

Steel, Esq., Berkhamstead, in the chair; amongst other resolutions, it was resolved:

That this meeting perceives with regret that the efforts hitherto made by the medical profession to procure relief from the arbitrary, unjust, and degrading treatment to which it has been subjected by the poor-law authorities, have proved unavailing; it is therefore considered highly expedient to petition both Houses of Parliament forthwith, praying for a committee of inquiry into the subject.

That a committee be appointed to draw up the petition.

That copies thereof be transmitted to the different medical associations.

That application be made to the Council of the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Association*, requesting that they will take such steps as may be deemed proper for bringing to the consideration of medical practitioners in general, the necessity of an immediate appeal to the Legislature on the subject of medico-parochial attendance; and hoping, that at the ensuing meeting at Manchester, the Council will please to make such arrangements as will ensure a full and practical consideration of this important subject.

That the thanks of the Bucks Medical Association be presented to Sir William Lawrence Young, Bart., M.P., and William Rickford, Esq., M.P., for their kindness in accompanying the Deputation to Lord John Russell.

That the thanks of the Meeting are due to the Deputation, for the efficient manner in which they presented the protest.

ROBERT CEELY, Hon. Sec.

*To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.*

The humble petition of the undersigned Medical Practitioners, in and near the county of Buckingham, sheweth,—

That your petitioners perceive with much concern the continuance and extension of the pernicious system of medical relief authorized by the Poor-law Commissioners of England and Wales.

That this system is unjust to the sick paupers, injurious to the community, and unfair towards the medical profession.

That the important objects of medical exertion, viz., the cure and prevention of disease, are impeded, and sometimes wholly frustrated, by the existing regulations.

That the circumstances attending the appointment of medical officers of parochial Unions must inevitably injure and degrade the medical profession in its moral, its social, and its scientific character.

That your petitioners are anxious to avow their conviction of the many evils connected

with the past and present modes of administering this branch of Parochial relief.

That your petitioners venture to assert, that a supply of prompt and efficient medical aid to those who may be deemed proper objects, is not only in accordance with the dictates of humanity, due to the interests of science, and the fair claims of the medical profession; but is absolutely indispensable to a sound economy in parochial expenditure, and to a rational diminution of the causes of pauperism.

That your petitioners feeling assured that a system of medical relief, founded on such a basis, is the only one that can claim and receive the sanction of your Honourable House; and being convinced that the arrangements at present adopted will be found opposed to its benevolent intentions, humbly beseech your Honourable House to be pleased to appoint a committee of inquiry into the present system of medical relief to sick paupers, and into the propriety of making any change in the same, and your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

[A similar petition to the Lords.]

LETTER BY SIR C. E. SMITH, BART.,

ON

MEDICAL CONTRACTS AND CLUBS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR: As the subject of medical clubs is now undergoing your vigorous scrutiny, and as you appear, at least in the estimation of the author of the following letter, to labour under the same misconception of medico-parochial arrangements as some of our medical brethren, you will not, I trust, think me presumptuous or impertinent in transmitting you the enclosed for your edification, and, through you, for the information of the stupid or perverse few who need enlightening. I may just add, that the whole of the Hertford practitioners refused to listen to the proposals, and left the generous Guardians to "ENFORCE" the medical club on the adventurer and the (doubtless) unwilling peasantry,—disdaining to submit to such tyranny, and sagacious enough to foresee the inevitable injuries that would otherwise accrue to them. This is a pretty state of things for the country practitioner; yet it would not be quite so bad if all practitioners would unite, as those of Hertford, and a few other places which you have mentioned; but alas! for the overstocked profession. Such is its lamentable disorganization, its deplorable poverty, its proneness to pecuniary competition, and the wide-spreading imposition and increasing disrespect of the public, that

these examples I fear will not be found very common.

You are at liberty to do as you please with the enclosed; but as I came by this second-hand, I was requested not to mention the source, and, therefore, vouching for the truth of the whole, and leaving it for your critical examination, I am, Sir, yours truly,

ROBERT CEELY.

