

Suggestions for the relief of the sick poor, and the improvement of the medical profession, in Great Britain / by John Dunn.

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SICK POOR.

BY

J DUNN.

1817.

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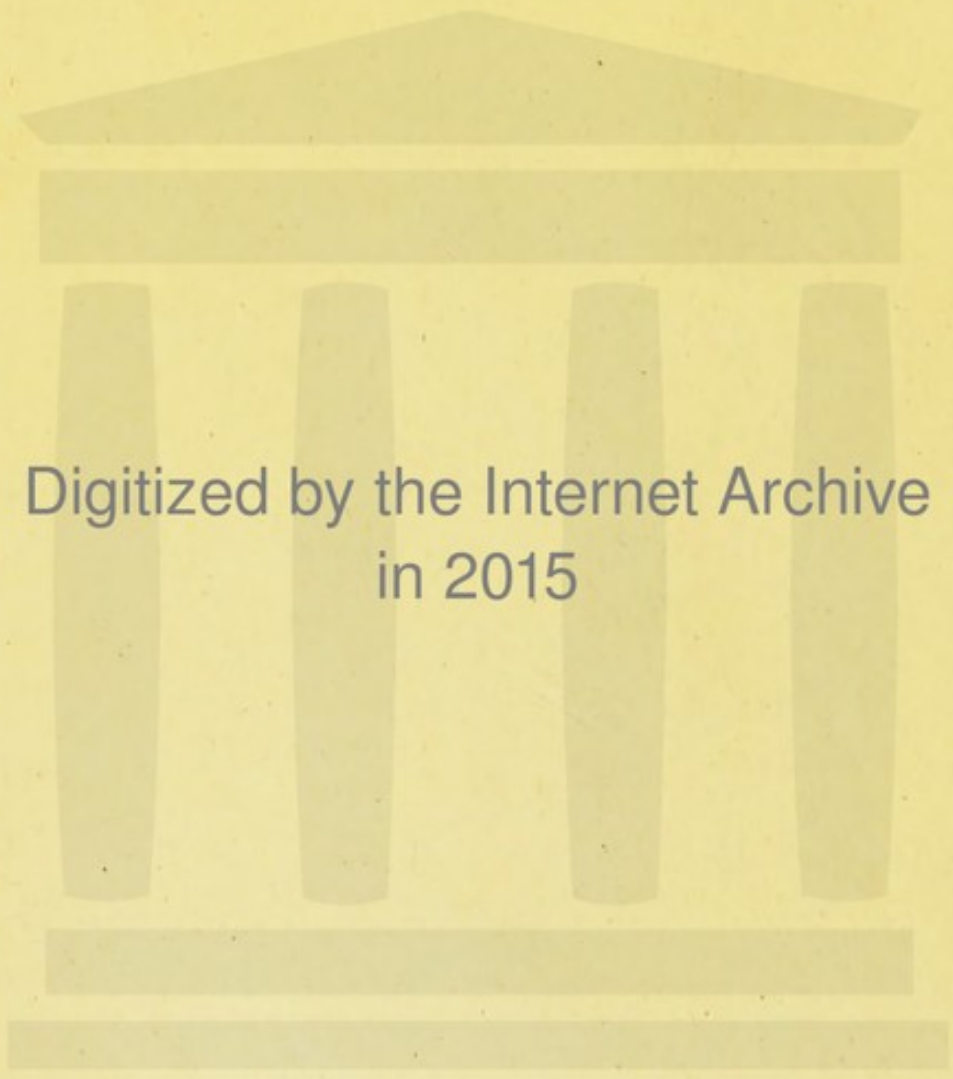
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SUGGESTIONS

FOR THE RELIEF OF THE

SICK POOR,

AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE

MEDICAL PROFESSION,

IN

Great Britain.

BY JOHN DUNN, M. R. C. S.

SURGEON, PICKERING, YORKSHIRE.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;

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SUGGESTIONS, &c.

