

Letter to the General Court of Contributors of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, containing observations on the minutes of evidence, and on the report of the committee ... / by a contributor.

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LETTER

TO THE
GENERAL COURT OF CONTRIBUTORS
OF THE
ROYAL INFIRMARY OF EDINBURGH;

CONTAINING
OBSERVATIONS ON THE MINUTES OF EVIDENCE,
AND ON THE
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO ENQUIRE
INTO THE STATE OF THAT HOUSE.

BY
A CONTRIBUTOR.

EDINBURGH:

Printed by James Ballantyne and Co.
FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND COMPANY, AND
MANNERS AND MILLER, EDINBURGH.

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R14676

LETTER, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

IN consequence of being unable to attend the General Meeting of the Contributors, called to take into consideration the Minutes of Evidence and the Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the internal management of the Royal Infirmary, I take the liberty to obtrude on your notice, through the medium of the press, a few observations which have occurred to me in the necessarily hasty perusal of these papers. I feel assured that you will agree with me in thinking, that the gratitude of the public is eminently due to your Committee for the uncommon pains which they have bestowed upon the investigation intrusted to their charge, and for the impartiality with which it appears to have been uniformly conducted; and I confi-

dently expect that you will not only express, in the strongest manner, the sense which you must have of the value of their labours, but that you will also urge on the attention of the Managers the adoption of those measures of improvement which have suggested themselves to your Committee in the course of their investigation.

To those who take an interest in the concerns of the Royal Infirmary, it must be satisfactory to find, at the close of so minute an investigation, that nothing which can strictly merit the name of an *abuse*, has ever been suspected to exist in the management of that Institution; and that whatever negligences or defects may have crept into its administration, they are obviously of such a nature as can attach blame only to those, who, when they are pointed out, should endeavour to palliate or defend them. It is, however, I confess, with some feelings of mortification that I have read the account which the Report contains (page 98,) of the actual state of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh in the beginning of July 1817;—of an hospital which we have been always taught to consider not only as an excellent school of instruction for medical students,

but also as an institution for the relief of sick and diseased poor, superior in its regulations and management to most others of the same kind in Europe. The statement of the Clerks, to which I allude, and which has given occasion to the present inquiry, appears to me to be the most important document in the Report. This authentic statement, containing a minute and circumstantial representation of the internal condition of the Infirmary at the time it was drawn up, is signed by four persons, who, from their situation as Clerks, possessed better opportunities of knowing accurately the state of the House, in every respect, than all the other persons connected with the Institution; and who, from the purity of their moral characters, and the strictness of their religious principles, were, individually and collectively, entitled to the highest degree of credit. This representation, which might, at the time it was drawn up, have been abundantly confirmed by the collateral evidence of all the other Medical Officers, ought to have been received with gratitude by the Managers, whose means of becoming acquainted through other channels with such facts as it contains, appear to

have been so limited. The Clerks, instead of being discountenanced and indirectly censured, were, in my opinion, entitled to the warmest thanks of the Managers for their conscientious and disinterested efforts to improve, through them, the condition of the sick poor in the charity under their direction. The result of the inquiry that was set on foot by the Managers, in consequence of this statement of the Clerks, (p. 106) and the various improvements in the internal economy of the House, which are universally allowed to have been introduced during and since the period of that enquiry, and the evidence now before you, afford the strongest confirmation that can be required of the accuracy of that statement; and whatever errors the Clerks may have committed in point of form in presenting it to the Managers, it must procure for those gentlemen the approbation of the benevolent, and the blessings of the poor. The 15th printed regulation, which directs, that " Upon observing any impropriety in the House, the Clerks are immediately to communicate the same to the Treasurer, in order that he may either acquaint the Managers thereof, or take such steps

as he may think proper for correcting the same ;” and which the Managers complain was departed from upon this occasion, was, I am persuaded, more honoured in the breach than it would have been in the observance ; for adherence to such a regulation, in the circumstances described, must have allowed full time for the temporary removal of many of the defects complained of by the Clerks, before it could have been in the power of the Managers to have become acquainted with their existence. Indeed, it seems to me doubtful whether this regulation could ever possibly answer any other purpose.

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Managers (inserted page 106 of the Report,) will best explain to the Court of Contributors the mode of proceeding, which, on receiving so important a communication, the Managers followed, to ascertain and to remedy the defects which had been pointed out. Let any candid and disinterested person read the account which the Managers have given of their own proceedings, and say whether these proceedings were calculated for the discovery of the truth. For my own part, I do not hesitate to say, that it appears to me that the

Managers committed several great oversights and mistakes upon this occasion. The first and most unfortunate of these seems to have been, their regarding the representation of the Clerks as a libel upon themselves, and their imagining, that the defects which had been pointed out by the Clerks, were defects for which they themselves were primarily and in a peculiar manner responsible. For the occurrence of these defects I agree most cordially with your Committee in thinking, that little, if any blame, can be justly attached to the Managers, either as a body, or as individuals. The fault is in the system, which precludes in so great a degree the possibility of the Managers ever being made acquainted with the practical details of the House. Negligences and defects in the department of the Matron and Nurses can never be attributable to the Managers, unless they abstain from correcting them when they are pointed out, or endeavour to defend the conduct of those with whom these defects originate.

