

What the Poor Man Told the Doctor

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

The term "dear" in this case is not one of affection but inspired by your bill of \$72, which has just arrived. When I called you in three weeks ago you said that you would do me good. I thought you meant my health, not my pocketbook. You have itemized the statement, else I should be totally at sea as to what I am to pay for. You say thirty visits at \$2 a visit, \$60; for consultation with Dr. Cuttem, \$10, and medicines, \$2.

Does it not strike you as a little unjust, doctor, to tax me \$70 for talk and \$2 for medicine? What I needed was medicine, not talk.

And that consultation, for which I am asked to pay \$10. You and Dr. Cuttem came together and thumped my chest and felt my pulse; Cuttem gravely pulled his whiskers and you seriously mopped the sweat from your bald head.

"He's a sick man," said Cuttem, "and needs constant care."

Then you two whispered together and departed. Now before you were called in and before Cuttem was called in I knew I was a very sick man. If I had been a well man I should not have sent for you. But I must pay a ten spot for being told something that I knew before anyone else.

We owe a great debt to medical science, I know, but there is no justice in trying to make me pay it. During the time that you made those \$2 visits you smoked my cigars, ate the oranges that were placed at my bedside, put my flowers in your button hole, carried away a box of

figs, and frequently lunched on the delicacies that my fond and loving wife prepared for me. I made no objection to that, thinking, of course, that you would credit me with the price of the meals. Now you want me to pay you for eating my food.

The medicine for which you ask \$2 consisted of a porous plaster and a bottle of liniment. The porous plaster is still with me, but the liniment you took away with you on your last visit. I am expecting every day to have you come and tear the plaster from my back.

It evidently costs money to be sick. It is a luxury that only the rich can afford. A man has no chance of recovery nowadays, for he no sooner gets better than the doctor's bill gives him a relapse. I am going back to work tomorrow and the first \$72 I get together in one lump is yours. I have worked for the last twenty-five years and the biggest sum I ever amassed in that length of time was \$8. Your chances are rather slim, but as you frequently advised me: "We must hope for the best" and "be prepared for the worst." I assure you that I was prepared for everything but the size of your bill. I see now why you were so solicitous to have my wife and me ready for the worst.

Yours deeply in debt,

OWEN MOORE.

It is hard to believe a man is telling the truth when you know you would lie, were you in his place.