

Speech delivered at the annual meeting of the Birmingham and Midland Branch of the British Medical Association, held on June 14th 1867, on the present rate of remuneration of the medical officers to sick assurance societies / T. P. Heslop, M.D.

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SPEECH

DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND BRANCH OF THE
BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION,

HELD ON JUNE 14th, 1867,

ON THE PRESENT RATE OF REMUNERATION
OF THE MEDICAL OFFICERS TO
SICK ASSURANCE SOCIETIES.

BY T. P. HESLOP, M.D.

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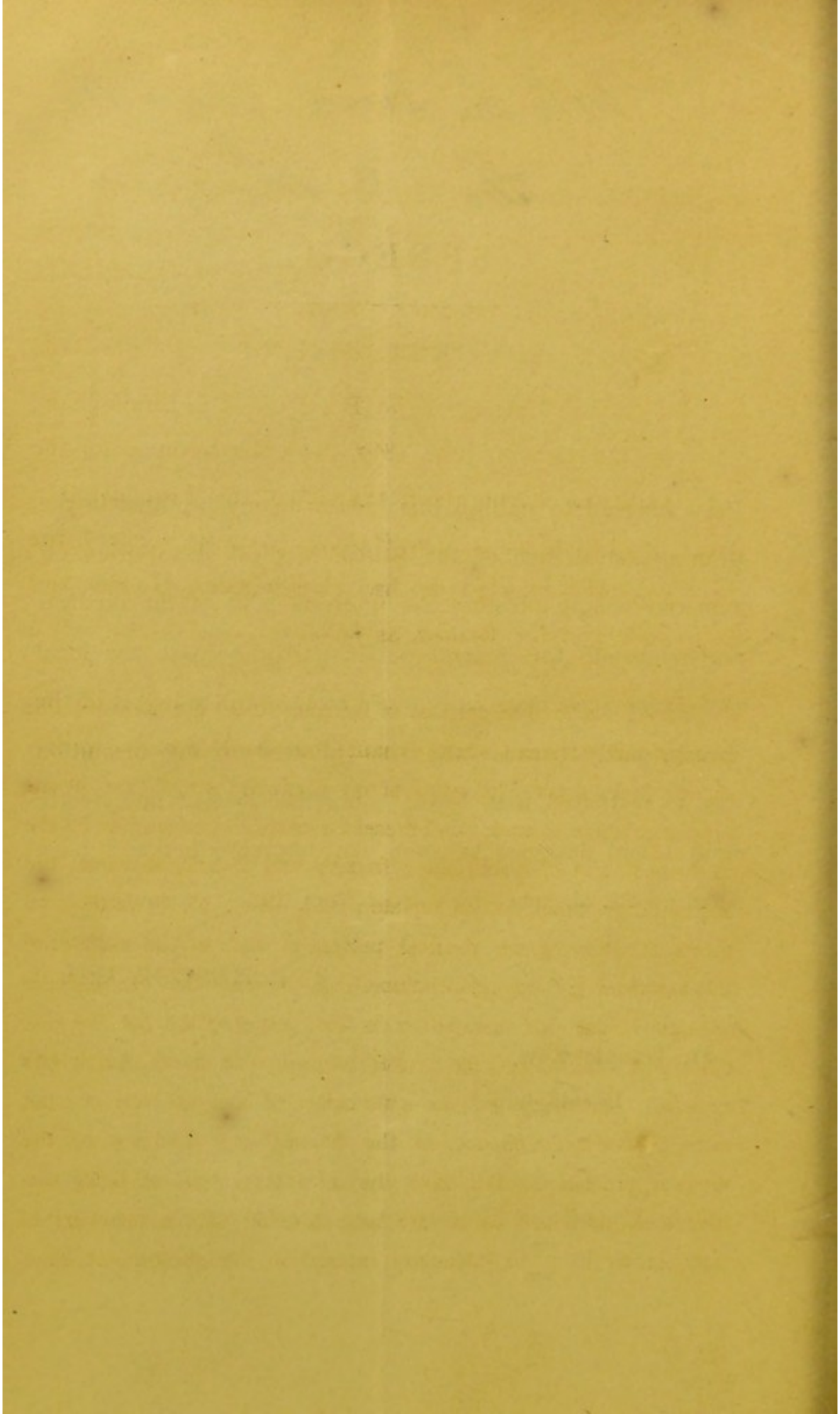
*With the kind regards of
the Author.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

