

*The Rev. Dr. Sprague,
from his friend the Author*

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

ARRANGEMENTS CONNECTED WITH THE

RELIEF OF THE SICK POOR;

ADDRESSED

IN A LETTER

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD JOHN RUSSELL,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT,

BY JOHN YELLOLY, M.D. F.R.S.

PHYSICIAN TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS OF GLOCESTER;

LATE PHYSICIAN TO THE LONDON HOSPITAL, &c.

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It affords the Author of this little tract particular pleasure to find, that the subject of medical relief to the poor, is on the eve of being brought under the cognizance of Parliament. He has long thought, that this is the only mode by which the evils now submitted to public consideration, can be effectually corrected; and he augurs much advantage from the discussion.

Some little points of detail are added as an Appendix.

February 11, 1837.

BACON, KINNEBROOK, AND BACON,
NORWICH.

TO

THE LORD JOHN RUSSELL, &c. &c.

MY LORD,

I am induced to trouble your Lordship, with some observations on the arrangements connected with the relief of the Sick Poor in this country, from a high sense of the importance of the subject, and a firm conviction that it is very imperfectly understood.

I am quite aware that your Lordship's attention has been already directed to the inquiry, by a great variety of publications and appeals ; and am sensible too, that a Statesman engaged in managing the affairs of a great nation, has little time for an examination of details, and must often be satisfied with transferring the investigation of them to others.

To these circumstances I may add, that so much has been already written on the subject, as to leave little of novelty for observation or remark. But in the face of all these considerations, I venture to

think, that it may be serviceable to the cause of fair and candid inquiry, that a person who has been in no way mixed up with the previous discussions ; who has never been connected with the management of workhouses or houses of industry, and may therefore be supposed to be in a considerable degree free from the prejudices to which such a connection is often imagined to give rise ; and who has no sort of personal interest in the question, should take a general view of the whole matter of investigation.

These are the grounds on which I take the liberty of addressing your Lordship ; but there are one or two additional points, which it may not be unbecoming or irrelevant to notice. Many years of Dispensary and Hospital practice, as well as the habit which I have pursued all my life, of seeing poor persons at my own house, have afforded me ample opportunities of becoming acquainted with the character and necessities of the more indigent classes of society, and in some degree with their modes of thought and action. I have likewise had the satisfaction of enjoying a very extensive acquaintance with all classes of practitioners, both in town and country ; and have possessed more than ordinary means of becoming conversant with their merits and qualifications. Entertaining therefore, as I do, very

strong feelings as to the necessity which exists for some improvement in the management of the Sick Poor ; and thinking likewise, that as a part of such improvement, a more liberal procedure to the professional persons who are engaged in attending them, would be both politic and just, I consider it as in some degree approaching to a duty on my part, to endeavour to assist, in the evening of life, and retirement from practice, in correcting what appear to me mistaken ideas, in that very important department of the public service, which relates to the administration of medical relief to the necessitous. I likewise indulge the hope, that if your Lordship, in the high station which you occupy as regulator of the domestic affairs of this kingdom, should be induced to devote your attention to an examination of the subject in all its bearings and relations, the result would be eminently favourable to the interests of humanity, as far as the poor are concerned, and particularly gratifying to the feelings of the large, useful, and influential body of men, who form the medical practitioners of the United Kingdom.

I have long been of opinion, that much ill-judged parsimony has attached to the medical arrangements connected with the Sick Poor ; and that, while the expenditure of parishes was conducted on a large and unrestricted, if not, (accord-

ing to the common opinion,) a profuse and lavish scale, the medical department, in which the interests of humanity are so much involved, and which formed only a very small item of the general account, was regulated with inconsiderate and inconsistent penuriousness. Under such disparity, it may well be said,

"Vehemens in utramque partem, Menedeme, es nimis,
Aut largitate nimiâ, aut parsimoniâ.
In eandem fraudem, ex hâc re, atque ex illâ, incidēs."

I took the liberty of offering a strong opinion on the subject, in my examination before the Committee on Medical Education in the early part of 1834, having long previously wished, that the subject might be brought under the cognizance of Parliament, by some well-informed and public-spirited Member.

When the new system of poor laws was introduced, I indulged the expectation, that under their influence, the plan of medical attendance on the poor would be rendered more efficient and satisfactory. This has not however been the case, and I regret that the Commissioners, for whose talents and character I entertain the highest respect, have early appeared to me, to have fallen into some misconceptions relative to medical men and medical practice, which it is the more necessary should be

the subject of temperate and dispassionate observation, because the same views are sustained in the second report which has lately appeared, and which comes forward with that augmentation of force and authority, to which the increased experience of its authors may naturally be supposed to entitle it.

Anxiety to obtain professional employment has occasionally led young and efficient men, but much more frequently the ill-educated and ignorant, to unworthy compromises of the respectability of the profession. Previously to the year 1815, when the Apothecary's Bill came into operation, any one might call himself a surgeon and commence practice;* and as we know how imperfectly even the best informed members of society are often able to appreciate the merits of medical men, it not unfrequently happened, that the more worthy practitioner was either supplanted, or obliged to lower the terms of attendance on parochial patients to such an extent, as did not admit of his doing them justice without a great personal sacrifice.