AT a general meeting of the members of the Worcestershire Medical and Surgical Society, it was resolved :—

“That the present system of removing paupers, on account of application from the overseers of the parish in which they happen to reside, to that parish to which they belong, often deprives the poor family of the means of gaining a living, and frequently induces them not to apply for a suspended order ; while if a medical man is called in, under such circumstances, to attend them, he has no legal means of obtaining any remuneration for his attendance.”

“Resolved, That petitions be presented to both Houses of Parliament, praying that some regulation may be introduced in the bill now pending relative to the poor laws, for medical attendance upon the casual poor.”

Perhaps nothing could be better either in time or place than these resolutions ; and as every inquiry will probably be made during the present recess of parliament, touching the most efficient means of relieving the poor, a few observations on this truly interesting subject, may not be deemed impertinent. But little which I can say, can add to the general impression of the necessity of public regulation, with regard to medical attendance on the casual poor ; the evil is at

present a crying one, most severely felt by every member of our profession. And there are some circumstances so strongly in my recollection, that I cannot resist the desire of inviting both the philanthropist and the practitioner to come boldly and cheerfully forward. We have already obtained a great deal; and perseverance in the common cause must rouse the attention of the legislature, if it should triumph no further. A friend of mine has most accurately remarked that a country apothecary's shop is a public dispensary unendowed. But this is not all:—if the apothecary be a man of humanity, he is also a public slave, obedient to the will of every body; and after devoting the best part of his time and scanty means, he has frequently the misfortune to see all lost, from the want of a little assistance in food, or raiment. Should he be a little more fortunate, and attend a family that can afford the common wants of nature, the delivery of his bill is too often the death blow to his fame, his consequence, and his character. The charge he exacts makes very little difference; and it is of no signification that, by waiting with a poor woman in labour, he foregoes the opportunity of attending another in better circumstances, where he might earn the means of his existence. Without thinking of remuneration for his services and sacrifices, he is loaded with promises of reward, which he knows will never be performed; and if he should chance to withhold his attendance from the imperious calls of his interest in another quarter, he is loaded with opprobrium, and very probably the reputed cruelty of his character, becomes a formidable bar to his future prospects of happiness and independence. The occasional calls of humanity must be dear to every man; but, to be cherished, its offices must be performed spontaneously.

To obey every voice as a matter of compulsion, (which is now too much the case,) is very different from the kind and voluntary exertions of sympathy. Besides, it is not in the power of every member of our art, however benevolent his feelings, to gratify this noble principle in all cases that present. In large towns, the generosity of the great has provided public hospitals and dispensaries, for the restoration of sick persons; but in the country nothing remains for a family, not belonging to the parish, but to sacrifice all their former occupation, if the apothecary will not attend them gratuitously, nor endeavour to get them supported by subscription during the period of their affliction. This very family may have hitherto lived independent of relief, but their application for assistance now becomes of very little use. If they ask in the town, the inhabitants say they have their own poor to consider; if they write to their parish, an order is transmitted for them to sell off their little flock, and to return the future victims of a workhouse. All their domestic comforts are sacrificed. That delightful independence and heart cheering sentiment which an Englishman attaches to the name of home, is now exchanged for the tyranny of a keeper, and the society of all the accumulated vice, poverty, and indolence of the neighbourhood. It is not only in the village where a practitioner resides, that he finds these inconveniences, but in the whole circuit of his practice. At a distance, peradventure, of ten miles, he may have a patient, who has a family of helpless children, labouring under an acute disease, and requiring his attendance at least twice a day; otherwise the death of the poor sufferer and a house full of orphans is the dreadful alternative. All this must be done without reward,

be borne with patience, and not even the expense of the horse remitted.

I should by no means wish to reflect on the general character of medical men, for I know they are much more humane than parish officers; but how many people are lost from a want of sufficient remuneration to induce them to exert the means of restoration! Neither is it so much a stigma upon the medical character, as upon the country. No other body of people are expected to work for nothing; the labourer himself will charge the apothecary for his hire, when his own bill has long been unredeemed.