I AM induced to publish this address to my brethren in the Birmingham Branch of the British Medical Association, on a matter deeply affecting the interests both of the medical profession and the general public, partly because the local newspapers have necessarily given an incomplete report of the speech, partly because the time allotted to my resolution was so restricted that I was compelled to say imperfectly what I had designed to utter. In this reproduction I have filled up the chasms which arose from these two sources.

T. P. HESLOP, M.D.

21, Temple Row,
Birmingham.



SPEECH.

AT the Annual Meeting of the Branch, held in Birmingham, on the 14th of June, 1867, the other business for the past year having been transacted, the President, Mr. BERRY, called on Dr. HESLOP to bring forward the resolution of which he had given notice. He rose and addressed the Branch, as follows :

Sir,—I rise for the purpose of bringing under the notice of this meeting the resolution which I handed to the Honorary Secretary several weeks ago. The terms of my resolution are, "That, in the opinion of this Branch, the present rate of remuneration to the medical officers of work clubs, friendly and benefit societies, and similar associations, is inadequate ; and, being so, is detrimental to the interests of the medical profession and to the welfare of the members of such associations." I presume that we shall be all agreed that this association is the proper place for the discussion of the subject, for it will be borne in mind that it was founded not merely for the cultivation of medical science, but also for the maintenance of the honour and interests of the medical profession. We have the advantage, too, of being disinterested, inasmuch as a very large number of the members of this branch have no pecuniary interest in the question at issue.

We can, therefore, properly stand between the medical officers and the friendly societies with which they are connected, and give our judgment without restraint. The club payments are apt to be erected by the labouring classes into a standard, by which the value of medical services is estimated—and, doubtless, such sentiments find an echo in the classes above them. If there were no other reason than this for bringing the matter before you, I should deem it sufficient, for one of the objects of every branch in our wide-spread association should be the elevation of the standard of medical remuneration in all classes.

In the recent newspaper controversy, carried on in our local press, both those who have written on the side of the profession, and those who have thrust themselves forward on behalf of the club system as it is, have mixed up many questions only very indirectly related to the one we have now before us. I warn you not to imitate those writers, or no practical result will arise from our discussion. This evil of inadequate remuneration to the surgeons engaged in the service of clubs is an admitted and well understood evil, one that can be precisely defined, and an evil that can be precisely defined can be the more readily coped with. Moreover, there is much uniformity, though with many exceptions, in the general conditions of the class contributing to these clubs. We are engaged with the same stratum of society; the actual pay to the surgeon is well known, and, so far as this town is concerned, differs but little in different societies. Let an amendment first take place here. Others more difficult, because less tangible, may possibly follow. Let us, above all things, avoid the blunder of going over too large a field. One thing at a time is a good rule here, as in most other things.

I need scarcely say, Sir, to this large assemblage, that grave complaints have long been made by our brethren of the inadequacy of the remuneration obtained from sick assurance societies. These complaints are constantly increasing, and they come from every part of the country. But complaints are also to be heard from the general public, and, recently, there has been a perfect effervescence of them—some of them very ill founded, and others apparently based on important considerations. It is not the duty of this branch to discuss the grievances of the members of friendly societies, but it might tend to simplify the discussion, if I give to you, in a few sentences, the case of the clubs, as it is put by one apparently belonging to them. As they are not represented at this meeting, it is right that a fair view of what are considered by them to be evils of the system should be placed before you. A short time ago, a letter, signed "Oddfellow," was published in one of the local newspapers, and the writer summed up tersely at the close of his letter what he considered to be the evils of the system of club attendance. The words were: "As far as my experience goes, I consider a club doctor a dear article. I am in a society, and for ten years paid my 3s. yearly for doctor without requiring his services. Last year I was ill, and went to him three times. I had enough of the club doctor. I once advocated the system, believing it was to their interest to procure the members' convalescence. I found my error, and that if I went on club doctoring I should soon be in my grave. No trouble was taken to find out the disease. So I was driven to a private practitioner, to the serious detriment of my pocket. *I have never heard a club doctor complain of the remuneration.* On the contrary, they are eager for the appointments! for two reasons:

it is a certain income, and their practice is extended. No reasonable man can blame the societies for paying low fees. I suppose medical labour finds its level here as well as any other labour, and if so many doctors accept these fees, it must be the market value of their services."