The vulgar and ignorant practitioners, who had insinuated themselves into the profession previously to 1815, are, it is true, fast wearing out; for no one is now permitted to practise, without a proper

* It may be proper to state, that by *surgeon*, I here mean the *general practitioner*, who practises all the branches of the medical profession.

education, and a due examination into his qualifications ; but the feeling of keeping medical remuneration for parochical services as low as possible, still continues ; nor does it appear that the amount of such remuneration, is ever determined by the sort of estimate, which the common sense of mankind leads them to employ in the regulation of their ordinary expences.

In matters of common business, men generally consider the quantum meruit of him whom they employ. The labourer they regard as worthy his hire ; and while they feel it to be their duty to resist imposition, they have no kind of disinclination to pay fairly for efficient services. But in parochial medicine the case is different ; for the only point aimed at, seems to be that of having the care of the sick poor undertaken as cheaply as possible, without its being a matter of consideration, whether the contract can defray the expence of proper medicines, still less that of affording anything like an adequate remuneration for time and trouble. But medical men are found to attend parishes on the low and inadequate terms mentioned, and the regulators of the affairs of the poor are generally satisfied, to refer this circumstance to the legitimate operation of competition, of which they perhaps consider themselves bound to take advantage.

The principle of competition, and the contracts to which it gives rise, are considered by many, as applicable to every sort of public arrangement. I venture, however, to call in question the justness of the reasoning in reference to a great variety of concerns ; and feel it therefore to be an important object of my present address, to submit to your Lordship some considerations, with a view to shew that the position is inaccurate, and its practical operation, as far as medical affairs are concerned, unsafe and inexpedient.

When the question relates to articles of known and palpable character, proposals and contracts afford the means of obtaining them at the lowest possible rate. There can therefore be no objection to such modes of effecting business ; for while we may be sure that the parties will not go below the rate which will allow them a reasonable profit, the honest fulfilment of the contract is capable of being ascertained, by a moderate degree of attention and judgment on the part of a principal or his agents.

If a work of magnitude is concerned, as the erection of a house, or the building of a ship, a contract is equally applicable ; but in this case, as the principal has rarely the time and the judgment necessary for enabling him to ascertain whether justice is done to him or not, he generally finds it necessary to employ some one to watch

over his interests. In such an example however, my Lord, it would be considered as altogether out of the question, to look to the lowest terms at which inspection and superintendence could be obtained, instead of selecting a person on whose judgment and assiduity dependence could be placed for efficient assistance and protection.

Nor would any one, I am sure, make competition and low charges, ingredients in his choice of a solicitor, who is to be entrusted with the management of his most important private affairs ; or of an engineer, who is to devise or to carry into effect momentous operations, whether of a public or private nature ; or of the fabricator of that nice and curious machinery, which, in the trackless ocean, enables man to pursue his way with confidence and accuracy ; but his aim would be, by a judicious selection in the first place, and liberal treatment in the next, to ensure the full exercise of the most faithful, and most able services.

In all these cases (and it is hardly necessary to multiply them, or to deduce examples from government, war, or diplomacy) it is not a common operation which is required, or an article of obvious character which is to be provided ; but it is the intellect, the spark of divine essence which we wish to enlist in our service ; the exercise of unfettered zeal, assiduity, and talent, which would be chilled

and repressed by any thing like illiberality and suspicion.

But yet, my Lord, in the appointment of the medical attendant on the poor, the common principles which actuate our proceedings in other concerns, are entirely overlooked. If a tradesman or artisan were to offer to provide an article of known value, at a rate at which it could not be afforded, there would at once appear to be something underhand and suspicious in the transaction. The proposition would be viewed as offensive and disreputable ; for though competition may be employed to ascertain the lowest value at which a thing can be provided, the greatest stickler for economy would never think of offering a sum which he knew was totally inadequate to procure the article in question. There would thus be the appearance of a temptation to obtain it in a fraudulent way.

And yet with regard to the parish surgeon, he is required either to accept a sum which the least consideration or inquiry will evince to be totally inadequate ; or he is desired to give in his proposals, which he knows must be within certain prescribed limits ; or he is threatened with a competition, by the introduction of some new practitioner into his district, which must in some degree risk a still further reduction of

his hardly earned income, than the crowded state of the profession has yet occasioned. There is no disposition to reward according to services, but the ungenerous feeling is too generally entertained, to employ the very hardships under which the profession labours by the numbers who enter it, as a means of still further depression. I have remarked that the parsimony is inconsistent, and that it applies to an article of comparatively small amount; and I will add, that if medical attendance were even adequately remunerated, it would still form but a small item of general parochial expenditure.

Though no reluctance is exhibited to trust the health of hundreds, or of thousands of poor persons, to the care of gentlemen very imperfectly remunerated, yet I am persuaded that matters stand somewhat differently, when the health of a man's own family is concerned. There is little probability, that in such case, he would look out for his medical man, as he would for a parish surgeon, on the sole or principal ground of cheapness, without his conjugal or parental solicitude being exercised, to inquire whether justice could be done them on the terms offered; and if he made a contract, and at the time of illness and anxiety had the least idea of its not being sufficiently liberal, there is no reason to imagine, that a considerate husband or

father, would suffer the letter of an engagement to interfere with making such an alteration in the terms of it, as might insure to his family every exercise of skill and attention, of which the practitioner employed by him was capable. In a question of mere property, there can be no doubt what would be the procedure; and that a cow doctor or a horse doctor would be desired to do every thing possible for the recovery of a sick animal, by the most efficient curative processes, without reference to the expence. I may remark, too, that when slavery existed in our colonies (now, to the honour of our nation, fortunately abolished for ever), feelings of interest and humanity united in procuring every possible attention to the health of the unfortunate subjects of it, which the most liberal and efficient medical arrangements could produce.