A great, almost the entire portion of the comforts of the poor, depends upon the parish officer. The unfeeling barbarity of men employed in this most difficult office, amounts almost to a proverb. In some parishes, a person is put into office, (which he holds under the proper authorities,) whose only pretensions to it are a callous indifference to the feelings of others, a sly cunning, and a total disregard of his own reputation. For a cat's paw of this vile character, a salary is often affixed which he enjoys with his office perpetuo. I admit that the public money should be distributed with frugality, but it is almost too trite a maxim to observe that very little, properly and seasonably bestowed, will often supersede a considerable expenditure, which too narrow a system of economy might have engendered. I also know that many persons of private worth, esteem it a duty to get through their public transactions as overseers, even with some measure of fraud, chicanery, and meanness, if by their parsimony they can serve their opulent neighbours, or in their language, husband the public treasure. I recollect one when I requested a few shillings,

which he refused, for restoring a poor married woman who had a large family ; and represented to him that, but for timely assistance in medicines and other necessaries, she would have been lost, and her children become a burthen to their parish ; he replied, “ If she had died, so much the better, as she could then have bred no more.” Another sent me a *verbal order* to attend a poor woman ; as soon as she was cured, he withheld the payment, as I had no *written testimonial*, and only the evidence of her husband, which he falsified. The poor man durst not utter a syllable, for fear the overseer would punish him hereafter. My bill, which for a month’s close attendance and a quantity of medicines, amounted to something more than a pound, was afterwards given out as exceeding three. Thus without either money or thanks, I had to put up with a still greater inconvenience. In another parish, I was desired to visit a poor man ; the overseer remarked, “ I need not fear being paid.” I had no witness ; and when the man recovered, this same officer told me, that he made him a weekly allowance during his illness ; and that the poor fellow had promised to pay me himself, which of course was never performed. Another surgeon was sent for to the next case, who will probably be served in a similar manner, as it happened with myself in an instance before, where I had followed him*. Now I would candidly ask whether such things are to be endured ? whether they are not calculated to break all feelings of charity

* I could enumerate many other circumstances of a similar character, but am desirous of adducing the testimony of Dr. Burrows, whose eminent talents and conspicuous situation, combined with a natural energy of character, have well qualified him for the part he has taken towards the improvement of the profession.

afunder, and almost make a man determine never to visit a poor person again, without a written order from his parish? But very often no answer is returned, and when it is, the distance may be so great from his parish, and the determination made up so tardily, that the patient may be lost before a plan has been formed, or consent given.

The world will laugh at our losses, and recapitulate the immensity of our profits. A most mistaken opinion! They forget that the manufacturing and labour-

“As this judicious provision for the medical care of insane paupers brings to my remembrance in vivid colours, the proofs I have had of the dreadful want of medical care which *sane* paupers in many parts of this kingdom experience; and as it is possible these observations may be perused by some of those members of Parliament, who have most interested themselves in providing for the comfort of the poor, I cannot pass this opportunity, although the matter be not strictly relevant, of detailing some few but strong facts. Perhaps further inquiry may ensue; and an evil be stopt that I have for years cherished the hope of seeing corrected.”

“Not long since I had the honour of presiding over a very numerous medical association, for the purpose of applying to Parliament for legislative regulations to prevent the introduction of ignorant and improper persons into the medical profession. In that capacity I had the conducting of a correspondence, which extended into almost every county in England and Wales; and consequently I became the channel through which the statements and sentiments of large and most respectable provincial associations were transmitted.”

“In relating various abuses which affected their interests, there was one in which all the country practitioners were nearly uniform; and that was, the gross medical neglect of the parochial poor.”