The other errors in the conduct of the Managers on this occasion, arising from this fundamental mistake, are abundantly evident. Instead of summoning, as might have naturally

been expected, the Clerks into their presence, and proceeding with them directly to inspect the wards of the Infirmary, they appoint a Committee, consisting of three civil Managers, to enquire, "at their first convenience," into, and to report upon the statement of the Clerks. This Committee show how they were qualified for the performance of such a task, by employing *three months* in the investigation of a matter which those who know any thing of hospital duties, know well ought to have been gone through in as many hours. The Managers seem to have taken no pains to ascertain, which they might easily have done, what changes had taken place in the interval between the complaints being made by the Clerks, and the commencement of their investigation; and who can be so simple as to believe that the negligences and defects which had been complained of would be permitted to exist for an hour after it was known that they were to be enquired into? and who but the Committee of the Managers, in conducting an investigation like that which they had undertaken, would have thought of passing over the Medical Officers of the Infirmary, and of applying for information to the Matron and Nurses, respecting

negligences and defects alleged to exist in their respective departments? It deserves to be remarked, that it is by statements of the Nurses, different from what they had previously given to the Clerks, that the Committee of Managers, in their Report, have endeavoured to throw doubts upon the accuracy of the representation which had been given in to them by the Clerks;—by the evidence of a description of persons, who, from their situations in the Hospital, could not admit of negligences and defects in their department without either criminating themselves, or impeaching the conduct of the Matron, upon whose favour the continuance of their employment solely depended; a description of persons, whose evidence your Committee have very properly agreed to set aside as unworthy of credit.

It is with feelings truly disagreeable, that I am compelled to allude to the conduct of the late Matron, but I am sorry to perceive that the Managers should have thought it necessary to defend, as they have done, her conduct in the Infirmary; and the more so, that I am fully persuaded that the greater part of the negligences and defects which have been proved to have existed in that Institution, had their origin in her

want of proper method in the management of the affairs of the house ; in her erroneous ideas of domestic economy, and the obstinacy with which she persisted in them ; and in her want of all proper intercourse with the Nurses, and control over their conduct. There is every reason to believe that Mrs Montgomery was a woman of strict integrity ; but all I have learned with regard to her tends to prove that she was a person of limited capacity, and one in whose mind a narrow economy seems to have held the place of other virtues not less necessary and proper in the Matron of a great Hospital. Her conduct in the Infirmary contrasts in but too many particulars with that of a former Matron, to whose character Dr Hamilton has borne so honourable a testimony. There are many who must remember well the daily visits which Mrs Rennie made through the wards of the Infirmary ; her unceasing efforts to add to the comforts of the patients ; the tenderness with which she enquired into the circumstances of those who appeared to be in peculiar distress ; the numberless little acts of kindness which she performed to them ; the strict charge which she took of the character and conduct of the Nurses ; her friend-

ly and maternal attentions to the Clerks ; and the impartiality, equanimity, and propriety with which, in the faithful discharge of the duties of a laborious and difficult situation, she conducted herself in all her intercourse with the Servants, Medical Officers, and Managers of the Infirmary. It is pleasing to record the virtues of such a character ; and in paying the tribute of our respect to the memory of departed worth, to point out Mrs Rennie as a model for the imitation of her successors.

It is unnecessary for me to detail to the Court the various circumstances which, subsequently to the Statement of the Clerks, and the Report of the Committee of Managers, have led to the present enquiry ; but now that this enquiry is finished, I will venture to affirm, that it is impossible for any one to read the Minutes of Evidence now under your consideration, and not to perceive that the defects and negligences which have been proved to exist in the internal economy of the Infirmary, have proceeded chiefly from the department of the Matron and Nurses. I feel no inclination, nor is it necessary, to enter into a detail of disgusting particulars ; but to me

it appears to be established beyond all possibility of contradiction, 1st, That for several years past, there existed every where in the Infirmary a want of due attention to Cleanliness; and 2dly, That the Food has frequently been observed to be defective both in point of quantity and quality. In proof of the want of cleanliness, we have the direct testimony of the Medical Officers and Clerks, both permanent and temporary ;—a testimony that could be supported, were it necessary, by the observation of every student of medicine who has attended the Infirmary during that period. The defect of the food, in point of quantity, has been ascertained by the accounts of the Infirmary, by the evidence of the Cook and Clerks, and also, very obviously, by the greater quantity of alimentary matter, which has been lately introduced into the food of the patients. The facts, which prove the occurrence of the occasional bad qualities of the food, and the slovenly and irregular manner in which it has been distributed, are attested by the evidence of professional gentlemen, who were very competent judges of these matters, and who could have no motive whatever for magnifying the defects which they observed.

Upon this evidence I have but one general remark to offer, which, though it is not expressed in the Report of your Committee, cannot altogether have escaped their observation. It is, that a great part of the evidence before you has been obtained from gentlemen who stand in a very peculiar relation to the Managers of the Infirmary, and who, consequently, in giving evidence relative to the existence of any negligences or defects in that institution, must have felt themselves in the disagreeable situation of being in danger of hurting the feelings of those to whom they conceived themselves to be under peculiar obligations, and who, they could not help perceiving, had considered themselves, though erroneously, to be implicated in the discovery of any errors or defects in the Infirmary. Instead, therefore, of being surprised at the apparent unwillingness of some of the Medical Officers to acknowledge the existence of these defects, we ought, I conceive, to appreciate duly the painful effort which it required to give that evidence which they have given.

I deem it quite unnecessary to dwell upon the great body of accurate evidence now in

your possession, because I am aware that every Member of the Court of Contributors can judge as well as I can do, of its import, bearings, and value. But I may be permitted to remark, that errors and defects of the kind, which have been proved to have existed in the management of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, several of which indeed are admitted by the Committee of the Managers, and all tacitly acknowledged by the improvements which have been lately introduced, are in some degree inseparable from the nature of such institutions, and may often exist for a great length of time without coming to the knowledge of those who may be zealously employed in the general superintendence of hospitals. This is an evil liable to occur in every great hospital, where there is no minute superintendence on the part of those who have the direction of its management over the practical details of its internal economy, and particularly where those who are engaged in the discharge of its active duties, have not frequent opportunities of communicating to each other the discovery of any negligence or defect that may occur in their respective departments. The want of such opportunities is a