But ~~there~~^{there} seems to be a feeling common with directors and parish officers, that if a medical gentleman can once be induced to make a contract for parochial attendance, on terms ever so unfavourable, he will execute his duties conscientiously and efficiently. To the credit of the profession, I believe that the exertion will always go beyond the remuneration, and very often far beyond it; but it does not appear to me humane to the patients, or proper to the practitioner, to constitute the latter the arbiter of his own conduct; or to

make it his interest to be as sparing as possible of his medicines, and particularly of the more expensive descriptions, and of every medicinal assistance which it requires much time or trouble to impart. It may be known whether a man has made a professional call; but though his attendance may be sufficient to satisfy the expectations or demands of the church-warden or overseer, it still may not be what a man of zeal would bestow, who feels that confidence is reposed in him, which he is proud of possessing, and anxious to merit. As to medicines, it is clear that as matters at present stand, there is no check whatever in relation to them, except in the sentiments of honourable obligation possessed by the party employed; and yet the conduct exercised to him, is not usually of that flattering description, which conveys the idea of much of that sort of feeling being presumed to exist.

I am aware that the Poor Law Commissioners are disposed, in their last report, to consider the principle of competition, as strictly, and to the fullest extent, applicable to the supply of drugs for the parish poor; but I would beg leave respectfully to state, that this can only be the case when means are afforded of judging whether such supply is correctly provided. If an hospital or a dispensary purchase drugs by competition, they have

proper officers to see that the articles furnished are good. In this case, and under such circumstances, the principle of competition strictly and fully applies; but it does not appear to me that it can do so with parochial attendance, when there is no check, and can be none, on the medical man, as to the quantity or quality of the medicines dispensed by him.

I have thus endeavoured to point out the inapplicability of competition to provide sufficiently for medical attendance on the poor; and I may add, that the inadequate terms of remuneration, give a low rank to parish employment, and prevent the more established and best estimated practitioners of a district, from wishing to have any share in it.

Of this circumstance I know personally several examples; and cannot help feeling it to be a subject of great regret, that any want of liberality in medical arrangements, should be the means of depriving the poor, of the best advice which their locality can afford them.

In comparing the plan which is adopted relative to the sick poor, with the mode of conducting many of the other public operations of the country, there are some singular and striking incongruities, to which I request your Lordship's attention. It was no unusual thing, in former times, for parish poor, and parish lunatics, to be farmed

out ; but though much pains were taken to see that justice was done them, the practice is very properly almost entirely done away. The Government and Parliament have long set themselves against any arrangements, whether medical or general, by which the full effect of those provisions which they may think proper to adopt for the public benefit, has not every chance of being received.

The medical attendance on prisons was formerly conducted very much with a view to cheapness ; but when an enactment was made, which showed that it was the wish of the legislature to have efficient services, and to pay for them adequately, the visiting magistrates raised the terms of remuneration to a fair extent, and have by this means, pretty generally I believe, now rendered the appointment of surgeons to prisons one that the most respectable members of the profession feel desirous of obtaining.

But the cases which I most wish to submit to your Lordship's consideration, respect the medical and surgical departments of the army and navy.

It was formerly the practice, for the surgeons to provide their medicines, in both departments of the public service, with a certain, and I have no doubt an adequate allowance for the purpose ; but Sir James Macgrigor, the Director General of

Military Hospitals, does me the favour to inform me, that this practice was discontinued in the army about the year 1793 ; and Sir William Burnett, the Physician General of the Navy, is so obliging as to state, that from the year 1796, some of the most important medicines were furnished by the then Sick and Hurt Board ; and that from the year 1805, the whole of the drugs were provided by Government, and the pay of naval surgeons regulated by an order in Council as it now stands.

Sir James Macgrigor mentions the old practice as being 'fraught with evil consequences' ; but if this were the case, where the pecuniary allowance was liberal, and the opportunities of inspection afforded, through the means of naval and military discipline, ample ; much more is it likely to be so, under the present circumstances of medical attendance on the poor of the country generally. Cæsar's wife ought not to be suspected ; and I have no doubt that it was felt to be highly desirable, to remove every possible opportunity of throwing out suspicions of interested or mercenary conduct, against naval or military medical gentlemen. Certain it is, that the additional encouragement given in both departments by Government, the kind protection afforded by naval and military chiefs, and the unwearied care and attention of the heads of the Army and Navy

Medical Boards, have infused among the medical men of both services, so much enterprise, and so much eagerness for professional distinction, as to have forwarded much the scientific cultivation of the profession, and by this means greatly tended to promote the interests of humanity. It is pleasing to see, in the medical profession, that men who have incurred perils, and endured hardships in the service of their country, should be able, on their retirement, to take an honourable position among the highest of their respective ranks, and bring into civil life, augmented energy, information, and experience.