“In most parishes the medical attendance is *farmed*, as it is termed: that is, a contract is made by the parish officers for attendance on paupers, at a certain sum per year. This contract is entered upon at Easter; previously to which, notice is given to all the *Doctors* in the vicinity to send in their proposals: accordingly

ing poor are not the only persons by whom we suffer. The cases are too numerous amongst many of the middling class of trades-people, for whom we are eternally at work, without their entertaining the least thought of remuneration. A medical man is the last who would involve a family, and proceed to law for the recovery of his debts ! How then is he to live ? It is of little consequence to enact a set of laws for the improvement of the professional character, unless it be protected and supported in some way or other.

all the regulars who think it worth their notice, and irregulars, consisting of farriers, bone-setters, mountebanks, and all the would-be tribe, make their tenders ; and he who is so fortunate as to offer the *lowest* terms, is appointed the parish Doctor for the ensuing year."

"In parishes where any person of education and character resides, who condescends to enter into parish affairs, this abominable practice does not often obtain."

"Five pounds per annum, for medical attendance and medicines, is a liberal salary, where the casual poor have averaged from sixty to a hundred ; and even in parishes inhabited by persons of property, and who would blush to be called inhuman, I have known forty shillings only allowed ; and of contracts for medicine and attendance at two shillings a head per annum. This is no exaggeration. I have abundant and irrefragable evidences in my possession to support these allegations. Nay to so infamous an extent has this practice gone, that in a parish not ten miles distant from the metropolis, when the day arrived for electing the *Doctor*, one was chosen in preference to the rest, because it was remarked that during the year he attended, there was always the greatest number of deaths ! The gentleman who stated this, offered to verify it upon oath." *Cursory remarks on a Bill for regulating Mad Houses, by G. M. Burrows. M. D. p. 76, 77.*

If an accident should happen to a poor person on the road, the first traveller passing by runs for the Doctor, he attends, afterwards sends his bill ; the payment is refused, because the overseer, who might live at some distance, did not give the order himself.

A method appears to me which might be adopted for the poorer class,—the division of the kingdom into districts, and the appointment of respectable professional men, with a fixed salary, to furnish medicines, and attend every case certified by the overseer of the parish in which the sick person resides. The allowance of 100£. per annum for a division of about 500 paupers, I think would be deemed an adequate remuneration.

The population of England, according to the enumeration of 1801, may be seen in the following Table.

	Houfes.			Perfons.		
	<i>Inhabited.</i>	<i>By how many families occupied.</i>	<i>Uninhabited.</i>	<i>Males.</i>	<i>Females.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
England	1, 472, 870	1, 787, 520	53, 965	3, 987, 935	4, 343, 499	8, 331, 434
Wales	108, 053	118, 303	3, 511	257, 178	284, 368	541, 546
Scotland	294, 553	364, 079	9, 537	734, 581	864, 487	1, 599, 068
Army, including Militia. }	.....	.....	.....	198, 351	.....	198, 351
Navy, including Marines. }	.....	.....	.....	126, 279	.....	126, 279
Seamen in Registered Shipping. }	.....	.....	.....	144, 558	.....	144, 558
Convicts on board the Hulks. }	.....	.....	.....	1, 410	.....	1, 410
	1, 875, 476	2, 269, 902	67, 013	5, 450, 292	5, 492, 354	10, 942, 646

The number of poor relieved in and out of work-houses amounted to 1, 039, 716, which deducted from the resident population 8, 872, 980, will make a proportion of about 12 in a hundred. Taking it for an eighth, now that the distresses of the country are increased, a population will remain of above 7 millions capable of paying the necessary expences.

A million paupers at the rate of 500 for each apothecary, would require 2000 medical persons to attend them; who being allowed a salary of £100 each, per annum, would cost the country £200, 000 which with a population of 7 millions, would just amount to sixpence farthing each, exclusive of those who are receiving parish relief.

According to the calculations of Davenant and Brakenridge, the number of persons in a house in England and Wales, amounted to six, of Mr. King only four and a half; Dr. Price thought five too many; but the fact now appears to be five and three fifths. Say for convenience six, which multiplied by sixpence farthing, will make three shillings and three-halfpence to each family, per ann. a sum if collected monthly or quarterly from the wages of the labouring class, would never be felt; and from trades-people and the higher orders, would almost amount to nothing.

