POOR LAW UNION MEDICAL OFFICERS.

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GUARDIANS OF ASHBOURNE UNION (DERBYSHIRE), AND WITH THE POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In *The Times* of June 18th is a letter signed a "Country Union Surgeon," referring to a letter signed "A." in *The Times* of June 10th, remarking on the paltry salaries offered for two districts in the Bicester Union, and stating that as a general rule the salary in the country is, for districts averaging six miles, 20*l.* to 25*l.* a-year.

Now, the inclosed statement and correspondence (which you are at liberty to use in any way you may think proper) shows that elsewhere only one-fourth the above paltry sum is given. It is asked by the guardians, and may be asked by the public, "Why did you take it?" The reply is, that I have been twenty years in practice in this district, and have spent more than 1000*l.* in building me a house, &c., to suit my practice, and if I had not taken it another might, which would so have interfered with my private practice as to make it necessary for me to look out for another location, not by any means a pleasant thing under the above circumstances.

I think as government propose to pay one-half of the medical officers' salaries, before doing so they ought to get returns from every medical district in England, giving the population, acreage, and salary of each, and have them placed on a fair and equal footing.

I know of no better way of doing this than appointing a medical commissioner who has been accustomed to country as well as town practice and let him fix the salaries, arrange forms of returns, &c. There are in England and Wales about 700 Unions, which, allowing four medical districts to each, will make the number of medical men connected with the New Poor Law 2,800. Now, you will render an essential service to them, and also to the public, if you will take this subject up in your influential journal.—I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

Wirksworth, June, 1846.

WM. CANTRELL, Surgeon.

BRASSINGTON DISTRICT, ASHBOURNE UNION.

From March 25th, 1845, to March 21st, 1846.

Towns.	Population.	Area of Acres.	No. of Cases.	No. of Visits.	Distance.
Middleton	..	..	24	150	1½ miles.
Canlow	..	..	3	11	1½
Iretton Kirk	714	..	25	92	3
Carsington	235	..	9	47	2
Brassington	776	..	19	100	4
Hoquiston	272	..	3	22	4½
Bradbourne	298	..	2	5	5
Hopton	..	..	1	2	1½
Bonsall and }	1496	..	55	258	4
Ible for nine months }	..	..	..	..	5
Total	4847	15,146	132	687	..

The Union House at Brassington is distant four miles.
Number of paupers admitted from March 25, 1845, to March 21, 1846, 216.
Number of Visits, 158.
Average weekly cases at least twelve.
Deaths during the year, ten.

Ashbourne, March 17th, 1846.

SIR,—I am directed by the Board of Guardians of Ashbourne Poor-law Union, to express to you their entire satisfaction with your attention to your duties as medical officer to the Union, both in the district which falls under your care and in the house at Brassington; and they wish me further to state, that they have never had the least complaint laid against you by any of the paupers.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Mr. Cantrell.

RICHARD HOLLAND, Clerk to the Union.

Ashbourne, April 4th, 1846.

DEAR SIR,—I have to apologise to you for not informing you officially of your appointment to the district of Brassington, at a salary of 30*l.* per annum, and as medical officer to the work-house at 25*l.* per annum.—I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

Mr. Cantrell.

RICHARD HOLLAND.

Wirksworth, April 10th, 1846.

DEAR SIR,—I beg to inform you that I accept the appointment as medical officer to the Brassington district and work-house, but shall take an early opportunity of showing the

great amount of duty required in my district, as also the house at Brassington, when I hope they will re-consider the salary.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

W. CANTRELL.

Mr. Holland,
Clerk to the Guardians.

Wirksworth, April 24th, 1846.

To the Guardians of the Ashbourne Union.

GENTLEMEN,—I beg respectfully to call your attention to the accompanying statement, showing the amount of duty in my district, and feel confidence, that when you have taken it into your consideration, you will re-consider the salary you have fixed for it, as also for the house. You will observe, that I have had, in less than one year, 132 cases, which, at the lowest computation of the Poor-law Commissioners, (see general orders, p. 99, published 1842,—viz., 6*s.* per case,) would give 39*l.* 12*s.* per annum; you will also find that I have only had to attend Bonsall and Ible nine months, which, taking the average cases for that period, would make eighteen cases more, adding 5*l.* 8*s.*, making the lowest salary, according to the commissioners, 45*l.* per annum, and I am quite sure that this sum would be a very moderate remuneration, and less than it ought to be for the many and important duties required. For the medical officer has not only to attend to the diseases of the sick, but also to detect imposition, and on him greatly depends the amount of money, &c., given for the relief of the poor.