It is of great importance, in my opinion, to the general advantage of the community, that the country surgeon should be viewed as something more than the common tradesmen; and that his tone of feeling should be kept up, by a consideration of the elevated nature of his studies and pursuits; the important character of his duties; and by his having the example always before him, of the eminent men who exercise the same profession which he does, participate to a certain degree in the same feelings, and with whom he is very probably conjoined as a member of some college or corporation.

Under such feelings, he is far better prepared to maintain the professional energy on which his

patients are so dependent for their safety, in what may happen to be the most sudden, dangerous, and difficult emergencies, than if he has the impression invariably presented to him, of his calling being considered as a humble one, inadequately estimated, and ungraciously and imperfectly recompensed.

As the attendant of both the rich and the poor, the medical man forms a useful medium of communication and reciprocation; and it would be very important in the execution of the momentous duties which are entrusted to the Poor Law Commissioners, that they should have the co-operation of the medical profession throughout the country; for it is not to be forgotten, that on the humanity, judgment, and independence of that body, the poor must hinge entirely, for their comfort and well doing during indisposition.

With regard to the mode in which a change in the medical arrangements could be effected, it would not be difficult to assimilate the system of providing medicines for parishes, in some degree with the method pursued in furnishing them for the army and navy, or for hospitals and dispensaries. It would be important to banish entirely the present plan of making it the interest of a professional man to withhold the medical aid that is proper; and this it appears to me, may be readily effected,

either by providing parishes or unions, with a certain supply of medicines, and awarding a remuneration for attendance separately ; or if it be determined that one sum shall still cover the whole, by making a proper estimate of the value of the medicines necessary, and superadding a fair remuneration for attendance and trouble.

Such an arrangement would be most readily effected with the sanction of Government, through the means of the Poor Law Commissioners. But it is a matter of grave and important consideration, whether it would not be in proper conformity with other parts of our social system, that there should be a medical gentleman of character and experience, connected with the Poor Law Commission, and possessing the confidence of the public and the profession, to study and advise on the many subjects of a professional nature which must continually come before that Board. While parishes acted separately, such a plan was impracticable ; but now that the management of the poor is concentrated in one body, I do not think the medical department can be efficiently, or satisfactorily regulated, without such aid. The Commander-in-Chief of the Army, or the Lords of the Admiralty, would never think of trusting solely to their own knowledge of medical affairs, for managing concerns which relate to the health of our

soldiers and sailors. They depute this duty to adequate and efficient men, who, while they leave the whole power of the general regulating body untouched, are the confidential advisers of the heads of departments, and are a guarantee to the public and the profession, for their having every species of professional information placed before them to direct their decisions. Your Lordship is by law the ultimate arbiter in all matters connected with the Poor Laws ; but with every deference to your Lordship's knowledge, and to your anxious wish to do every thing which humanity can dictate for the good of those whose interests come under your especial protection as the Secretary of Home affairs, I cannot help being of opinion, that it would have been advantageous if some of the points submitted to your consideration in the annual reports, had previously come under particular professional cognizance.—I may deduce another instance of the same division of duty, from the Court of Chancery, in which, it is well known, that though the Lord Chancellor has the sole right of decision on every point which comes before him, he never acts on medical subjects, without medical advice.

I took the liberty at the commencement of my letter, of stating my impression, that the Poor Law Commissioners had fallen into some misconception relative to medical men and medical practice.

I feel it to be no impeachment of the highest fitness for exercising the most important public duties, that there should not be a familiarity with all the details of a purely professional nature, which may be connected with them. Such an acquaintance is certainly never expected of the high public functionaries to whom I have just alluded. But more peculiarly I consider it desirable, that the Poor Law Commissioners, with the large mass of multifarious duties, which, from the instant of their coming into office, has most severely and constantly pressed upon them, should have had the means of knowing something of the character, feelings, and pretensions of the large, well-educated, and useful body of men, in whose affairs they found it to be their duty to legislate. In particular, they should have been made minutely acquainted with various important circumstances relative not only to medical affairs generally, but medical attendance on the poor, which, with every deference to their talents, powers of observation, and experience, I consider it to be hardly possible that any one, who has not been called upon to make such affairs his particular study, can know with sufficient accuracy for important practical purposes.

I do not at all wonder, that from the first of their coming into office, the Commissioners should

be impressed with the absolute necessity of making retrenchments in every quarter. To effect this object, appeared indeed to be a main and primary object of their formation. The gravamen of the poor rates has always been considered to be their magnitude, and this supposed to arise, as well from extravagance in necessary expenditure, as misapplication of relief to cases not requiring it. In correcting the former, it must have been felt difficult to act upon any other principle, than that every item should be closely looked to, and unsparingly cut down. It could hardly be imagined that parsimony and extravagance could ever co-exist; and that while the great mass of expences required curtailment, some particular ones were to be untouched, or even augmented.