For myself, I wish it to be well understood that I have no personal prejudices against the club system. Quite the contrary. What I wrote of these societies many years ago is still my opinion. I believe them to be among the most characteristic of our social institutions. Providence, self-respect, honest pride, equal coöperation, the geniality of once merry England, self-government—all are seen here as in a microcosm. It is only lately that this noble and beneficent system of supplying medical aid and pecuniary support to the sick artisan has been imitated in continental countries, where it is now making great progress, especially in Germany.

Then, Sir, dissatisfaction with the club system is general. The members are discontented as well as the surgeons. The discussion of the question can hardly be termed ill-timed.

Now, that the pay for medical services rendered to these clubs is inadequate, is proved by the following facts. In the first place, many surgeons, as anxious to succeed as their brethren, looking forward to practising among the same classes of the community, never take any club practice. If it was so good a thing to be a club doctor as it is pretended to be, surely this would not occur. Secondly, many more give up their societies as soon as possible, as soon as they get occupation and the requisite general support. Thirdly, the surgeon's tenure is of the slightest—he does not care whether he retains his place or loses it. At the smallest disturbance he throws it up at once. The fact that medical men are

careless of retaining this kind of practice is a positive demonstration that the pay is inadequate. Compare the feelings of one of our brethren on losing the care of a family which paid him, on the average, £25 per annum, with his feelings on losing a club that paid him the same amount for attending two hundred members. I am not surprised at your laughter. The comparison is rather suggestive of a jest than worthy of being gravely set forth. But, if we are to believe those who agree with our friend "Oddfellow," the last would be a disaster that no surgeon ought to hope to survive. Fourthly, the professional conditions under which the present system of club payment grew up are greatly changed, and will soon have passed away altogether. I mean the system of a lengthened and *bonâ fide* apprenticeship. I need not tell you, Sir, that the altered method of medical education has been attended with a total change in the aspect of the "surgery," as it was known in our youthful days. No longer have the surgeons a string of apprentices ever ready to aid their master, to fill up a gap, and work, as best they could, the contract practice. The Head has practically on his own hands, especially in these great towns, all the labour he undertakes to perform. It will be easily understood that, in former days, the surgeon would be willing to take this kind of practice on very insufficient payment, if it were only to find employment and opportunities of experience for his subordinates. He stood somewhat in the position of the attorney, who gains a large increase of income from calling to his aid inferior labourers. This state of affairs is rapidly passing away, and in the change I see a powerful reason for reconsidering all contract prices among our profession.

But the weightiest argument that I have to adduce upon the

question is, that the club remuneration bears no proportion to the ordinary payment of medical men. Let us suppose the case of a surgeon attending a member of the club whose last report I hold in my hand. He is ill for five weeks, and his disease is rheumatic fever. He visits him frequently, finds him all the appliances needful, and obtains, at the end of the year, half-a-crown for the care he has taken of his patient's health. The patient may be an enameller, or a skilled gunmaker, getting £5 or £6 a week; or a tradesman or licensed victualler, immeasurably better off than the surgeon who attends him. He may be called, at the same time, to attend a man living next door. Mark! I do not say some eminent consulting surgeon, but the same surgeon practising mainly in the same stratum of society. This man may be working in the same shop with the former, and earning the same wages, but may not have chosen to enroll himself in a club. He, too, is ill of rheumatic fever, and remains so for five weeks. Now what would be his bill for this attendance? I am anxious not to exaggerate anything, but to give a fair view of facts. Would you smile at my modesty if I say that the bill would reach £5? You know, better than I know, how far this is below the average of remuneration for such an amount of attendance. But let us assume that this would be the price of the work which mechanic, number two, would have to pay. Why, this is forty times what his neighbour has to find for a year's attendance; and while number one pays so little, he has the rare privilege, denied to all other patients, of grumbling to the top of his bent.

