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EDITED BY JOHN ROSE CORMACK, M.D.

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ADVERTISEMENTS.

Three lines and under	-	-	-	60	2	6
Every additional line	-	-	-	0	0	6
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A line contains ten words.

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DISCIPULUS is again requested to communicate his name, not for publication, but in confidence, so that his letter may be answered.

MEDICAL ATTENDANCE ON SICK-CLUBS.

UPON several recent occasions, the attention of our readers has been directed, both by ourselves and by our correspondents, to the subject of sick clubs as they affect the interests of medical men. We again recur to the topic, not only because these institutions are in themselves the source of much injury to the medical profession, but especially because they are a part of that system of imposition and oppression, to which we are all more or less exposed, whereby our time, our skill, nay, almost our lives, are assumed to be at the disposal of the public (from government downwards), whenever they are asked for under the names of charity and benevolence. We deny not the claims upon our charity and benevolence; and we rejoice to bear testimony to the general readiness with which those claims are practically acknowledged by our professional brethren; but we do deny the right of any one, whether in a public or private capacity, to make them a ground of imposition in what ought to be purely business arrangements. We object to the abuse of the sacred name of charity, when it is improperly used to give an appearance of goodness to the gratuitous or semi-gratuitous services of medical men. How many, we ask, of the gratis morning levees of the unpaid dispensary and hospital officers, with their indiscriminate admission of patients, are held for the sake of true charity? We need not give the answer; all know it: all know, too, and feel, that reform of these things there must be—a reform which can only be brought about by earnest and united action. No body of men in our profession possesses the same power of acting in union as our own Association. To its members, therefore, we address ourselves, hoping that the reform, when once begun *by them*, will not cease till all abuses have been swept away.

Owing to the great variety of circumstances under which Sick Clubs are constituted; owing, also, to the great variation in the amount per member paid to the surgeons, it is impossible to form any calculation of the general remunerative value of clubs. Assuming, however, that from three to four shillings per member is the average annual payment,

and knowing that the ascertained average cost of the medicines for each patient treated in a public hospital is a little above four shillings, it is evident, as only a certain percentage of the members of a club are ill in the course of one year, that the payments made to the surgeon must cover the cost of drugs, and leave at least some margin of remuneration for time, trouble, and skill. Now repudiating any system of medical remuneration based, either actually or ostensibly, upon the sale of medicines prescribed, our calculation has simply to do with the amount of remuneration left after the actual cost of the drugs has been deducted. That such amount of remuneration is small enough even in the best paying clubs, there can be no question; but, whatever it may be, if it is what the members of the club can be justly expected to afford, it can never be derogatory to any medical man to accept it, if it suit his convenience to do so. Its acceptance is simply a personal matter, a calculation between value received and value of time given; and often, in the country, of the facility with which the members of a club can be attended coincidentally with the private patients of the district.

But, after private considerations, every medical man, as a member of the profession, has public considerations due to that body, in the acceptance of any public appointment. *He is bound to take care that his acceptance of such appointment does not involve injustice to his medical brethren.* Every practitioner who, upon the ordinary club terms, accepts clubs composed, either in whole or in part, of members who are able to discharge a reasonable medical account, clearly does so to the injury of his brethren and of himself: he withdraws individuals from the ranks of those who, consistently with the order of society, ought to do their part in the support of the profession as a whole. If persons who unjustly seek for club medical relief do not feel the degradation which they ought to feel in accepting the semi-charity of terms adapted to the scanty earnings of the labourer, medical men have no right to degrade themselves and the entire body of the profession, by pandering to such meanness. In confirmation of our sentiments, we cannot do better than quote from the extract from the *Union Médicale*, given in the Journal for September 2.

"But if we have some right to pride ourselves on our acts of charity, is it not our duty to take care that they are properly recompensed by those who can do so? And would it not be at once a dereliction of our duty to our brethren, and a lowering of professional dignity, to accept a position which would oblige a practitioner to visit the rich as well as the poor members of a club, thus depriving his brethren of a practice from which they could obtain some reward for their trouble, and throwing away his own services, as if he doubted whether they were worth anything?"

It is upon the established practitioner of moderate income and moderate practice that the abuses of the club system press most severely; encouraged as those abuses are, on the one hand, by young men struggling into practice, and on the other by men of large and old established busi-