It was perhaps not altogether unnatural too, with the impression which the commissioners seem to have early imbibed as to the mean and mercenary conduct of certain individuals of the profession, relative to suspended orders, that the general inference which they were disposed to form of the body at large, was not a little disadvantageous; and that they might hence feel themselves justified in applying the tradesmanlike mode of contract and open tender, as a defence against their selfish and interested conduct. If it could be at all imagined, that the habits and feelings of the

profession generally, would condescend to make a property of suspended orders, and to fee "inferior officers"—"to search out" for them, no means of prevention could be conceived to be too harsh and too strict. But without at all questioning the existence of an occasional deviation from rectitude, from which even the sacred profession itself cannot, from the infirmities of human nature, be in every instance exempt, I must beg leave most respectfully, but most firmly, to deny the propriety of the generalization at which the commissioners have arrived on this subject, and the procedure which they have in consequence adopted; or to admit that the charge for suspended orders is usually either excessive, or made at the highest rate of professional usage. The suffrages of all classes of society, from the throne to the cottage, unite in stamping the feelings and conduct of the medical profession in all its departments, with an honour, and probity, a trustworthiness and decorum, which well merit the unbounded confidence which are reposed in it. Hence it is hardly a matter of surprise, that the profession generally should feel hurt, by gentlemen of the endowments and character of the Poor Law Commissioners, and of their elevated position in society, entertaining any disposition to give credit to, or act upon, so unworthy an imputation as that which I have noticed.

By the second report of the Poor Law Commissioners it is satisfactory to see, that in recommending the method of tender, they disclaim any proceeding at all derogatory to the character of the medical profession; but at the same time I think it must be fairly admitted, in justification of the feelings of annoyance which have arisen on the subject, that in adopting the practice in the first instance, in order to guard against the unworthy conduct of some particular men, it was difficult to view the proposition in the complimentary light in which the explanation of the Commissioners has endeavoured to put it.

With regard to the opinion of the Commissioners, that the office of parochial or district surgeon, is likely to offer inducements to obtain it, differing in degree, but similar in kind to those presented by the chief medical institutions of the country, I have every conviction that the united feeling of the profession is not in accordance with this idea.

Hospitals and Dispensaries impart a considerable degree of consequence to the offices connected with them, because the offices are generally held by Physicians and Surgeons of rank and estimation; but attendance on parish poor is declined by the higher part of the profession, and until the importance of the Parish Surgeon is raised, (which certainly may be done to a certain extent) the induce-

ments to hold his appointment, can hardly be viewed as superseding considerations of emolument. Most of the circumstances which give dignity to the great medical situations of the country are sufficiently obvious; and it may be stated as an additional ground of disparity between those offices, and that of the Parish Surgeon, that the finding and dispensing, and at the same time saving medicines, is a striking characteristic of the latter, with which hospital Physicians and Surgeons have nothing whatever to do.

If the disposition is entertained, of giving a fair and proper remuneration for services, there would be no difficulty in finding honourable and independent men enough, having no personal views or interests to serve, who would readily give information on the subject.

Medical men are represented as being the best judges of the value of their own time and services, and so they certainly are; but I would submit whether it is not somewhat ungracious to appear to pay them a compliment by inviting them to fix their own terms, when the opinion is to be employed in the mere business way of tender. It is stated that there is no actual obligation to accept the lowest offer; yet there is unquestionably an implied one, unless for an adequate reason to the contrary, which the good character, and fair pre-

tensions of most candidates, will necessarily make a very rare occurrence.

The report given of the successful establishment of independent medical clubs, in a great number of Unions is particularly gratifying; but I cannot, I must own, view the exhibition of medical relief to poor persons, any more than giving them the advantages of education, as productive of the evil consequences, which from some observations contained in the Commissioners' Report, appear to be feared from them. I am very averse to consider as paupers, persons who merely receive medicines or instruction from the public. Nor ought the noble Hospitals, and other medical establishments of which our country has so much reason to be proud, to be viewed as at all accessory to the demoralizing operation of pauperism.

The means of having medical relief and education, should, I would submit, be as little narrowed as possible; and with all the advantages which sober habits, strict economy, and a general elevation in the scale of social beings will produce, it is difficult to conceive that an agricultural labourer, earning at most 9s. per week, of which he pays 1s. or 1s. 6d. for his cottage, can be beyond the necessity of receiving medical as well as other aid in sickness. Under such circumstances, I have every

reason to believe, that the Poor Law Commissioners will give their complete sanction to the relief being adequate to the occasion; and I am happy in having it in my power to state, that I have never, either in town or country, applied to Overseers or Guardians on behalf of sick persons, or such as from age or infirmity were unable to do any thing for themselves, without the most humane attention being paid to my representations.

The various means now in operation, for elevating the condition of the labourer, will, I trust, have an extensive and beneficial result; but time is required for the object, and I would also say, a greater increase of wages than has yet taken place.

But there is one subsidiary point to which I am anxious to direct your lordship's particular attention, and that is the increase of appropriations, (for I dislike the perverted term of allotments) of a small quantity of ground, as a quarter of an acre, for a cottage garden.

A labourer would be willing to pay even double the ordinary letting value for such a portion of ground, and the advantages produced by it would be incalculable, in filling up his spare time, employing his family, and furnishing himself with work in uncertain weather, or when he cannot procure it elsewhere. He would thus be enabled very effec-

tually to assist the endeavours now in operation, for bettering his situation, and increasing his independence; and would have it in his power, more readily, and more effectually than by any other means either in use or prospect, of providing the funds necessary to prevent him from ever having occasion for parish relief.

It would be of great importance that the Poor Law Commissioners should give their powerful aid, to the furtherance of this object; and if the assistant Commissioners, under their auspices, would avail themselves of their visits to unions and parishes, to impress on landholders and farmers, how subservient distributions of small portions of land as gardens, at almost any rent which could be set upon them, would be to the comfort of the poor, and the favourable operation of the Poor Laws, the measure, (which with its other recommendations, would be exceedingly popular among agricultural labourers,) would have the prospect of being soon very generally adopted.