serious defect in the constitution of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, and has unquestionably given rise to that want of cordial co-operation between the Medical Officers and Civil Managers, which is so essentially necessary for the proper administration of charitable institutions, destined for the reception and care of sick and diseased poor. Instead of this, there seems to have existed a mutual distrust and jealousy among those connected with the civil management and medical duties of the Infirmary—a distrust and jealousy, which, I fear, have on various occasions been injurious in their operation to the comforts of the sick poor who have been admitted into that Institution. When defects have been complained of, or improvements suggested, we find no example of a general meeting of all those who were concerned in the administration of the Infirmary; no open discussion with regard to the best method of remedying these defects; but, on the contrary, we find the Managers sometimes taking the advice of one branch of the Medical Faculty to the exclusion of the other, in matters which equally affected the departments of both; in other in-

stances, listening to the statements made by one or more Medical Officers, the existence of which was not known to the others. The conduct of the Managers in this respect appears to have been less liberal and wise than I should have expected from persons of their knowledge, benevolence, and independence. Even the existence of a certain proportion of Medical Managers in that body, instead of being a security against the operation of that jealousy, seems to have increased it, and to have had the effect of depriving the Managers of that assistance in discovering and correcting defects in the Hospital, which they undoubtedly had a right to expect from the Medical Officers.

From the evidence now upon record, it appears that the Medical Officers of the Infirmary had been long aware of several defects and errors in its internal economy, the proper correction of which required the active interference of the Managers. The reserve of the Medical Officers with regard to these, a reserve to be regretted on their own account, as well as on that of the Royal Infirmary, seems to have had its origin partly in the disappointment which they

had on various occasions experienced, in not having had these defects remedied by representations, which they themselves had made to the Managers ; partly in that distance at which the Medical Officers, as a body, are well known to have been always kept by the Managers ; and partly also in the mutual jealousies of these Officers as to the influence which they should respectively possess, directly or indirectly, in the management of the Infirmary. The necessity of being obliged to communicate with the Managers by written statements, and the ignorance in which they were kept of the manner in which their statements would be received and treated, have often, I believe, prevented the Medical Officers, both as a body and as individuals, from making communications to the Managers, that could not have failed to have had the most beneficial effects upon the character of the Infirmary, and of improving the condition of the sick poor admitted into it. Had a free and independent intercourse existed between the Medical Officers and Managers of the Infirmary, no defect or error of importance could have been permitted to exist for any length of time in the domestic ma-

nagement of that Institution ; and had a proper system of intercourse between these two bodies been adopted and acted upon, your Committee, I am persuaded, would have been saved the trouble, and the Managers all the disagreeable feelings, that have arisen from the institution and progress of the present enquiry.

I cannot omit the opportunity which is now offered, of urging upon your attention that part of the Report of your Committee which relates to the manner in which the Managers are chosen. Instead of being appointed, as they ought to have been, by the General Court of Contributors, the Managers are entitled by the Charter of the Infirmary to choose their successors in office. The charter provides, that not fewer than four, nor more than six Managers shall go out of office yearly, and that their places shall be filled up by new Managers out of the different bodies in Edinburgh, to which the retiring Managers belong. Now, I beg leave to ask, In what manner has this part of the intention of the Founders been fulfilled ? So far from nominating successors to themselves in office, the Ordinary Managers have

always continued themselves, or recommended their sons to be their successors in office ; and there is not on record an instance of the appointment of a Manager, in whose election the intentions of the Founders, or the spirit of the Charter, have been fairly, fully, and truly accomplished. It is seen, that, by changing the names of some of the Extraordinary Managers, who, it has been proved, are never allowed to take any share in the management of the Hospital, and who seem to be a sort of a *corps de reserve*, to be called forth only when some testimony is required to the good management of the Ordinary Managers, they appear to have complied with the letter of the Charter in a most scrupulous manner. By this mode of election, the Managers have contrived to perpetuate themselves in office, and to leave the management of the Infirmary, an institution raised and supported by the donations and contributions of the public, as a kind of patrimonial inheritance to their heirs and successors. It is, I firmly believe, the consciousness that their title to this succession is, in many respects, questionable, that has made the Managers of the Royal Infirmary upon all occasions so extremely jealous

of any interference on the part of the Medical Officers, or of others in the affairs of that Institution. Paltry as the patronage may appear to be to the Contributors, which the situation of Managers affords, it has not, I will venture to affirm, been regarded as such, either by the Managers themselves, or by any of those who have had occasion to apply for appointments in the Infirmary. There is no body of men, I believe, in Scotland, to whom so many personal and pressing solicitations are made by all ranks of the community, as are annually made to the Managers of the Royal Infirmary, for the appointment of Clerks and Dressers. And by appointing likewise, as they have hitherto done, the Physicians and Surgeons to situations of great professional improvement in the Hospital, the Managers of the Royal Infirmary exercise a considerable influence over the advancement and interest of a number of Medical Practitioners in Edinburgh. Until that part of the Charter shall be complied with, not only in its letter, but also in its spirit, which directs the annual change of from four to six of those who are engaged in the civil management of the Hospital; until some provision be made to secure a

much more frequent and minute inspection, than has hitherto existed, into the economical details of the house ; and until some controul over the nomination of the Medical Officers is resumed by the Court of Contributors, and they are rendered more independent than they are at present of the favour of the Managers ; until the appointment of the Clerks and Dressers is put upon a different footing in relation to those under whom they are to serve in the Infirmary ; and also until the Medical Officers shall have the privilege of attending and giving their advice in all meetings of the Managers, that have for their object the economical and professional management of the Infirmary, I cannot conceive that any very beneficial, or, at least, permanent reforms, can be effected in that Institution.

