patients that have been stolen from them. They are generally more or less incompetent either in general, or in the particular case in question. They have been practically unsuccessful in that particular case or are so in a number. Under such circumstances they have no real grounds of complaint. Another class is composed of those who are negligent. They do not give the care and attention which they should and which would be cheerfully paid for. They have too many pleasures or other distracting influences drawing them away from their legitimate work and, as a natural result, they lose patrons. They prefer playing poker to keeping office hours, or in some analogous way impose upon the patience and good-will of patients. Or, they may be possessed of vices of such a character as to drive away patients as soon as the latter discover them, and as a simple matter of self protection. But we do not wish to enumerate more causes.

On the other hand, the physician who is kept busy by his cases has no time to lose in detailing the real or fancied wrongs of which he is the victim. He is too busy to lose time inquiring after the business of others or to pry into their affairs. He sees to it that he is paid for his services and his time is so valuable that he cannot lose it inquiring into the relations of his prospective patient and the latter's former medical attendant. The matter is a very simple one for him. A man or woman desires his services. They receive them, pay for them, and that ends the transaction.