But it is said that a great number of the club members do not call in the club doctor at all, either because they are not ill, or, being ill, call in somebody else; and that, therefore, the doctor enjoys not merely the half-crown of the sick member who employed

him, but the half-crown of many more besides who were not ill, or, if ill, preferred another doctor. What are the facts?

One or two of the clubs in Birmingham publish the medical labour of the year, and it would be well for the medical profession if they were all compelled to do so. Publicity dispels many delusions, as it exposes many wrongs. I am about to destroy this pleasant fiction, so far as the largest, best organized, and lowest paying club in this town is concerned. I hold in my hand the twenty-sixth annual report of this particular club. It has no less than 6,638 members. This constitutes a town. Several towns of such magnitude return two members to Parliament. The report says, "The medical attendance department has been of immense service to the members during the past year; 5,170 members availed themselves of medical attendance and medicines, at a total cost of £836. 5s., being about 3s. 3d. per medical case. The average duration of sickness for each member sick was five weeks two days and a half; average rate of sickness *for each member of the society*, eight days." Now, this society has an accumulated fund of all but £30,000. Its annual income is £10,000. The balance on the year's (1866) business in the sickness assurance department amounted to £3,568, "nearly 11s. per member, exclusive of the interest on the invested funds." How many surgeons are there? Nine. Some of them are in firms of two or three. The sum of money divided among these nine gentlemen for the medical superintendence of this town of 6,638 members, 5,170 of whom actually demanded medical aid during the year, was £836. What now becomes of the statement that only an "insignificant number" of the members of clubs require medical attendance? or, of that other delusion, that the great sums derived from these

societies in a lump, make up for the smallness of the individual contributions? £838 from a body so large that most clubs seem to be pigmies by comparison, among nine educated gentlemen for a year's service! Could any learned profession live if their ordinary remuneration anywhere approached this! This may be justly termed a coöperative society with economic aim, so far as a benefit assurance against sickness is concerned. As far as the surgeon is concerned, I will frankly term it a conspiracy directed against the highest form of skilled labour.

This society, you will observe, is not a licensed victuallers' society. I have some compunction in saying it, but the medical profession have great reason to regret that some of these societies have left the houses of licensed victuallers, who did the duties of secretaries and clerks in exchange for the benefit they got to their houses. I should be very sorry to see a change backwards in this respect, for intemperance is the greatest of our social stains, although now vast sums figure in the balance sheets of the clubs for management expenses, and the profit is taken away from the medical men. The old licensed victuallers' societies usually paid 3s., but the figure has become, in those established after the new fashion, only 2s. 6d. per head. The salary of the secretary of the club to which I am now referring was £334. 10s. last year. The whole management expenses were over £500 (inclusive of that salary). Well! I will admit that an able and reliable secretary is very important in such associations. I shall not go so far as even to hint that his income from it is too large. But I will go so far as to declare that either the secretary who received £334 for his clerk's work was enormously overpaid, or the nine surgeons who were allowed £836 for their brain-work—their supervision of

the health of 6,638 valuable members of society—were shamefully underpaid. I will defy any one to escape from this alternative. Would any veterinary surgeon look after the health of a hundred horses, looking to prevention as well as cure, for £12. 10s. per annum? But the veterinary surgeons might consider themselves insulted by any comparison of their remuneration with that of the medical profession. Sir JAMES SIMPSON recently told a story, on a similar occasion to the present, of a bailiff who was ill in the country. He was asked who was his doctor? The reply was, “Dr. DEWAR.” He was then asked, “Well, do you like him?” “Oh, he’s a capital doctor, but he charges awfully.” “What does he charge?” “Do you know, sir, he charges 2s. 6d. a visit. I could get a cow doctor for 5s.” I apologize to my brethren of the stable, and hope they will not take pattern by the doctor, but keep to their 5s.