I am sensible, My Lord, of having trespassed too much on your time, by the extent of my observations, and I would therefore, in conclusion, merely express the hope, that an opportunity of obtaining medical relief should still be allowed to the labourer and workman, to the full extent of the

demand, without too nicely balancing any mixed considerations, relative to the ultimate effects of the practice. When the position of the lower orders becomes more elevated, their feelings of independence increased, and the success and advantages of Medical Clubs more generally known and experienced, the necessity for having relief from the Parish Surgeon, and at the expence of the Parish, will necessarily cease, or be much diminished.

I have the Honour to be,

With high respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's faithful and obedient servant,

J. YELLOLY, M. D.

Woodton Hall, Norfolk, Feb. 11th, 1837.

APPENDIX.

EVIDENCE ALLUDED TO AT PAGE 8.

4322. With reference to medical attendance on the poor in the country, is there any information you wish to give to the Committee?—I think nothing can be worse than that which is adopted in parishes very generally; it would be exceedingly desirable if legislative measures could be adopted which would enable the poor to have more efficient advice than they can have at present.

4393. Is the point to which you allude that of farming out the medical attendance upon the poor to the lowest bidder?—It is.

4394. Does that prevail extensively in that part of the country in which you reside?—There is an incorporation which comprises above 40 parishes, and four medical men attend 10 parishes each, at the rate of only £4 per parish. Even in opulent parishes near London, the surgeon is sometimes beat down by competition, to a stipend which could not admit of his doing the duties properly.

4395. Have any of those points ever come under your own observation in any parishes?—Certainly I have known many inadequate payments. I have seen now and then inattention; but generally I am very happy in saying, that I think the profession at large do themselves great credit by giving more attendance and medicine than the amount of stipend at all remunerates them for.

4396. Is it generally the practice in your part of Norfolk to farm the poor?—It is always the practice if there are not hun-

dred-houses; but when there are hundred-houses, which unite many parishes together, the surgeon is remunerated better by the number, than if he had one parish only at the same rate of payment.

4397. Is the price paid very often such as will not more than pay for the medicines?—Decidedly. I have heard of £5 being given at some miles distant: some of the medical men of Norwich have had parishes to attend at a distance of some miles, for not much more than that rate.

SMALL AMOUNT OF MEDICAL EXPENDITURE, PAGE 14.

At Norwich, with 60,000 inhabitants, the poor-rates have varied within the last few years from about £20,000 to £29,000 per annum; and for the last year were £15,700. The expences of medical attendance during the same period have remained at about £300 per annum, the medicines being made up by an Apothecary, at a salary of £100 per annum, in a house hired for the purpose; but the poor being attended by medical gentlemen gratuitously. If the four gentlemen in attendance had an allowance of £50 per annum each, to which would make the whole expence relative to the poor of all descriptions about £500 per annum, the system would be very efficient, creditable, and satisfactory.

In former times, I understand, when the annual expenditure was seldom less than £30,000, four medical gentlemen gave attendance and medicine by contract at about £80 per annum each, besides an allowance for vaccination, and the power of charging for suspended orders.

In an union in my own neighbourhood, consisting of the two Hundreds of Loddon and Clavering, in Norfolk, having a population of about 14000, and paying poor rates, till of late, of about £9000 per annum, the attendance and medicines were

long contracted for by four gentlemen at £40 per annum, or £160 in the whole, with the payment of at first 2s. per mile, which was reduced to 1s. for visiting distant poor, (that is poor out of the Hundred) and 2s. 6d. each for vaccination; but the whole sum is now made £210 per annum, without any other sources of emolument.

In a contiguous union, that of Wangford, in Suffolk, consisting of 27 parishes, having a population of about 14,500, and expending about £6000 per annum, in poor rates, the amount of which, till the introduction of the new poor laws, was about £9000 per annum, four medical gentlemen receive £43 each, or £172 per annum in the whole, for medical attendance on all paupers within the Union, whether they belong to it or not, without further emolument, and to find every thing except trusses, which is the case with all the other contracts mentioned.

I am acquainted with several of the directors of the arrangements Unions, and their report of the success of the arrangements adopted under the new poor laws, is very favourable.

In the Hundred of FOREHOE, in this county, consisting of 22 parishes, having a population of near 14000 inhabitants, and whose expenditure by the parliamentary return was about £7600 per annum, in an average of three years ending with 1815, the whole medical attendance is, I understand, contracted for at £120 per annum, the gentleman having the contract engaging some assistance in executing the business.

In the Union of ST. FAITHS, near Norwich, consisting of about 11,000 inhabitants, and raising above £10,000 per annum for the poor, the medical attendance is contracted for at £170 per annum, by four Surgeons, two of whom live at Norwich, the districts which they attend extending to the distance of 7 or 8 miles from thence. Costessey, four miles from Norwich, with a population of above 800, is attended for £5 per annum; and

Ringland, six miles from Norwich, with a population of 350, for £10 per annum: in both cases by Norwich Surgeons.