With these remarks I should have concluded this Letter, were it not that my attention has been recalled in a particular manner to the Minutes of Evidence now before you, by a Note submitted to your consideration on the part of the Managers of the Royal Infirmary ; a Note, which I am sorry to observe, cannot be regarded in any other light than as a professed defence of

that defective system of domestic economy which has given rise to the present enquiry, and the existence of which seems for a considerable period to have been known to every one who has had an opportunity of visiting the Infirmary, except to the Managers themselves. In proceeding to animadvert upon this Note, I must begin by declaring my sincere respect for the different individuals who compose that body. Towards some of them, indeed, I entertain, and must ever entertain, every feeling of gratitude which obligation can impose, and every sentiment of regard which sense of duty can dictate ; but, in a matter which so intimately concerns the public good as the management of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, I hope I may be permitted to distinguish between the conduct of the Managers as private individuals, and their acts as members of an incorporation employed in the administration of a great Public Charity. No member of the Court of Contributors can be more completely satisfied than I am of the benevolent dispositions and upright intentions of the Managers of the Royal Infirmary ; and, I am perfectly assured, that there is not

one of these gentlemen who would, with his knowledge, have permitted for an hour the existence of any one of the negligences or defects, which have been proved by an irrefragable body of evidence to have existed for a series of years in the internal management of that Institution.

Knowing, as I do, that several of these Managers attended the examination of the witnesses, and believing that all of them must have read the evidence upon record, I confess, that it is with no small surprise, I find them affirming, in the Introduction to their Note, that "nothing has been proved which can materially affect the management of" the Infirmary. This is a point, which, in my opinion, might have been left to be determined by the Public, the tribunal to the decision of which it must be ultimately committed.

Feeling in common with the Managers a wish, that "a further enquiry should be made as to the disturbance given to patients by an individual at unseasonable hours of the night, as mentioned by Mr Benjamin Welsh," I took the liberty to transmit to Mr Glover, the gentleman who I had reason to believe is alluded to, the

following queries, his answers to which, for the satisfaction of the Managers, I now subjoin :—

Query 1st. During the time you have acted as Clerk in the Royal Infirmary, have you been in the custom of visiting the Wards during the night?

Q. 2d. If so, will you be so good as to state upon what occasions, and for what purposes, you made these visits?

Answers. As respects the Surgeons' Wards, which were those more immediately under my care, as Surgeons' Clerk, 1st. Yes; not every night, but many nights before I went to bed.

2d. When the illness of any of my patients required such attention. To see that the Wards were properly ventilated. To know if my patients had all gone to bed, or if they were all even in the house. To see if the nurses had not gone to bed, and if they were in a fit state to attend to their patients.

N. B.—My acquaintance with the Hospital taught me, that in its present state, particularly as to nurses, this was indispensable, to insure the comforts, and preserve the lives of my Patients.

As respects the Medical Wards, or those under the care of the Physicians and their Clerks, No, except the Men's Country Ward, which I visited several times about 11 and 12 o'clock at night during the month of last December, to ascertain, whether the Physicians' night nurses were more attentive than the Surgeons'; in short, to know whether they slept or watched. An additional motive for this arose from a conversation with Mr Welsh, from which I understood it was his opinion, that it was unnecessary to make such visits as I did to my own wards. The doors of this Ward (Men's Country) were sometimes locked; as often as I found them open, I observed the night-nurse in bed, sometimes asleep. I never spoke to a

patient, but literally walked direct through the ward as softly as I could.

Query 3d. In making these visits did you find the night-nurses always awake and sober?

A. Frequently asleep, sometimes drunk, but more frequently sober. Finding on the 1st of January some of my nurses drunk, I was desirous of knowing the state of the other nurses; I therefore visited seven Physicians' Wards, in four of which I observed at least one drunken nurse; in one Ward (Women's Fever,) the night-nurse was in bed with a patient; in one, (Short Soldiers' Ward, then used for fever patients) there was no night-nurse; and as to the remaining (Mens' Country) Ward, it was locked.

To shew the necessity of vigilance on the part of the Clerks in the *then* state of the Hospital, two of my, or Surgeon's nurses, sober on that night about 11 p. m. got out after that time with two patients, and came in about 12 staggering and making a noise. They acknowledged the porter had allowed them to pass and re-pass to and from the public house.

Query 4th. Had you any conversations with any of the other Clerks respecting these visits, or, in making them, did any of the Clerks ever find fault with you for making a noise with the patients or nurses in any part of the Hospital?

A. I believe I mentioned some of these observations as to nurses both to Mr Cameron and Mr Welsh, when the latter told me, in a cursory way, that some patient or patients, or that the nurse (I understood of Men's Country Ward) complained, and said, that some patients had complained of their being disturbed by my *passing through the Ward* at night. I also mentioned to Mr Cameron the circumstance of the Men's Country Ward being locked, and that the day-nurse said it was his orders, which he denied.

None of the Clerks ever did, or ever could find fault with me for making a noise with the patients or nurses in any part of the Hospital.

Query 5th. Have you reason to believe that the late Matron ever caused sheets to be put upon the beds in the morning that were taken off again before evening ; and upon what occasions was this shifting of the linen practised ?

A. I have. On occasion of a Managers' visit after the date of our Memorial.

Q. 6. Were the accounts which the nurses gave to the Managers, with regard to fever-bedding, the same with those which they had given to you a day, or two days, before ?

A. The accounts given to me were either on the *4th or 5th of last July* ; that which the nurses gave to the Managers, in my presence, was, I believe, about *the middle of last September*. They were different.

Q. 7. Were any of the other Clerks present with you when you received your accounts of the fever-bedding from the nurses ?

A. Yes. Dr Lee was present during the whole time, and Mr Sims during most, if not the whole of it. Dr Lee *noted down* the nurses' statements as they were emitted. I observed that this was done quite correctly. These Notes I have at present. No regular Notes appeared to be taken before the Managers. I mentioned to the Managers, *where* the statements of the nurses differed from their first statements, which statements I informed them my Colleagues (Lee, Sims,) could prove ; but they were *not* called on by the Managers to do so.

Q. 8. Have you any reason to believe that any pains were taken to separate the fever-bedding from the other bedding in the Infirmary ?