Let us, Sir, for a moment survey this half-crown point from another side. If you will look into the *Athenæum* for June 1st, you will see the last of a remarkable series of articles on Hospitals and Dispensaries. It is there mentioned that a certain dispensary, at the west end of London, permits the medical officers to send all their prescriptions to a particular druggist, instead of having a dispenser and drug department connected with the charity. He is allowed 2s. per case for his time, and skill, and drugs. Now, remember that dispensary notes rarely last more than six weeks, and generally only four. But here is a club in Birmingham, calling itself a provident society, whose members boast of performing their duties to themselves and to their families, who are content to give 2s. 6d. per head per annum to a medical man for his skill, time, and drugs.

I have, however, to adduce another series of facts showing the inadequacy of club payments. They have not increased in proportion to the general advance of professional remuneration, nor to the expense of our special education, nor to the rise of wages among the working classes. I have made numerous inquiries, not merely in Birmingham but in many adjoining districts, and I find the opinion of my brethren unanimous that in ordinary private work the remuneration has gone up at least fifty per cent. during the last thirty or forty years. Here is a fact beyond dispute. In my hand is a bill, brown with age, which was made out in the year 1809 by a Leeds firm of surgeons, and sent to a highly respectable firm of merchants in this town, for attendance upon a traveller who had met with an accident. The charge for "stitching and dressing wound of the ankle" is 2s. 6d. "Dressing wound of the head" is 1s. The visits are 1s. each. "Visits and dressing wound of ankle from July 20th to August 7th, sixteen times, at 1s. 6d., £1. 4s." "Dressing at shop, from August 7th to 18th," 4s. ! The whole bill for attendance, visits, dressings, lotions, tinctures, &c., from July 17th to August 18th, was £2. 14s. This is a sample of the change that has taken place in medical fees during the last half century. Is there any corresponding change in the remuneration from clubs? Well known facts clearly negative it. One of the oldest and most respected surgeons in this town told me a few days ago, that he had an uncle practising here for a long period, who died thirty-five years ago, at an extreme old age. He had sixty clubs. Some of them paid 2s., but most paid 2s. 6d. The matter, however, stands something worse even than this. The tendency in these great towns appeared to be, thirty years ago, towards 3s. That level was certainly reached in

many cases. But during this generation many clubs, of great size and more than ordinary pretensions, have started into existence, whose rate is 2s. 6d.

Now let us cast a glance at the wages question. In reference to the agricultural districts, they have increased by one hundred per cent. since the middle of the last century. They were 9s. 4d. per week in the year 1824. They are now 13s., and are yearly increasing. In great commercial towns the increase is such as almost to surpass belief. From the recent work on wages by Professor LEVI, it appears that the wages of factory labour went up fifteen or twenty per cent. between 1844 and 1860. In some branches the increase was much greater than this. In Mr. NEWMARCH'S continuation of TOOKE'S great work on prices, you will find it stated that during the four or five years ending in 1856, the wages of every kind of labour, skilled and unskilled, had gone up from fifteen to twenty per cent. Take the most recent statement on this point. Mr. BASS begins his letter to Professor LEVI, asking for his aid in the inquiry, by alluding to "the recent great advance in the rate of wages." It is more difficult to estimate the precise increase of wages in this town during the last thirty years. But wherever you seek for the evidence—either in the elaborate papers by various manufacturers in the recent work published by Mr. HARDWICKE on the trades of this town and district, or in the oral testimony of living men—the result is the same. The increase of wages has been remarkable, and that increase appears by no means to have reached its maximum. In reference to individual trades, probably the highest wages are to be found here and in Sheffield. They are such as to surprise the inexperienced reader. When we are told on

indisputable authority that enamellers can get from three to four pounds per week ; some of the workers in guns five or six pounds a week—that among the jewellers 30s. to 50s. are “considered the average wages,” that “in plated wares, men working by the piece earn as much as 50s. to 55s. per week single handed,” and so on—we are entitled to assume that the rate of wages in this town offers no local obstacle to the payment of a just recompense for medical services.