Aylesbury, July 11, 1836.

"Bedwell-park, March 22nd.

"MY DEAR —: The papers you sent me are sensible and temperate, and calculated to explain to the public many of the evils of the existing practice about medical contracts. But the truth is, both parties to these contracts are, generally speaking, ignorant of the real seat of the evil, and of the remedy to be applied. The Guardians are, generally speaking, endeavouring to reduce the remuneration; the medical men to raise it, without altering the class who are to be the subject of the contract. In fact, however, both parties are in the right. The Guardians feel that a large sum is paid for attending all the poor in a district; the medical men feel that immense labour is thrown upon them, and the amount, though in figures it looks large, is inadequate as a remuneration. Now the mistake is this. In the case of all other relief the *pauper* is distinguished from the *poor man*. The person who cannot earn his livelihood is the *pauper*; the person who can do so may be *poor*, but he is not a pauper. But in medical arrangements, past and present, the two classes are combined. The contract is for the whole population; at least for that large proportion who are not in a situation to incur the expense of a doctor's bill. No wonder the medical men complain of the remuneration, as compared with the labour. Such labour! No wonder that the rate-payers endeavour to diminish a burden which is no less than that of finding medical advice for nearly all the peasantry!

"Now what is wanted is this, and it will diminish and define the class of medical paupers, and will remove many of the difficulties so justly put forward, in the paper which you sent to me, as resulting from the present plan of contracts.

"The desideratum is a plan for medical insurance for the whole class unable to pay a surgeon's bill, at a rate within the means of the independent peasant. He must pay the subscription for himself; the paupers, that is, the persons in the workhouses, and the weekly recipients of pensions, must be paid for by the *public*.

"This is what is called a medical club. Something about three shillings per annum is found to remunerate a medical man. Taking the whole population, he will not have one in twenty seriously ill. But say

one in ten: he gets thirty shillings for every serious illness.

"Assume then that any sum under 4s. 4d. per annum is sufficient remuneration to the doctor for insurance (this is under 1d. a week), what is to prevent the labourer who pays 1s., 1s. 6d., or 2s. a week for rent, from paying his 1d., 2d., or 3d. for medical insurance for himself and his family? Why should one be thrown on the public more than the other?

"This is what we wanted to do. We proposed to form a medical club in the Hertford Union. The doctors were to have no trouble of collection; the money was to be collected for them, and their remuneration in a given district would have been increased to twice—three times—four times of what it was. But no! they had a notion it was *infra dig.*,—derogatory to the profession! They who all their lives have been contracting for parishes in the lump, thought a contract per head *infra dig.*: they rejected the plan. We intended to enter our paupers on the club, paying their subscriptions; but the club being at an end, it behoved us to provide for our paupers some other way. The club would have made a separate rate for adults and children: we determined to average all ages at one price, and we advertised for attendance on our (more or less) 600 paupers at 2s. 6d. per head per annum, with power to add to the list. "No," said the surgeons, "your paupers are so dispersed about the country, the price will not pay us." "But," we reply, "we offered you a medical club, into which the whole population must ultimately enter, and we must not pay more per head, because you refused to make an arrangement including peasantry and paupers." However, they refused to take our contract; and we, in courtesy, and willing to give them every chance, ask their plan. They offer to take the *actually sick* at from 25s. to 30s. per case. (The latter in a remote parish.)

"Remark there is no provision made for any person of the humbler class providing for themselves. The whole population, therefore, remains as heretofore, dependent on the public.

"The whole expenditure of Little Berkhamstead (my parish) may have been 90*l.* a year. The population is 450. Say that 50 of the class, unable to incur a bill, are more or less ill in the year. On the one hand, if we draw the line between lesser and greater illnesses, what misery may ensue from the ignorance of our relieving officer, who gives the order on the surgeon; and if, on the other hand, all are relieved, there is 75*l.* for medical attendance, in a parish where the *whole* expense has been hitherto 190*l.* and the parish doctor received 12*l.*!