I know an opinion prevails amongst the Guardians that the extra cases make up for the lowness of the fixed salary, but you will find I have had only one case during the year, that of Millicent Kinder, of Canlow, who had dislocation of the shoulder.

As to the house, I have had to go over in one year 158 times, making 632 miles, which gives about 7½*d.* per mile, giving all the medicine, examination of paupers, &c. in, the average number of sick has not been less than twelve, and great numbers have come into the house with itch, venereal disease, ulcerated legs, &c., requiring a great many expensive medicines.—I am, Gentlemen, your obedient servant,

WM. CANTRELL.

Ashbourne, April 28, 1846.

DEAR SIR,—I am directed by the Board of Guardians to inform you, that, having received the confirmation of their alteration in the medical and relieving officers' salaries and districts from the Poor-law Commissioners, they cannot enter into any reconsideration of the salaries this year.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Mr. Cantrell.

R. HOLLAND.

Wirksworth, May 22, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—I take the liberty of forwarding you copies of letters that have passed between the guardians and clerk of the Ashbourne Union and myself, and as I observe in a minute of the Commissioners (dated 31st October, 1840) that you have a power of fixing salaries, and have exercised it in certain cases, I hope you will consider mine a case for your interference. At all events, I consider it one to which I ought in justice to myself and profession to call attention.

I may observe that though I am the nearest qualified medical man, I have to take a horse to visit every patient, and that the country is very mountainous, and the people miserably poor.

I should have sent this communication sooner, but for having mislaid some advertisements for medical officers, in which the sum offered was more than double to mine.

I may observe that the salary of the medical officer of the Bakewell Union house is 45*l.* per annum, the trouble and expense of attending which cannot be anything like so great as mine, he living within a few hundred yards, and the Ashbourne Union house being four miles from my place of abode.

—I am, Gentlemen, your obedient servant,

WM. CANTRELL.

To the Poor-law Commissioners of England and Wales.

Poor-law Commission Office.
Somerset House, 29th May, 1846.

SIR,—I am directed by the Poor-law Commissioners to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd instant, in which you call the commissioners' attention to the amount of salary which is allotted to you as a medical officer of the Ashbourne Union, and request their interference with a view to its being increased.

In reply to your letter, I am instructed by the commissioners to state that as a new workhouse is intended to be erected for the Ashbourne Union, and as the present arrange-

ment for medical attendance is therefore of a temporary nature, and has been sanctioned by the commissioners for the present year, they are not at present prepared to disturb it.—I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Secretary.

FATAL HÆMORRHAGE FROM A FREE INCISION OF THE GUMS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On Thursday, May 28th, 1846, I visited an infant six months old, at Cottesmore, a village four miles distant from Oakham. It had been delicate from the first month of its life, but afterwards became stout and healthy, until the day before I saw it. I found it labouring under symptoms of pain in the abdomen, as frequent fits of crying, attended with a bending of the knees upon the abdominal parieties. There had been no sickness nor vomiting; the bowels were not constipated, nor was there diarrhœa; the evacuation of urine was but little diminished in quantity; there were no cerebral symptoms present; no disturbance of the respiration in the intervals free from crying; and no fever. I examined the gums and found those over the upper central incisors a little red and tumid. I lanced these upper gums somewhat freely; they bled, the child took the breast, and every trace of blood soon disappeared. At that time, I distinctly told the mother that the inferior gums did not require to be lanced. I sent it a grain of calomel to be taken night and morning, and a carminative aperient mixture to be taken every three or four hours. I believe I also directed moderate fomentation of the abdomen with hot water and flannel. My prognosis, delivered to the mother, was, "I see no danger in the case, give it the medicine and I believe it will get well, but if it *should* become worse, send and tell us."

On Saturday morning, the 30th, I received a message that the child was considered to be worse. I went over and found no remains of abdominal symptoms, and the reason that the child was considered worse was, that it had become unusually sleepy. I had not administered any sedative, and was uncertain whether this somnolence was the result of the relief of the abdominal pain, or the first manifestation of cerebral symptoms. Time would solve the former supposition, and fearing the latter, I directed that the head should be constantly covered with a cloth wrung out of cold water, and the medicine continued.

On Monday, June 1st, I went over before breakfast, and found the child awake and lively, and had no hesitation in saying that it would soon be well.

Thursday, June 4th, a messenger was sent to say that the parents were uneasy about the child's body, (the abdomen,) which had swelled, and they requested that it should be seen. I was from home, and Mr. Jones promised to go directly; he did not, however, see the child until after eleven at night, although he received the message before ten in the morning. I have been told that he paid little or no attention to the abdomen, but urged the necessity of lancing the lower gums, notwithstanding the mother's objection, and that she urged that I had so plainly told her they did not require it. He lanced them, and they bled profusely; he saw the hæmorrhage, yet he went away, only remarking, "it will do the child good, and I will send it some stronger medicine."