A. No.

(Signed) W. GLOVER.

Edinburgh, March, 1818.

On this evidence I have only two reflections to offer ; the first, a very obvious one,—That it

must have been the night-nurses, and not the patients, that had reason to complain of being disturbed by Mr Glover's nocturnal visitations ; the second, That the Court of Contributors must regret, with me, that their Committee had not had an opportunity of examining Mr Glover, as it is difficult to reconcile the statement of the Managers, respecting Mr Glover's failure in establishing the statement of the Clerks, with the account of the inquiry about the fever bedding, which that gentleman has transmitted to me. How, after a lapse of two months, could the memories of the Nurses be supposed capable of enabling them to remember and confirm the evidence which they had given to Mr Glover, in the presence of Mr Sims and Dr Lee, when it will be observed, from the testimony of the very Reverend Principal, (p. 84) that their recollection did not serve them to remember to-day what they had said yesterday, and this even with regard to matters in which their interests were in no ways concerned ?

On Article 1st of the Note, I have only to remark, that no one can be more firmly persuaded than I am, that the funds and pecuniary transac-

tions of the Royal Infirmary have always been faithfully and conscientiously managed to the best of their judgment, by those to whom they have been intrusted. But whether in the manner in which the funds have been put out to interest, and whether in the manner in which contracts for expensive and necessary articles of consumption, have been made, the pecuniary transactions of the Royal Infirmary have been always managed to the greatest possible advantage, are points, which it is not my object to discuss, and which I shall, therefore, leave to be determined by those of your Committee, whose attention may have been directed to these subjects.

It is with regret I have read the statement which has been made, in Article 2d, of the comparative mortality in the Infirmary of Edinburgh, with that of similar Institutions in London. The Managers may be assured that they know very little of the proper *data* upon which these comparative statements should be founded, or of the various local causes which occasion a greater mortality in some of the Hospitals in these kingdoms than in others. This injudicious and in-

vidious comparison, can only have the effect of recalling the attention of the Medical Practitioners in other Hospitals, to the numerous defects which have existed for a series of years in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh; and with the existence and nature of which, from having themselves visited, and many of them having held official situations in that Hospital, these Practitioners are fully acquainted. The continuation of this invidious comparison, in Article 3d, by extending it to the civil management of other Hospitals, is equally improper and injudicious.

In the assertions made in Article 4th, with respect to the Diet of the Infirmary, I apprehend that the Managers have committed a great mistake, in confounding the quantity of food, stated in the private Diet Table of Dr Home, with that which has been actually administered to the patients. It is in evidence, that when Diet Tables have been called for, no one concerned in the prescription or preparation of food in the Infirmary, knew of any such tables, either printed or written. Mrs Montgomery distinctly stated, that her predecessor Mrs Hume, had no Diet Tables, and that she received from her only verbal

instructions with regard to the preparation of the food of the patients, and the quantity of nutritious matter which it ought to contain, and which it will be seen, by the evidence of Mary Manners, the cook, has, in the past practice of the Infirmary, had no fixed reference, or proportion, to the variable number of patients at the time in the House. It appears also from the evidence before you, that the late Matron exercised her discretion in a very remarkable manner in these matters; and contrived to make that quantity of meal, barley, and beef, serve for the support of five persons during her management, which is at present, and was during the time of her predecessor, consumed by three. I am not aware who the Medical Practitioners are, who are referred to by the Managers, as having approved of the Diet of the Infirmary, nor whether the approbation which they gave to the food of the Infirmary was bestowed upon the Table in Dr Home's possession, or upon that actually served out in their presence to the patients. We would require, however, to be informed of this before we can duly estimate the value of their approbation. You will perceive, from the evidence of Dr Ha-

milton and Dr Spens, that these gentlemen have judged the diet of the Infirmary to be suitable in point of quantity, *only from Tables, the existence of which was not known to the Matron, who had the sole direction of the food*, and that they both confess, that in their visits to the Hospital, they seldom, if ever, had had an opportunity of seeing the food served out to the patients, a circumstance which may account in some degree for what has been considered by the Managers as an officious interference in this matter, on the part of the Physicians' Clerks. From the evidence of Dr Home, it appears that he was in possession of a diet table, though he did not know from whom it had been got, which the Clinical Clerks were directed to copy into their case-books, and which he had conceived to have been a diet table taken from the Statutes of the Royal Infirmary. A comparison of this table, however, with that admirable bill of fare to be found in these Statutes, very few articles of which have ever been seen, far less tasted, by any patient in the Royal Infirmary, shewed very plainly that this could not be the case. Dr Home acknowledges that he had had occasion to complain

repeatedly of the bad quality of the broth ; and that he was not aware whether the quantity of meat put into the broth on any particular day, depended or not upon the number of persons to whom the boiled meat was to be served out. It is very plain, from the evidence given by Mr Law, respecting the food which he had had occasion to see served up to the patients, that he considered it as deficient in quantity and quality, and this evidence is supported by that of his colleague Mr Gillespie, and of Mr Wishart and Dr Gordon, at present Surgeons, and who have formerly both acted as Clerks in the Infirmary, the latter of whom seems for a considerable time to have paid particular attention to the state of the food. The evidence of these gentlemen, again, is corroborated in every particular, by that of Drs Beilby and Tweedie, and by Messrs Sims and Hastings, whose opportunities of observation, with regard to the state of the food while they acted as Clerks in the Infirmary, were greatly superior to that of the ordinary Physicians and Surgeons ; and consequently their testimony respecting this point must be regarded as the most authentic

and satisfactory that can be obtained ; yet this is the evidence which the Managers have been pleased to represent as being derived from “ very partial means of information.”