A capitation tax is generally esteemed improper, as it falls more severely upon the poor, but a tax intended solely for their own interest and of such trifling amount, could not be considered in any other view than as fair a price for benefits received. The difficulty and trouble attending this mode of taxation, is a more forcible objection, and if it should be deemed inconvenient, a species of income tax might be raised, which would operate in the mildest manner.

From the returns of 1804, the income tax of the nation at one shilling in the pound, produced £4, 650, 000: a penny in the pound would therefore raise £387, 500, a sum more than adequate to the end proposed.

A tax on property might be desired in preference to one on income, as the present rates fall principally upon it. The rent of land and houses in the kingdom has been estimated at £37, 500, 000, the income of stock-holders £20, 500, 000, of mortgages and monies lent £3, 000, 000, making a total of sixty-one millions, of what may be denominated the real property of the kingdom. Now without interfering in the public works, in trade, the profits of agriculture, mines, judges salaries, the income of the clergy and other professions, it would require only threepence farthing in the pound to raise the amount demanded of £200,000. Mr. Pitt's estimate of 1795, was 750 millions landed, and 600 millions personal property, making a total of £1350 millions; an estimate much above the former, which I have taken from a work of respectable authority.

From these accounts it will appear, that a tax might be levied either from property, income, or individuals; most facile in acquisition, so gentle as hardly to be perceptible in operation, and complete in effect. A confidence of assistance, without having recourse to the parish, would be encouraged amongst the poor; and the fair and honest rewards of his labour, would add promptitude and cheerfulness to the exertions of the practitioner.* (*Vide Appendix.*)

To prevent unnecessary trouble to the apothecary, a certificate from the overseer or principal inhabitant

of the parish, might be his warrant; and to fulfil his curative intentions, it should be required in return, that such necessaries as may be consistent with economy should be furnished at his command, at the expense of the parish to which the sick person belongs. This would produce a mutual check upon all parties. The parish officer would be careful in giving too much trouble; the surgeon would be obliged to fulfil his duty when called upon, and the pauper would not make unnecessary complaint, without the hazard of detection from both. One great advantage would result to the profession and to humanity; men of merit alone should be put into office, and not those who would work at the lowest price, as is now the disgraceful practice. An examination of the candidates should be insisted upon, (as shall be pointed out hereafter,) and he who has passed the most honourably through the ordeal, should reap the reward. *Palmam qui meruit, ferat.* A fresh impulse would thus be given to industry, merit would push its way, the opportunities of professional observation would be enlarged and improved upon, from qualified persons alone being favoured with the means; humanity would respire, and science extend her protecting wings. The parish officer would no longer be afraid of the apothecary's bill, when he is labouring to restore one of his poor tenantry from the bed of affliction. The poor, from the consciousness of independence, might improve in morality and attachment to the laws of their country; and a mutual confidence would be diffused through every member of the state.

The department of midwifery should by no means be forgotten, in the general consideration for the relief of the poor. There is scarce an art more

simple in its principles, or more open to abuse, ignorance, presumption, and violence. Pretension, insinuation, and effeminacy, will for the most part take the priority of sober judgment, scientific acquirement, and manly deportment. The arts of an old midwife will prevail in this branch of the profession, even in families where men of merit are expressly selected to perform the other duties. When the people can pay for their folly, they suffer only by their own choice; but with the poor, any pretender who will attend at a cheap rate, is most generally preferred, and employed by the overseer. The woman must submit to a person of any character, of any acquirements. Surely there is something very barbarous and repulsive in such a practice! a little delicacy is due to every situation: and with what facility might a plan be adopted to serve them in these awful moments!

It would not be possible for the medical practitioner, to deliver every pauper within the district I have named, without material injury to his ordinary avocations. But respectable women might be provided, who were proved to have sufficient abilities for the common routine of duty, and whose moral character had been certified by a magistrate or clergyman.