It is hardly necessary to tell this enlightened audience that the actual power of the English artisan to pay for what he wants is greater than that of his predecessors, even in a higher proportion than is indicated by the increased rate of wages. MACCULLOCH, in his article on Wages in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, tells us that “money wages have been considerably increased, and owing to the fall that has taken place in most articles used by the labourer, the same amount of money goes much further now than formerly in the purchase of necessaries and conveniences.” What are called the sick and benefit societies, exclusive of trade unions, building societies, &c., have a reserve fund of twenty millions sterling. This very morning the Birmingham newspapers will tell you that the central committee of an order of Oddfellows, assembled at Plymouth, are debating what they ought to do with a certain surplus money; and it was naïvely remarked that it would have been devoted to the diminishing of the members’ contributions, if any one had asked for such a distribution of it. There appears to have been no notion of the propriety of a better payment of their surgeons. Look, too, at the savings banks, the accumulations in which are yearly becoming of greater national importance. Look at the dwellings, the dress, the luxuries of the labouring classes, and it will be admitted that

it is high time some fair proportion was established between their earnings and the payment of their doctors. The whole life of these classes has been changed. The clubs themselves are changed in every other particular. HUTTON's *History of the Court of Requests* shows that, in 1782, the weekly payment to sick members was not more than 7s. Now it is sometimes 10s., 12s., or even more. The licensed victualler has been dethroned and the secretary is installed in his place. What was once muddled in liquor is now muddled in management. But amid the rise of wages and the fall of taxes; the ruin of so many things and the birth of so many more; amid all the chances and changes of this mortal life; still stands unmoved, as if reposing on the inherent nature of things, the club doctor's ancient half-crown.

I wish now to draw your attention, Sir, to this the twenty-second report of the Royal Victoria Dispensary at Northampton. It is almost the only dispensary with which I am acquainted, in Great Britain or Ireland, that is founded on sound principles, in so far as the relations of the members to the medical men are concerned. It is supported by the payments of members and by some small donations from the richer classes. From the report, which is signed by a clergyman once well known in Birmingham, the Rev. S. GEDGE, I gather that there are three surgeons connected with it, and that last year there were 3,807 paying members. These members paid their surgeons £1,027. The senior of these gentlemen had 1,564 paying members, and his remuneration was £421. 18s., or about 5s. 4d. per head. Here, then, is a club, under the name of a provident dispensary, which finds a dispenser and the drugs, and pays its three surgeons £1,027 for attending 3,807 members. Our Birmingham club, whose twenty-sixth report I have just read to you,

pays £836 to nine surgeons for the care of 6,638 members, and looks to them for every appliance that their cases may need. This is not all. Much has been said, and with justice, of the abuse of clubs, from tradesmen and such like being enrolled among the members. The Northampton Dispensary does not admit every-one to the system of cheap doctoring. It lays down restrictions for which you will look in vain in the rules of any friendly society. Rule 1 says, "The free members shall consist of working persons and servants, their wives and children, not receiving parish relief, and being unable to pay for medical advice in the usual manner." Mark, too, this just law, No. 6: "If any free member shall, through improved circumstances or otherwise, be, in the opinion of the committee, no longer eligible to the benefits of the institution, his or her name shall be erased from the books."

But, Sir, we can learn another lesson from Northampton. It so happens that one of the gentlemen connected with the dispensary attended last year 995 free or paying members. One of the gentlemen, or rather one of the firms of gentlemen, connected with our model Birmingham club attended the same number, or, in exact figures, 998 cases. In the former case 6,155 "visits were paid at the houses of the patients." In the latter 734 visits were made to "members' houses." I might compare any one surgeon's attendance in the one society with that of any surgeon in the other. The result would be practically the same. Now I hope that what I am about to say will be read to-morrow morning in every workshop in this borough—in every forge in South Staffordshire. I shall shrink from nothing necessary to elucidate this question, and will now frankly ask you and my fellow citizens outside, whether it is not plain that the inadequate pay of medical

men is a matter of great gravity—whether it is not plain that an inadequate pay may issue in an insufficient attention? I know nothing in the air of Northampton likely to produce more serious sickness than that of Birmingham. The Registrar General's reports give no countenance to such a notion. I certainly shall not admit that the lives of the Northampton shoemakers are more important than those of the eminently skilful artisans who are the glory of this "nursery of the arts," as our local historian called this town eighty years ago. What I do admit, and what every impartial reader of these facts must admit, is—that a profound modification is necessary in the club system.