With regard to the quantities of wine and porter which the Managers boast of as having been consumed during the last 10 years in the Infirmary, it will not, I believe, be presuming too much upon the very imperfect and slovenly system of internal economy, which has prevailed in the Infirmary, to suspect that a considerable proportion of these liquors may have flowed into very different channels, from those for which they were originally intended. The patients, I imagine, who have been in the Infirmary during this period, would not be less surprised to hear of the prodigious quantities of wine and porter which they consumed while they were there, than they must be to be told of the very excellent beef steaks and other sumptuous fare with which they were feasted.

On Article 5th I have to remark, that in common with the Managers, I feel no inclination to scrutinize the evidence, as to how far the quantity of food prescribed has always been duly furnished by those who had no interest to withhold

it; because it is proved by the evidence, in the first place, that the general quantity and quality of the food furnished to patients has varied according to the pleasure of the Matron, without the knowledge, and therefore without the interference of the Managers and Medical Officers of the Establishment; and, 2dly, because it is obvious that it is in itself a thing quite impossible to ascertain the quantity and quality of any articles of food which may have been furnished to individual patients in the Infirmary, unless at the precise point of time when they were so furnished. It does not appear, however, that before the late investigation any Manager had ever visited this Hospital at the hour of meals, in order to ascertain, by actual inspection, the quantity or quality of the food really furnished, or to ascertain how far patients were in general satisfied with it; but it would seem that this matter, so essential to the health and comfort of the patients, and to the general reputation of the Infirmary, has always been left to the entire direction of the Matron.

It is too much to presume, after the complaints that are ascertained to have been made

by patients in all parts of the Infirmary, and in opposition to all the evidence before you, that because the late Matron had no interest to withhold food from the patients, it must therefore have always been furnished in due quantity and quality. The interest of the Matron consisted, I conceive, in her acting so as to gain the approbation of the Managers, and their records will best shew whether her economy did not procure for her a distinction in this particular over some of her predecessors. It must excite surprise, as well as regret, to find the Managers labouring, as they every where do, in this Note, to identify their own intentions and acts of management, with the errors and consequent misconduct of Mrs Montgomery. The food, in every public Hospital, should be served out to the patients according to a printed diet-table hung up in the wards, and open to the inspection of every patient in the house.

I am quite aware of the doubt and circumspection with which complaints of patients in public Hospitals with regard to their food and treatment ought to be listened to ; and also that a great deal of exaggerated statement has gone abroad respecting the food and the manner of

its being served out to patients in the Infirmary ; but I am disposed to regard these statements, however much they may have been exaggerated, as a proof that some defects have existed in these particulars, rather than the contrary. In affirming, however, the existence of some negligences and defects in the internal economy of the Infirmary, I am far from wishing to insinuate that this Institution has not been of incalculable benefit to the sick poor in this country, and that the patients treated in it have not had the greatest reason to feel truly grateful for the assistance or relief they have derived from it.

With regard to the steaks mentioned in Article 6th, I would observe, that provided the meat be good and fit for steaks, the plan of dressing it in the wards, with proper conveniences, in preference to having it done in the kitchen, is evidently advantageous to the patients. But with regard to the meat that was served up for steaks during the management of the late Matron, I can find no evidence to prove that there was the slightest attention, either on her part or on that of the servants under her, to see that the meat furnished for steaks was fit for that purpose ; and there is

the direct and undeniable testimony, now upon record, of a great number of gentlemen, in proof of the fact, that the meat actually served out for steaks was not unfrequently very unfit for the purpose of being so used.

On Article 7th I have only to observe, that I suspect the Managers have been misinformed with regard to the practices of knives and forks being generally made a charge to the patients in the London Hospitals; but whatever may be in this, the late improvements which have been introduced into the manner of serving up the food in the Edinburgh Infirmary, must be regarded as a tacit confession that that manner was formerly in several respects faulty.

With regard to the personal cleanliness of the patients alluded to, No. 8th, I must say, that I regard this as a matter of the utmost importance in the economy of the Infirmary, as it must be of all Hospitals, and that every attention should be given to enforce and to preserve the practice of personal cleanliness. There are surely few patients, the whole of whose bodies on admission may not be safely enough washed with soap and water, either warm or cold, and none, I believe,

that could be injured by having this done in a proper manner to their faces, hands, and feet. Besides the articles necessary for this purpose, every Hospital should be furnished with a sufficient quantity of combs, and the greatest care should be taken that the careful washing and combing of the patients be a duty daily performed by the patients themselves, in all cases where this has not been forbid by the Medical Officers, and by the Nurses or others to those patients who are disabled from performing this duty for themselves.

With regard to Articles 9 and 10, I have only to say, that I conceive it impossible to read the evidence, and not to approve warmly of the very great labour and pains which the Managers have of late taken to secure the perfect cleanliness of the linen and bedding of the patients; nor would any complaints, I am satisfied, ever have been made, or pains taken to prove the bad state of these during the last five or six years, had not the Managers undertaken to defend, as they have done, the very improper conduct of the late Matron in relation to the sheets and bedding of the patients. The facts which establish her great,

not to say wilful, negligence with regard to these points, are of a kind that it would now be much more agreeable to forget, than to remember or to enumerate.

The opinion so strongly expressed by the Managers (Art. 11) with regard to the impossibility of procuring better Nurses than are at present employed in the Infirmary, is so contrary to that which I have formed after a very long and attentive observation, that I was at first disposed to imagine, that, by some mistake or other, the word "*better*," had got into the place which should have been occupied by the epithet *worse*; for I will venture to say, that the opinion, as it now stands, is contrary to experience and common sense. The situation of Nurses in the Infirmary ought to be, in several respects, better than that of ordinary servants. They should be supplied with several comforts which ordinary servants cannot be said to require. The admission into the permanent service of the Infirmary should not be through the Matron alone; and some provision, not depending altogether on the favour of that person, should be made for the Nurses, when, from age,

they become unfit for their duties. The observations of your Committee on the subject of Nurses are excellent, and have my warmest approbation.