The surgeon of the district might be compelled to assist her on every difficult occasion without reward, which, together with the knowledge she might acquire by a simple, proper, and efficient course of study, would answer the end most satisfactorily.

The emoluments she should receive might be raised by the same means as those of the surgeon. Five shillings for each accouchement, would be generally esteemed in the country a sufficient remuneration. A woman of this kind has no necessity for keeping up

the establishment and consequence of a medical gentleman. She is for the most part at her duty, and has very little business at home.

The number of families in England has been computed at 2, 269, 902:—deduct from this the proportion of paupers which has been said to be as twelve to one hundred, or rather as we called them an eighth, it will make 283, 737 poor families, receiving relief. Allowing five and three fourths, or for easier calculation fix in each family, one only of whom can be the living mother; and as it is unusual for her to have a child every year during her natural life, or even for the common period of pregnancy, we will suppose parturition to take place every second year, which will make a proportion of one twelfth only, or one in two families bearing children annually. By dividing the number of poor families 283, 737 by 12, we shall have 23, 644 obstetric cases in a year, which at five shillings each, would cost the country £5, 911.

As the surgeon would have the principal responsibility with the midwife, having to direct her in the execution of her duty, and to give assistance in all difficulties, the right of election should rest with him; otherwise he might be liable to the inconveniences of contumacy and opposition. To insure however a proper choice of women, a testimony of character should be given from a clergyman; the commission ratified by the authority of a magistrate; and the office held during good behaviour only.

On the whole, the obstetric branch of the profession would be the most difficult to be submitted to general laws. For upon this point, however improper the choice, most women like to be indulged in their own opinion; and the poor too often are not the least obsti-

nate and fanciful. It is not however a matter of such extreme importance, as that of the surgeon and apothecary. The fee is regular in midwifery; every officer knows what he is to pay, and fears no extortion. Before the event of accouchement, there is a long warning, and the patient has generally made in good time, some arrangements with the parish, should her means be unequal to her necessities. Nature also so generally accomplishes her own purposes, although she is often counteracted by ignorance and precipitation, that custom and prejudice will probably still maintain their ascendancy.

I have endeavoured to represent the magnitude of the existing evil, and, to the best of my humble judgment, have pointed out a plan of redress which appears to me simple, easy of accomplishment, and much calculated for its end. One subject still remains for consideration, on which the success of the whole depends, the most eligible method of appointing an apothecary. To leave a means for the all-powerful hand of wealth and rank to extend its authority, would immediately counteract one of the most prominent advantages which is likely to result from the measure I have ventured to propose. Where interest can give effect to the appointment, talents will still remain in the back ground, and all the benefits which may accrue to society, from the improvement of an important and difficult profession, will be forfeited. No sincere lover of science and friend to mankind, would ever desire to see such an intrusion.

Perhaps the simplest and most appropriate measure would be, to appoint a board of examiners in the different counties, consisting of the principal professional characters within the district. An examination

in the London college of surgeons, or the association of apothecaries, would unquestionably suffice ; but I should be inclined to suspect, that those respectable bodies would not have sufficient time for so difficult a purpose ; as the relative merits of contending candidates could not be ascertained by a single examination. From the board above mentioned, four members alone might be chosen for examiners or arbitrators, the night previous to the scrutiny. The order of rotation would be improper, as it would leave the possibility of the umpires being known, and interest might be made with them to serve their friends. However we may despise in sentiment the abuse of privilege, favour will sometimes naturally incline towards those who are known and esteemed.