But apart from the more general relations of the question, how does this particular district stand when compared with others? I have made extensive inquiries in many midland counties, and I find that Birmingham, with the parts of South Staffordshire and East Worcestershire in close connection with us, stands far behind most places, particularly the small towns and villages in these counties. In many places, the very same orders which here pay their surgeon 2s. 6d. or 3s., give him 4s. or 5s. In one or two instances, other clubs pay even up to 10s. 6d.; but there is not a club in Birmingham, I believe, paying 5s., and only one or two even 4s.; 2s. 6d. and 3s. are the two reigning prices; and I am afraid that there are still a few even below the first of these two sums. I know of one club, scarcely to be called local, connected with one of the great railways, which pays the surgeon 7s. 6d. per head. It is an equitable remuneration, but why should it stand alone? If it be said that the money is paid by the company, I rebut the assertion by quoting the words of Professor LEVI—"Contribution to these societies is compulsory on most railways,

and the amount is deducted from the wages." If it be averred that the rate of wages justifies the exception, I reply that the servants of the railways, 160,000 in number, including ticket collectors, guards, policemen, &c., get on the average 21s. per week. The artificers, 40,000 in number, including engine drivers, fitters, &c., get on the average 30s. a week. No one will assert that there is anything in the wages, when compared with those prevailing in Birmingham, warranting so remarkable a difference in the remuneration. I know of but one thing to account for it—the superior wisdom of the directors of the railway friendly societies.

The strikingly higher payment of the medical attendant in the country towns and villages has much surprised me. The mortality and sickness are less than in such a town as this. The wages rule at greatly less than half the ordinary rate among skilled artisans. The expenses of the professional man are less than those of his town brethren. Why, then, is the club doctor better paid at Alvechurch or Alrewas, Upton or Daventry, Ashby or Sutton Coldfield, than in Birmingham? It has been assumed by those unacquainted with the facts, that this is owing to the distance travelled over by the club doctor. But I find that the patients are visited here three miles from the Town Hall. This is also common in the country, though in some places the doctor is expected to travel five or six miles to the house of his club patient. I believe that the more inquiry is made about this distance question, the more will it be found that it is in favour of the village surgeon rather than of his brother in the large town. The fact is, the country labourers are clumped together in villages, or are easily accessible to the doctor on the road-side, as he drives over the lanes, in his daily rounds, to his private patients. The town doctor

has to seek the club members in every suburb, far away from the centre of the borough ; and this altered position of workmen's residences is, happily, daily becoming more completely the rule. The real reason, Sir, why the medical officers to our borough friendly societies are paid so little, is the excessive competition in the ranks of the profession. Will it be said, then, that my case fails ? If it has apparently failed in the past, as regards medical men themselves, I know assuredly that it does not break down when the whole question is viewed by those whose interests are so closely involved in it. I must ask the artisans to remember that there are some things which cannot be regulated by the ordinary laws of political economy—by the simple ascertainment of the supply and demand ; and health stands preëminent among them. I must ask them to imitate the wisdom of the Legislature, who came to this conclusion some thirty years ago. Members of sick societies, were they wise, would ask for the best, not the cheapest, doctor they can get ; not for the man who will undertake everything for almost nothing, but for him who insists upon a substantial reward for his exertions. Unhappily, too, a wrong course taken in this sphere of work is often irremediable afterwards.

It would be waste of time, Sir, to prove that as the pay is inadequate, it is detrimental to the interests of our profession ; for the one necessarily flows from the other. The indirect results are, moreover, more serious than the direct ones. Such is the constitution of this world, that as a man is paid so is he respected. The money value of services is the only value known to the mass of mankind. In this way the honour of our calling is closely mixed up with its material interests. Were there time, I could easily show you still more important effects arising from the hard

labour and poor remuneration connected with contract practice. But I must hasten on.