"We, therefore, have determined, *coute qu'il coute*, to engage one medical man to give

his whole time to our paupers for three months, and to ENFORCE the establishment of a medical club within that time, on the basis of amply paying the Surgeons, and enabling the poor to become independent of the public.

"I have now answered your questions about medical clubs. As the termination of the parochial contracts on Friday next is exciting a good deal of discussion on the subject, I wish you would endeavour to set your medical friends right about it, by showing them that guardians, surgeons, and 99 persons out of every hundred, have been hitherto very much in the dark; and that the contracting parties are in the same predicament of being both in the right.

"I wish you could get something said about it in the professional periodicals, the places of publication of which I am myself unacquainted with. You may send this letter if you please. I am, yours faithfully,  
"CULLING EARDLY SMITH."

\*\* On the letter of Sir C. E. Smith we shall make a few remarks next week.

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NOTE FROM MR. MACINTYRE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR: I have to request that you will afford me a small space to correct an error which occurs, I doubt not inadvertently, in Mr. Bree's letter to THE LANCET of the 27th ultimo. I am there stated to have disclaimed any participation in the wholesale condemnation of medical practitioners contained in the Report on the medical management of the poor. The only thing (save an undue share of credit) which I felt myself called upon to disclaim, was the personal application attributed by Mr. Bree to the report; and this disclaimer I made, not merely on my own part, but also on that of my coadjutors. I did not consider that the report contained a "wholesale condemnation of medical practitioners," and I was not, consequently, required to disclaim an act which I should not, assuredly, have on any account participated in. I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient and obliged servant,

P. MACINTYRE.

Bury St. Edmunds, July 11, 1836.

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THE PER-CENTAGE SYSTEM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR: I forward the following copy of an Advertisement which has appeared in more than one of the Brighton Papers during the last Month, for insertion in your in-

valuable journal, in which you have so long advocated the rights of our profession, and deservedly exposed those individuals among its Members who have, by their conduct, in any way degraded it.

"J. COLLEY, Chemist to their Majesties and Royal Family, No. 17, Castle-square, Brighton, begs to acquaint the inhabitants of Brighton and the public in general, that in consequence of the numerous applications for gratuitous medical advice and assistance, he has entered into an engagement with a medical firm of established reputation, residing on the Old Steine.

"The Medicines Supplied at Chemists' Prices.

"Days of Attendance, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from 9 to 11 o'Clock in the Morning, and from 6 to 8 o'Clock in the Evening. Vaccination every Thursday Morning."

That this Advertisement is degrading to an honourable profession, unfair to the honest practitioner, and disgraceful to the parties concerned, I am quite sure you will agree with me in thinking. I enclose my name and address. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

MEDICUS.

July 5, 1836.

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CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Kemplay should favour us with a fuller account of his discovery, and the mode by which he arrived at and produced it.

To our Dublin correspondents we may observe this week, that the subject of their letters will receive every attention on our part.

Several medical students express in letters to the Editor, a desire to know whether, as is reported, the Examiners at Apothecaries' Hall have the intention of extending the examination in Celsus and Gregory to the whole of each work, instead of confining it to the first and third books of the former, and the first ten chapters of the latter.

The Letters addressed to the College of Physicians by Drs. Farre, Hodgkin, and Sir Alexander Crichton, declining to accept the Fellowship, cannot be inserted in the present Number.

Mr. Ridout's evidence next week.

Medicus in our next.

The letter of Mr. Septimus Godson, suggesting the presentation of some mark of esteem to Dr. Quain from his pupils, on his retirement from the chair of anatomy in the University of London, reached us too late for insertion this week.

The late indecent proceeding of the President of the College of Physicians at the Vaccine Institution, cannot find even a brief record in our pages to-day.

The reply of Baron Heurteloup to Sir Charles Bell shall appear in the next LANCET.