The proper qualifications of a candidate being expressed, the system which is observed in our universities with candidates for honours, of noting quantities of plus and minus for every instance of superior merit and inferiority, would be well adapted for fair and impartial election. The memory would be too treacherous to confide in under such circumstances, and the balance of numbers is so easy a method of deciding the contest, that all feelings of attachment, and even doubt would be counteracted. As it is impossible for a medical man after a long practice, to stand the same chance on minute anatomical or botanical knowledge, as a student fresh from the schools ; his merit as a respectable practitioner, should be taken into the scale, and his labours and discoveries in his profession should be rated alone, as a certain number of quantities in his favour. This will give his practical merit a fair equipoise. When a candidate feels confident that he is superseded by another of inferior abilities, he ought to be allowed

to challenge him to a clofer examination, as is done at the univerfities. But he should not be apprised of his numbers, of plus or minus, till the conteft is terminated.

A reward for examination ought to be left to the government; a trifling remuneration for the lofs of time, together with travelling expences, would probably be deemed fufficient, as the honour would not be inconfiderable. But a liberal allowance would never be felt by the country, for after the firft occafion, it would feldom occur.

I was once of opinion, that a confiderable faving might be obtained, by employing as diftrict apothecaries, army and navy furgeons on half pay, allowing them an addition equal to the fum above fpecified; or of 30 or £40 per annum, if their half pay amounted to £80 or upwards:—but there would be fomething unfair in the meafure to other men as well as to themfelves, and it would entirely prevent thofe improvements in medicine, which may be anticipated from the former plan.

As the crime of fuicide has become very frequent, and the ancient punifhment eluded by the mild difpofition of a jury, I think fome check might be put upon the practice, by a law empowering the medical practitioner to infpect the head, thorax, and abdomen of every cafe. This punifhment would be much lefs dreadful to the feelings of the friends of the deceased, than that at prefent directed by the law; it would be a means of improvement to the country practitioner, and might infpire fome horror in the unhappy character who contemplated fo atrocious an act as felf murder.

Proper authorities for discharging incompetent and negligent persons from office, would not be difficult to arrange. A trial of eligibility at the sessions by jury, or a court of inquiry of twelve gentlemen, three of whom are to be clergymen and three magistrates, would unquestionably be the fairest method. For as the duties are indefinite, and the prejudices of party spirit might run high, if left to the magistracy alone, the proceedings might be too arbitrary. The apothecary might save his character or his blushes, if he was not likely to make out his case, by resigning. The magistrate ought to be allowed the power of reproof, on well authenticated complaints ; and to prevent litigation, no trial ought to take place previous to the permission of a bench of magistrates. Without this precaution, a man's character would be at the mercy of the populace. But although, like the clergy he is in a certain measure independent, he ought with them to be responsible to higher powers, in cases of gross and criminal neglect.

To some persons the salary of £100 per annum, may appear inadequate to the extent of duty and responsibility imposed on the practitioner. To others, the attendance of five hundred persons scattered in different directions, would seem too arduous a task for accomplishment. With regard to the first difficulty, a man living in the lap of luxury, and enjoying already an extensive business, the sum of £100 would be disproportionate to his desires ; but this is not the man who ought to be appointed. I believe there are many well educated men, at the present period, who would exert their utmost powers of mind to attain an office so beneficial to their interests. To a person of economy, it would serve almost as a subsistence, independent of his ordinary practice ; and I need not ask

how much this practice is likely to be increased, by the great introduction his public functions would afford him. How warm is the contest for a public hospital or dispensary, where there are no pecuniary rewards! and the labours of dispensary duties are by no means contemptible.

Whether it be possible for one medical gentleman to perform his necessary duties towards five hundred of his fellow-creatures, is a question which may be resolved in the following manner. Out of the five hundred persons before mentioned, I should conceive that in ordinary periods, he might not expect above thirty or forty who required his assistance, and a part of this number might be able to visit him at his own house at a regular hour in the day. I name so small a proportion of sick, because I know that in England, a regiment of such a strength has seldom any more, unless they have been in very bad quarters. I have known so few as ten, and half of those were venereal cases, which we do not find so frequent in private practice.

In a district comprising a great extent of country, and only a small population, the distance ought to compensate for numbers, by which means labour would be more equally diffused. In such a case, it must also be recollected, that the common calls of the apothecary will be generally in the neighbourhood of some of these poor people, so that his journey will not always be expressly for them; and when it is, it may be the means of introduction to other patients.