Friday, June 5th.—I went to the child in consequence of receiving a note, which stated, that it had been bleeding all night and was dying. Upon entering the room, I perceived the contents of the stomach, which had just been ejected on to the floor, and in which was a coagulum of not less than two ounces of blood. I was told, that once previous to that, a similar quantity had been thrown up, and that much blood had passed in five or six evacuations from the bowels since the gums had been lanced the night before. The urine had been voided as usual; the abdomen was slightly tympanitic, and an umbilical hernia had protruded a little. This was the condition of the abdomen which had occasioned the uneasiness of the parents. The pulse was perceptible at the wrist, and the extremities were warm as usual, but the entire surface of the body was much blanched. The respiration was so hurried that it was the first thing I observed; there was also a disposition to sleep; it could not be said that the child was faint. Upon examining the gum I found an incision extending about an inch or an inch and a quarter in length on the upper border of the lower jaw. It appeared to have been begun at about the site of the outer edge of the right inferior lateral incisor tooth; to have passed with the curve of the jaw on the alveolus for about a quarter of

an inch, then to have descended on the posterior aspect of the site of the two central incisors, separating the gum from the alveolus and to have been brought over the site of the outer edge of the left lateral incisor, transversely across the alveolus. It was bleeding freely from its entire extent, the blood, issuing out of the incision into the mouth, was swallowed, and it had not the appearance of arterial blood. I endeavoured to suppress the hæmorrhage by the application of styptics, as alum in powder and in solution; the nitrate of silver; the application of cold to the chin, &c., but principally by a firm compression of the gum against the bone, continued with little intermission for two hours, but with no effect. The impatience of restraint, the crying and struggling manifested by infants in general, were in this case much opposed to the success of the means employed. I had at one time, however, nearly succeeded, as it bled only from the two extreme points, but a fit of crying brought back the hæmorrhage with renewed vigour.

Having passed several hours with the child unavailingly, I left it at near midnight and returned home, leaving word at Mr. Jones' house that *he* should go to see it. He was not at home, but went about three in the morning of Saturday. I did not see the child afterwards, but I heard on the Monday that it had died on the Sunday morning.

These, Sir, are the details of this case, related to the utmost of my ability with an undeviating and an *unflinching* adherence to the truth, as free from exaggeration as from extenuation. I solicit an insertion of it in the pages of THE LANCET as early as conveniently possible, and I abstain from comment because I believe it may be undertaken by persons who consider themselves more competent. No one, however, but myself could furnish a report of the case.—I remain, Sir, yours respectfully,

Oakham, Rutland, June, 1846.

WILLIAM ANDERSON.

QUACK MEDICINES AT APOTHECARIES' HALL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Taking it for granted that you have proved your sincerity in your crusade against empirics, by the sacrifice you have made of some thousands of pounds which you might have realized by admitting their advertisements into the columns of THE LANCET, let me perform a duty in *my* way, by directing your attention to Apothecaries' Hall, the presiding geniuses of which place,—as we are told in a late manifesto of the Provisional Committee of the Hanover-square Practitioners,—are about to receive the aid of a "National Institute," to drive the non-qualified men into a net, while the Apothecaries' Company draw the strings—beating the bushes being rather too expensive a labour for the latter gentlemen to continue.

I present to you, and to the public through you, the testimony of Mr. Jacob Bell, to prove what these gentlemen are in company, although individually assuming to be physicians, and something more:—

"H. TAYLOR.—De Vallenger's Solution of Arsenic is prepared at Apothecaries' Hall. The formula is a secret. It is sent out labelled 'Solution Solvent Mineral.' We are not aware whether this is intended for Latin or English; nor have we been able to obtain any information concerning the use of the medicine."

What an age of cant and humbug is this! Armed by the law, they have the power to strike down the half-educated apothecary, brought up, it may be, under the *régime* of their own order, but falling short of success from want of means; and under that same power, they habitually receive the profits of secret formulæ!

I, for one, (and I could name others,) have given formulæ by which I could have realized, and others *have* realized, fortunes. Let the National Institute begin by reforming the Apothecaries' Company.—Your humble servant,

Spring Gardens, June 15th, 1846.

G. F. COLLIER, M.D.

THE ROYAL SOCIETY AND ITS MEDALS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In Dr. Sharpey's letter, (LANCET, May 9th,) the following statement is made:—"The medal was awarded by the Council at a meeting which was held a few days after; though a member, I happened not to be present at that meeting."

Curiosity prompted me, a few days ago, to avail myself of the privilege, which I enjoy as a fellow of the Royal Society,