Now my resolution goes on to affirm that if the pay is inadequate, it is detrimental to the welfare of the members themselves of these associations. Can the requisite attention be hoped for, when there is no proportion between the work and the payment thereof? Is it likely that the diligent supervision of their health, both as to the cure and the prevention of disease, will be carried on from year to year for 2s. 6d. or 3s. per head? Many medical men may perform this, and I know, as a matter of fact, do perform it. This, however, arises from the circumstance that the sense of duty of educated and honourable members of our profession is higher than the sense of justice of their patients. But what I wish to impress on our fellow-citizens in the sick assurance societies is, that they have no right whatever to expect this result; and that, in fact, they do not always obtain it, as is sufficiently proved by the openly expressed dissatisfaction. That, too, is the best system which least depends on the personal qualities of its administrators.

But, Sir, the working men will say to us, why don't you combine? If what you say be true, follow our plan, and gain your own price for your work. Now although the public morality of the medical profession, as of every other body of men, holds each of its members responsible to all the rest for the effects produced by his disposal of his labour, yet the traditions and the feelings of that profession are opposed to such combinations. A combination, in the ordinary sense, is not to be thought of among us. Let me, however, grapple more closely with this matter. If I may credit the rumours which have reached my ears, there are some unworthy persons among us who have even expressed a willing-

ness to accept less than the present rate, should resignations occur—who are prepared to rush in at the scramble, and take anything, at any price, that may offer.

From this Branch, I earnestly warn the artisans of Birmingham and the neighbourhood against these persons. I ask them to remember this—the experience of many older men than I am—that the man who is insensible to the honour of his profession is always dead to every other kind of honour too; and that he who sets small value on his services, were he as well known to the public as to himself, would be found to set even a higher estimate on those services than they are worth.

No! we shall not urge our brethren to combine, still less to retire from the duties that they have undertaken, which are neither to be lightly taken up nor lightly to be set down. We shall obtain all that we have a fair claim to by argument, by conference with the authorities of the societies, and by discussion in the press, in the presence of a well-informed public. This Branch will strengthen the hands of the surgeons, and materially influence the action of the clubs, should my resolution be passed. We must then invoke the coöperation of all our brethren, to whom I will say, in the words of Sir JAMES SIMPSON, that “those who abstain from helping us in the good cause are just conniving at the profession being underpaid, and are assisting the public to keep us down in the matter of payment.” I shall venture, too, to remind them of the noble words of BACON: “I hold every man to be a debtor to his profession: from the which as men, of course, do seek to receive countenance and profit, so ought they, of duty, to endeavour themselves, by way of amends, to be a help and ornament thereunto.”

We must also try to carry with us the judgment of our fellow-

townsmen, and, above all, of the members of the societies. To them I will appeal, in conclusion, to weigh this matter gravely, as one involving a question of justice. Considering the cost of the education and maintenance of a medical man, the skill and time employed in his peculiar labour, I ask them if they can believe, upon mature reflection, that three shillings a head per annum is a fair recompense for the gentlemen to whom they intrust the care of their health? I must appeal to them to consider it from the point of view of their self-interest. In a comprehensive sense, the interests of one class are the interests of all; it is remarkably so here. If it becomes not the interest of the underpaid doctor to attend as well as possible to the health of his club members, it becomes, to an infinitely greater degree, the interest of the club members not to claim the services of that doctor. It is a serious matter even to feel a suspicion, the smallest tincture of want of confidence, when a man is laid on the bed of sickness. Should there turn out to be just grounds for this want of confidence, the condition of affairs is hapless indeed, and the more so as it is generally past remedy.

I am confident, Sir, that a beneficial change is about to come over the relations of the medical men to the sick societies, and I sincerely trust that this influential branch of the British Medical Association will have the honour of taking a leading part in effecting that change.

Mr. CLAYTON, a member of the council, seconded the resolution. It was passed unanimously.