By some persons, the poor may be thought to be more in want of food than medicines; and that many of their diseases might be prevented by removing the

causes, which are believed to consist in poverty. This is another subject of consideration; but it must be recollected, that persons in all conditions are liable to a number of casualties, which have no connection with their manner of living, and requiring the most prompt and efficient aid. I am moreover of opinion I shall be supported in the assertion by many of my medical brethren, when I affirm, that hard fare has occasioned less sickness than a luxurious and generous table. Cleanliness is however a circumstance of very great magnitude; and I believe that such a free use of soda might be introduced, by a removal of the duty upon salt, (so ably proved by Mr. Parkes in the last session of parliament,) as would greatly contribute to this valuable adjunct of health, among the lower orders. The increasing employment of gas lights will also diminish the price of oil; and by making it subservient to the purpose of the soap-boiler, may render the use of his product more general and accessible.

Those medical gentlemen who would desire to leave the poor to the generosity of the profession alone, are very short sighted in the affairs of men; and however pure may be their own motives of charity, such would ultimately tend to the increase of distress. A man might be very ready to prescribe, or even gratuitously to provide medicines for the poor; but he may have some sinister views, or may be a very indifferent practitioner. Many of his brethren who might be the most disposed to assist their fellow creatures, may also be unpossessed of the pecuniary means. Besides, those who are really charitable, need not regret their sphere of exertion being circumscribed by prudent regulations. If they zealously seek a channel for their humanity, they need not fear one being already closed; the nourishing and clothing of the poor

will always have an inviting call on their generous feelings.

Indeed the more I reflect on the plan proposed, the more easy does it appear of execution; and although I should never presume that the feeble developement I have offered would not meet with objection, yet I trust that by whomsoever the subject may be discussed, a liberality of sentiment will prevail. Let there be an unanimous determination to wave all personal considerations, and to forbear no effort that may remove an evil, at present so humiliating to the majesty and generosity of a great nation, and that may ultimately tend to the promotion of medical science in every part of the British dominions.

The French have pre-eminently the advantage over us in their public institutions for the sick; by means of which, they are promptly attended to, and a cheap and most excellent school established, for the accommodation of the medical student. Indeed it is almost a matter of astonishment, that our own country can boast of so many great rivals, under its present disadvantages. But if it be remembered, that these celebrated characters are almost all the superintendents of our public charities, and in consequence confined to large towns and cities; we shall readily be able to perceive how much more may yet be attained, when the same opportunities are given to the country practitioner.

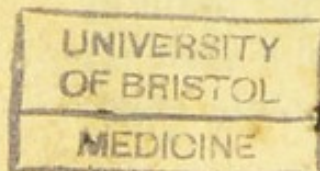


APPENDIX.

A tax upon real property appears to be liable to the least objection. It might be collected by the overseer in the same manner as the poor rates, by which means, considerable trouble might be avoided, and the possibility of abuse prevented. I am aware that many well informed men think it highly expedient, that the poor should be made to provide for themselves, in which case they would become less refractory and better disposed to exertion.

The present method of supporting the indolent, the intemperate, the extravagant, the disobedient, and every variety of character, whether in health or sickness, at the sole expence of the affluent, is extremely pernicious. No man can ever repine at lending assistance to a poor sufferer, in those hours of confinement and affliction, when he cannot maintain himself; but who by timely interposition, might again be restored to the service of his family. As a compensation for these benefits, either in reserve or already received, every pauper should be subject to an annual stipulated labour. A sense of independence would thus be given to the poor, whose minds would be impressed with a consciousness of meriting the assistance held out. The receipts which the parish officers might obtain for their combined labour, together with the particular rates before mentioned, should be added to the general stock; and the sum total of both transmitted to a special committee of magistrates, appointed for each county, by whom the financial concerns should be regulated.

FINIS.



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