With the opinion expressed by the Managers in Art. 12, my sentiments coincide in every particular ; and I am much pleased to be assured by authority, which I cannot question, that the internal state and domestic economy of the Infirmary are greatly improved since July 7th, 1817, a day which must ever be regarded as the commencement of a new era in the history of the Royal Infirmary. But with all the improvements which have taken place, there is, in my opinion, much still wanting to put the internal state and management of the Infirmary upon the footing on which it ought to be. For, besides the very bad state of the Lock-up Ward, which has been brought under the notice of your Committee, there is another matter connected with that subject, which stands much in need of reform in the Infirmary. I allude to the practice, which has so long prevailed, of mixing venereal with other patients through the different wards of the Hospital. This is a very serious evil, and one which,

in a moral, as well as medical point of view, must be highly injurious to the Institution. I have been told, that the Managers have been long aware of the existence of this evil, and that they had even at one time taken some steps to have it remedied, by establishing a separate ward for venereal patients; but which they were obliged to give up, in consequence of some difficulties that occurred about its medical superintendance. This is a point, however, concerning which I am very imperfectly informed, and must, therefore, refer the Court of Contributors to the Managers for more satisfactory information regarding it.

Amongst other defects in the Infirmary requiring to be remedied, is the very obvious one of the want of Fever Wards for the Clinical Professors. The Fever Patients are at present, I believe, and have always been, mixed with the other patients in the Clinical Wards, to the great risk of these patients, and to the almost certain infection of some of the students attending there. Greater pains should be taken also, than have hitherto been done, to cut off the communication between the Fever and the other Wards of the House, so as to preclude the possi-

bility of contagion being conveyed from one part of the Infirmary to another ; and some means should be fallen upon to purify the body-clothes of Fever Patients, before they are permitted to leave the House.

There is still another department in the Infirmary, an inferior one, it is true, but one of great importance to the Hospital, which also stands much in need of reform. I mean the office of Janitor or Porter to the Infirmary ; for, upon the vigilance and good conduct of the person who fills it, depends much of the sobriety and regularity of the Patients and Nurses in every ward of the Hospital. It is consistent with the knowledge of every Student, who has, of late years, attended the Infirmary, that the duties of the Porter have been most negligently and incorrectly performed. No patient, or his friends, who may have wished to smuggle in food or drink of any kind, have, for many years, met with any difficulty at the door of that House, and abundance of evidence could be brought, were it necessary, to prove, that one of the persons employed as Porter has been long chiefly occupied in conveying liquor into the Infirmary from the spirit-shops in the neighbour-

hood. The office of Janitor has been for sixteen or eighteen years filled by two persons, one of whom, on account of his age and infirmities, ought long ago to have been permitted to retire from the House; and the other, a person, who, from his habits, as well as his age, ought never to have been admitted into the employment of the Infirmary. I mention these as examples of defects in the internal state of the Infirmary, which still require correction, and surely it would not be difficult for any one acquainted with the Hospital and its duties, to enumerate many more.

On Article 13th I have nothing to offer. But it is surely too much for the Managers to expect, that either the Court of Contributors, or the Public, having before them the Minutes of Evidence, will give any place to the assertions and insinuations contained in the 14th Article. Something more than a vague and general approval of the internal management of the Infirmary by medical gentlemen, of however long standing, will now be required, in order to set aside that extensive and consistent body of evidence, which, by a multiplicity of precise and individual instances,

has established, to a demonstration, the defective state of the internal economy of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh during the last ten years. The moral character, the great professional attainments, and superior opportunities of observation, possessed by the persons whose evidence the Managers affect to depreciate, must be regarded by the public as the surest pledges of the accuracy of their statements, and of their benevolent wishes to improve the condition of the sick poor in the Royal Infirmary.

With the sentiments expressed in the two first sentences of Article 15th, I most cordially agree; and I agree also with the Managers, in believing that the Clerks are the Medical Officers in the Infirmary who have the best opportunities of observing, and, by their attention and vigilance, of securing against any neglect connected with the care of the patients in all respects; but after the example of the manner in which that most true and faithful representation of the internal state of the Royal Infirmary, in the beginning of July, 1817, was received, I should be glad to be informed upon what grounds the present Managers can expect that any communication of ne-

gligences, or defects, in the Infirmary, will ever be made to them by the Clerks. Future Clerks will find, I conceive, no bad specimen of the kind of reward they have reason to look for in any communications of negligences or defects, which they may feel inclined to make to the Managers, in that very extraordinary resolution that was passed on receiving the communications of their predecessors in office, a resolution which enacts, that "when a patient is admitted, the Clerk of the Physician or Surgeon, under whose charge such patient is to be, must *attend the patient until he or she is placed in the proper ward, and until a bed, properly furnished with blankets, sheeting, &c. is made up for such patient.* For this purpose, no Clerk, whether Physician's or Surgeon's, *is to leave the house until he himself sees this necessary duty performed,*" and which imposed upon the Clerks an office quite foreign to and inconsistent with their situation and proper duties, and a compliance with which, on their part, could only have had the effect of degrading them in their own estimation, and in that of every other person in the Infirmary. With equal propriety, in my apprehension, might the Mana-

gers, on the discovery of the deficiency of certain utensils in the wards, have resolved, that when any patient required the use of such utensil, the Clerk must attend the patient till he or she be supplied with it, and that no Clerk should ever leave the House until he himself had seen such necessary duty performed.