In the very opulent parishes of Woodford, Walthamstow, Leyton, Wanstead, Chingford, and Loughton, in Essex, the population of which amounts to about 17,000, and the poor rates, by the parliamentary return above mentioned, to about £7500 per annum, the medical attendance was formerly contracted for at about £280 per annum, of which about £225 was for the four first named parishes. But this last mentioned sum has been reduced to £155 per annum.

For a short time the drugs in one of those parishes containing a population of above 5000 persons, were purchased by the parish, a dispenser engaged at a small salary to make them up, and attendance on the patients given by the resident surgeon gratuitously; but yet, though the expence of the drugs amounted to near £70 per annum, the guardians, I understand, have felt themselves justified in contracting for drugs and attendance together, at £50 per annum.

In the Metropolitan Parish of ST. LEONARD SHOREDITCH, consisting, by the parliamentary return of 1821, of near 53,000, and having an expenditure of above £12,000 per annum, by the average of three years ending in 1815, three gentlemen are engaged to attend the whole poor at £80 per annum each, including midwifery and suspended orders.

From a consideration of the statements now made, though only approximating to accuracy, it is clear that the sum employed in the medical department bears a very small proportion to the whole annual expences; that a fair and proper recompense for medical services would make too trifling an addition to such amount to be at all felt; and that as the rates have been much diminished, and have the prospect of being much more so, such an addition could be the better spared.

In the instances given, the population amounts to 184650, and the sum paid for medical services under £1500 per annum, (£1437.) At this rate, in the whole of England and Wales, containing a population of near 14 millions, the annual payment for the sick poor, would be under £110,000 per annum, and therefore, when the poor rates amounted to 8 millions, a 72nd part only of the whole. Supposing, however, that the calculation made is very considerably below the truth, I am still justified in saying, that the medical expences, if fairly and considerately paid, would be only a small part of the annual expenditure.

PROPRIETY OF GRATUITOUS SERVICES.

In Norwich, I have stated, that the poor are attended gratuitously; but it appears to me that the acceptance of gratuitous services where funds can be raised to any extent, is very objectionable. Experience shows, that no one will long contribute regular, laborious, and efficient duties, without adequate remuneration. There ought invariably to be a complete feeling of responsibility on the part of official persons of every kind; and a perfect and practical power of controul on that of their employers.

In Norwich, they have had continual changes. At first they had the attendance of physicians; but no one of that class will now accept office under this system; and they are entirely dependent on the younger class of practitioners, who may be expected to throw up their appointments after a certain time; and this when the addition of one hundredth part (£200) to the annual expenditure, calculating it at an average of £20,000 per annum, would render the attendance on the poor very satisfactory.

I regret to be informed, that in the very opulent parish of Mary-le-bone, where it appears by the parliamentary returns

that the estimate of real property in 1815, was near £510,000 per annum, the poor rates on the average of the three preceding years, about £40,000 per annum, and the population, by the census of 1821 near 100,000, there has been the singular and peddling parsimony lately introduced, of withdrawing all salary from their attending physicians, to whom £100 per annum were, I understand, in the habit of being paid, though the sum thus saved is only one two hundredth part of the amount of expenditure, supposing it to be not very different from that above mentioned.

SPARING OF MEDICINES, PAGE 16.

It is impossible to expect that the ill-paid practitioner will employ the more powerful and expensive medicines in the execution of his contract; as for example, quinine, Peruvian bark, iodine, sarsaparilla, castor oil, citric acid or lemon juice, tinctures, or aromatics; and he has therefore the continual temptation before him to make cheap substitutions. Lint, though so valuable as a dressing in surgical cases, is expensive, and is therefore sparingly used; but as for leeches, for which there is no proper succedaneum in many serious affections, it cannot be expected that he will incur the heavy expence of providing them, if at all, in the adequate number and frequency; nor can he afford the time to do many little personal offices, which may be eminently conducive to the comfort and well doing of the sick, and which, if his sympathies were not in some degree affected by the hard bargain forced upon him, humanity, and professional feeling might induce him to exercise.

The unworthy higgling and beating down process, to which a medical man must therefore subject himself, before he can succeed in getting a contract to attend the poor, are unheard of in other liberal professions; and the devices which he must adopt

to make his contract answer, make a mere tradesman of him, and risk the production of an unfavourable effect, as well upon his own personal character and feelings, as upon those of the young men under him, by shewing to the latter, that there is one set of medicines, mode of prescription, and kind of attendance in operation for those who can afford to pay for themselves, and another for such as are dependent on the public for relief in sickness.

LOW RANK OF PARISH EMPLOYMENT, PAGE 17.

In my own neighbourhood, in the small towns of Beccles and Bungay, the principal practitioners do not take parochial employment; and this is likewise the case at Norwich.—A gentleman of great merit, who is one of the Surgeons of an Union in the county of Norfolk, in which he attends eight parishes, containing about 3000 inhabitants, at the distance of from 2 to 6 or 7 miles from his residence, at £50 per ann. mentions a singular, and I should imagine quite an original, mode of securing attendance at the work-house (about four miles from his residence) which is by a stipulation, that he must attend there *one hour regularly* every day, whether there is any duty requiring such frequent attendance, or such a period of it, or not. How far the thralldom and want of confidence that any such stipulations evince, will be favourable to the interests of the sick poor, is well worthy the particular attention of the Poor Law Commissioners.