I agree, likewise, with the Managers in thinking, that they have not at all times received from the superior Medical Officers that cordial co-operation and support in the discovery and correction of negligences and defects, which they had reason to expect; and I must say, that I think it would have been more proper and becoming for these Officers to have laid aside their apathy, upon the occasion so often alluded to, and in availing themselves of the information and assistance of their Clerks, to have themselves made the necessary representation to the Managers. If any thing can be offered in apology for their remissness, it will be found, I believe, in the declaration, which, I have been told, one of these Officers has been heard to make, that, after having been endeavouring for forty years to get the negligences and defects reme-

died which he had occasion to see in the Infirmary, he had abandoned the undertaking as hopeless ; and, in the discouragement which another Medical Officer gave to Mr Sims, by saying, while pointing to the place where his abortive efforts seemed to lie dormant, that he had made many representations to the Managers, but that they had all ended in smoke ! I am happy, however, to perceive by the evidence, that some of the Medical Officers are aware, that, in abstaining from representing to the Managers, as they ought to have done, the errors and defects which they had observed of late years in the Infirmary, they had been guilty of a neglect of duty.

The public will judge how far the Managers are borne out in any of the assertions contained in Article 15th, by what appears to have been their treatment of the communication of the Clerks, which alone has given rise to the present enquiry. Instead of being displeased that the incidents, founded on by the Clerks in their letter of July last, had not been sooner made known to them, the Managers, in my opinion, would have acted more wisely, both in regard to themselves, and to the Institution under their charge,

had they, upon that occasion, admitted the truth of the common adage, *Better late than never*, and proceeded without delay to rectify the evils which had been pointed out to their notice, by obliging the Matron and Nurses to perform properly their respective duties in the Hospital. Had this been done, as it ought to have been, we should never have heard one word of the present enquiry.

The appointment of a House-Governor, from whose superintendence (Article 16th,) the Managers seem to anticipate so many useful results, is a measure from which, I will venture to predict, very little good will ever be derived to the Infirmary; because I am satisfied that a person will not be easily found qualified in all respects for the duties which the Managers mean to impose upon their House-Governor. This person, who is to act as Apothecary, and to keep a strict look-out on the conduct of the Clerks, is also expected to relieve the Matron of a part of her duties; he is to facilitate the communication between the Medical Department and the Managers; and to remedy, under the saving clause of *as far as possible*, at the moment, any defects as they may occur. In short, the House-Governor is to be a

person responsible to the Managers for the faithful discharge of the duties of the Medical Officers, Clerks, Dressers, Matron, Nurses, and other Servants in the Infirmary ; and by this responsibility, to relieve the Managers from all further complaints or trouble in their management of that Institution. The Managers know little of the qualifications or duties required of Clerks to the Physicians and Surgeons, if they can allow themselves to imagine that they will ever get a House-Governor for the Infirmary fit to take any professional superintendence of the Clerks ; this is a duty which can belong to the Physicians and Surgeons alone. Neither do the Managers appear to me to be so fully aware as they might be, that the services, of all others in the Institution under their care, which are the most likely to be performed with fidelity and zeal, are the gratuitous services of the Clerks, undertaken solely for their own professional benefit, and performed under the direction of the superior Medical Officers, and the vigilant and jealous inspection of their Fellow-Students.

With regard to the functions intermediate between the Managers and Medical Officers, which

the House-Governor is to execute, they could but increase that distance which has always existed between these two bodies, and from which I firmly believe the greater part of the evils have originated which have been found to exist in the management of the Infirmary. I trust no superior Medical Officer will ever be found mean enough to admit of any other representation of the defects and negligences which he may observe in his department, to be made to the Managers by any other person than himself.

If a Treasurer could be found, who would give his undivided attention to the duties of the Infirmary, he, not the Apothecary, is the person whom I should wish to see in the situation of House-Governor. The present Treasurer, than whom, I am well assured, no one can ever feel a deeper interest in the prosperity of the Institution, has been obliged to delegate his duties to his Partner; and they are duties which occasion no small trouble and consumption of time. The services of a House-Governor, in order to be useful to the Institution, must be unbought, voluntary, and proceed from the heart; and they must be performed by one who shall find pleasure in

devoting the whole of his time to the important concerns of that Institution. As for the Apothecary, his duties, as they stand and are executed at present, are quite sufficient to occupy his attention. In addition, however, to any House-governor, I would earnestly recommend to the attention of the Court of Contributors, the appointment of Visitors to the Infirmary, who shall not only have the privilege, but who will actually perform the duty of visiting all the wards of the house, at whatever time, or in whatever manner they shall judge proper, that do not interfere with the medical arrangements of the Institution. Without these Visitors, the Contributors can have no security against the recurrence of the evils which are proved to have existed in the Royal Infirmary.

I am sorry that I cannot give full credit to the assertion so broadly stated in the first sentence of the last article of that very injudicious and improper Note, in the analysis of which I have already detained you so long; because I can find no proof that the measure of a House-Governor, in particular, was ever thought of by the Managers before they received that very un-

pleasant, but faithful representation, from the Clerks, of the internal state of the Infirmary, which was given in to them on the 7th of July, 1817; and because I believe that the principal intention of a House-Governor, though this is not avowed by the Managers, was to guard against the possibility of such representations ever being made to them again through that department of the Infirmary.

Neither do I think it necessary to correct the mis-statements, or to repel the insinuations, in the latter part of this Note; for I feel assured, that though you may pity, you can never sympathise with the mistaken and irritated feelings which have led to the expression of the sentiments it contains. The Court of Contributors, in executing their duty to the poor and to the public, cannot but form a proper estimate of the meritorious exertions of the benevolent and truly respectable persons who have undertaken, and discharged so faithfully and impartially, the painful duty of enquiring into, and reporting upon, the late defective state of the internal economy of the Infirmary; a labour which, I trust, cannot fail to procure for them the cordial approbation

of the public. And I may be permitted to hope, that it will not be forgotten, that the benefits which have resulted, or may result, to the poor from the late enquiry, owe their origin chiefly to the benevolent exertions of some persons belonging to the respectable Society of Friends.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

With all respect,

A SINCERE WELL-WISHER,

AND OLD CONTRIBUTOR,

TO THE ROYAL INFIRMARY.

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OF THE
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