SURGEONS OF GOALS, PAGE 18.

By the enactment of the 4th Geo. IV, c. 64, Justices have the power to direct "a reasonable sum to be paid *as salary*" to the Surgeon, "and also such sums of money *as shall be due* for medicines, and other articles for the sick;" by which the prin-

ciple of giving a proper remuneration for services, separately from the value of the medicines, seems to be completely recognized. The salary to the Surgeon of Norwich Castle, in the old plan, was only £40 per annum; but after the passing of this law, it was increased to £120, at which rate it now stands.

I may state likewise, that the stipends of clergymen to goals, were very properly made more liberal, by I believe the same act; but I have regretted to see only £80 per annum offered by some unions for double duty, when, under such circumstances the ordinary payment to curates would be £120 per annum; and of chaplains to prisons, from £150 to £250, and in some cases even more.

QUALIFICATIONS OF SURGEONS, PAGE 20.

Most country Surgeons, even in the most remote districts, have not only the qualification which the Apothecary's act requires, but are members of the Royal College of Surgeons, a rank which it is not a matter of obligation, but which they feel to be creditable to possess. Notwithstanding the humble duties which a superficial view of the subject may induce some persons erroneously to attach to country practitioners, their education (the medical part of which embraces the same objects in all the departments of the profession) the liberal objects of their studies and associations, and the habits of observation which their daily avocations produce, communicate to them very frequently, a respectable character for information and intelligence, and sometimes a well marked distinction for scientific and literary attainments.

DANGEROUS EMERGENCIES, PAGE 21.

It is little known out of the profession, that some of the most delicate and important operations of surgery, sometimes fall to

the lot of country surgeons to perform; and I particularly allude to *strangulated hernia*, in which the loss of an hour, in sending to a distance, may cost a patient his life.

ESTIMATE OF THE VALUE OF MEDICINES, PAGE 22.

Hospitals and dispensaries would give much assistance in this way. At a small dispensary in my neighbourhood, to which I subscribe, the expence of medicines for 136 patients last year amounted to £25 : 15 : 6, which was at the rate of 3s. 9d. each.

If the question related to the mode of estimating the value of any work of art, or of the services of any artist or artisan, no one would find it difficult to obtain such information on the subject as, with the assistance of common sense on his part, would enable him to form an idea of the fair value of the services which he might so obtain.

SUSPENDED ORDERS, PAGE 26.

Suspended orders in Norwich, when they were charged for separately, amounted, I understand, to £120 or £130 per annum. The difference in the expence of medicines to the rich and poor is principally in the form in which they are given; draughts being much more expensive than mixtures, and therefore appropriated to the more wealthy classes. I have every reason to believe, that in suspended orders, the more expensive form was not given, and that the charges were those usually made to the middle classes of society.

PUBLIC MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENTS, PAGE 29.

A very zealous, and able Poor Law Commissioner, with whom I have the pleasure of being acquainted, Dr. Kay, attri-

butes, in a very interesting memoir on Suffolk and Norfolk, which appeared in the second report of the Poor Law Commissioners, a very unfavourable influence to the facility of obtaining medical relief, which well supported Hospitals, and other means of providing it, afford; and he regards medical relief as "a form of pauperism, which is the more dangerous, "since it habituates the poor to dependence, under circumstances which cloak the tendencies of the system." He states that in Manchester, and its adjacent townships, (the population of which in 1831, amounted to 230,000 inhabitants,) there is at present an annual medical expenditure of £18,000, which has much increased of late years, and is still likely to go on increasing, and he adduces some other places in corroboration of his views.

The careful examination of Dr. Kay's conclusions, relative to the effects of medical relief, in which I have the misfortune, but with every feeling of respect, very much to differ from him, would carry my appended observations too far. I must satisfy myself therefore with remarking, in addition to what I have said at page 29, that the disposition to seek for medical aid may arise from other causes, in a flourishing town, than a tendency to pauperism. It may be connected, for example, with an augmented estimate of the utility of the profession, and an increased value for the skill of the Physicians and Surgeons who exercise it in medical charities, and who occupy generally the first rank in their profession.

With regard to the apparent magnitude of the sum raised, in proportion to the population, it does not appear to me by any means equal to the medical expences of London, which, with its population of 1,400,000 would at this rate have an expenditure in medical charities, under £110,000 per annum; nor do I apprehend it is much, if at all greater, than that of most other provincial towns.

A large proportion of the human race is destined to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, but a Statesmen, though he may with good reason dread the effects of interfering too much with this law, need have no fear as to the adoption of any public measures relative to health or education. The admirable operation of Parochial Schools in Scotland, where the provision for the poor is very trifling in amount, shews that though education is provided by the public, it is not to be regarded as a "form of pauperism." Here, therefore, I would submit to Dr. Kay, that there may be "a reliance of the entire population on parochial aid" for some forms of relief, with an increase rather than a diminution, of honourable and independent feelings. Physic is seldom swallowed from choice. If medical aid is only given when required, and is not allowed to be a pretext for receiving general assistance, from a wish to indulge indolent or vicious habits, I see no objection to its being freely, readily, and generally given. I only wish that we had as complete a trial in England, as they have had for 150 years in Scotland, on that "reliance of the entire population on parochial aid," in the way of education, which exists with so happy an effect in the northern parts of the island.

THE END.





