

Report on the general sanitary condition of Cowley Industrial School / by Henry W. Acland.

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REPORT

ON THE

GENERAL SANITARY CONDITION

OF

COWLEY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL,

BY

HENRY W. ACLAND, M.D.,

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD ;
HONORARY PHYSICIAN TO H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES.

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1863.

*Cowley Industrial School is the School for Pauper
Children attached to the Oxford Union.*

H. W. A.

OXFORD,
March 12, 1863.

To the Guardians of the Poor within the
City of Oxford.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to acquaint you that, in conformity with the Resolution of the Board of Guardians communicated by your Chairman to me on February 25, I have examined the Industrial School at Cowley.

By the courtesy of the Chairman and of your Medical Officer I have visited it both with them and by myself, and it gives me pleasure to add that I have received the most ready assistance from the resident Officers of the Establishment.

It is hardly necessary to remark that the words of the Resolution, with I doubt not the fullest intention, imposed on me the duty of a full enquiry. To report "generally upon the sanitary condition" of a school is to give an opinion on all circumstances which can affect the health of the inmates: and this opinion is valueless, unless it be accompanied by a statement as to whether any and what alterations are desirable, in order permanently to secure the children's physical welfare.

There is in the Cowley School a condition of an anomalous nature, which makes it difficult to frame satisfactory recommendations while that condition lasts.

I allude to the fact that it was planned for more than 200 children and that there are now but 83. Consequently the capabilities of the Institution are undeveloped. This being so, it is not easy to conduct the internal arrangements for industrial work so as to ensure at once economy, education, and health.

I will endeavour to state clearly the points which called for investigation, and I will name under each head such modifications as appear to me desirable for the health of the children without defeating the objects of the founders of the School. After this has been done I shall venture to lay before you some of the general principles which have guided me in the observations I shall have made.

I found on the 26th of February among eighty-three children no less than thirty-four cases of skin disease. There were two distinct disorders—one a disease of the scalp, the other a general affection resembling Scabies in several stages, but so deficient in some of the ordinary characters as to make a positive conclusion as to its nature at first difficult. I have now had time to make the investigation necessary to arrive at this conclusion, and by signs which cannot be mistaken, viz. the detection of the ova of the *Sarcoptes hominis* (which I believe these ova to be), the presence of Scabies is established, however much it is masked by other serious pustular eruption and by boils. I have conferred with your Medical Officer on the medical management of these cases. They, as you know, have proved very tedious; and though often cured have often again relapsed.

There was, besides, in many children evidence of languid circulation, unfavourable to the development of either body or mind.

These conditions do not imply necessarily either neg-

lect or mismanagement in any one department. But they do of course imply, either, that in one or more departments the arrangements are imperfect, or else, that the children themselves are incapable of attaining to health. It became therefore my duty to look into every particular of the scheme of the School. I may as well say at once that, on the whole, the management of the School is encouraging and satisfactory.

To point out by what kind of management we may hope to secure freedom from disease, and the future health of the children, is the object of what follows.

The sanitary condition of the School generally may be considered under the heads of

1. The Building and its Site.
2. Clothing and Cleanliness.
3. Food.
4. Occupations.
5. Hospital Accommodation.
6. Management and Expenditure.

1. THE BUILDING AND ITS SITE.

THE history and general character of the School-buildings at Cowley are too well known to you to require minute details from me.

The house has a southern aspect, and stands on a small plateau of the Oolite, with gentle slopes to the South, the North, and the East. If the adjoining fields were in possession of the Guardians, they would afford ample scope for agricultural operations to any extent that the Guardians could require. But the ground most available for these purposes as regards the children—that is, the ground with the southern slope sheltered from the north—is not, I am informed, the property

of the Guardians ; whereas the northern plateau, exposed to all keen winds and quite unprotected, is their only available tillage-ground. This is, I think, a cardinal misfortune.

The arrangements of the interior of the dwelling are sufficiently good ; the rooms are lofty, airy, capable of excellent ventilation, and of adequate warming by open fireplaces. The drainage demands attention. Soil-pipes are said to leak into the house, and the water supply is scanty in the Closets. The Drains moreover, so Mr. Bruton informs me, ought to be examined, and before this Report is presented, will have been inspected.

It is proposed to convey the sewage away from the present cesspools to a sewage distribution tank. Under proper management, and if the soil be sufficiently friable to absorb the liquid and to mix with the solid refuse, there is, I am inclined to think, no danger to be apprehended to the health of the house, from this change. Upon this point, and upon the question of how much sewage can be most profitably distributed on a given area, it is premature to speak with certainty^a. The Guardians will, however, be justified, both on sanitary and economical grounds, in making the attempt of so re-arranging their drains, and by this method they will help to familiarize the agricultural lads with practical operations of this nature. It would be more easy to distribute the house sewage on the east and south, than on the plot now in hand to the north. If it be distributed to the north it must be pumped to a proper level. Already the children have, to say the least, enough work.

I have not felt called upon to examine the general

^a See Reports of the Sewage Commission, 1858 and 1861, and Report of Select Committee on Sewage of Towns, 1862.

character of the shell of the building. But with respect to the ground-plan it appears to me that in two particulars it is defective.

(a) The Play-yards are to the north, and though partially sheltered by low buildings from the northerly winds which come unbroken over the plain, the children are during the whole winter deprived by the mass of the school-building of one essential of health—sunshine.

One of the first remedial measures should be a Playground to the south of the School.

(b) The Lavatories have no covered communication with the main body of the building.

It may be said generally of the several departments that they are airy, roomy, and suitable to their several purposes.

2. CLOTHING AND CLEANLINESS.

THESE two are considered together, as they are intimately connected.

The bleak position of the School, the absence of all protecting vegetation, the northern aspect of the playgrounds, the low physical type of the children, require that very special attention should be given to the Clothing; both in respect of its quality and quantity. In each of these the children appear to me to be treated with judgment; and their general appearance is creditable to those to whose care they are committed.

The Clothes are in good order and of substantial quality. I find that flannel next the skin is not worn, nor should I lay down as an absolute rule that it is necessary. But if it be not necessary for *all*, it is the more requisite to pay attention to the children individually, and

to provide flannel waistcoats for some ; but I believe as a rule that up to the age of seven they should have it. I shall have to state hereafter some general principles applicable to dress as to other subjects, so that I need only add now, that when the circulation is languid, when chilblains are frequent, when the physical type is markedly low, and especially when these characters co-exist in the youngest class of children, then flannel should be always ordered. For the younger children, up to five, flannel gowns are desirable for a night-dress ; for the older this is unnecessary.

Essentially connected with the Clothing is the Cleanliness of person, of apparel, and of bedding.

The experience of the great Metropolitan Workhouses shews that low type children require more attention to cleanliness to keep them in health than children of a higher grade and of finer breed ; and I make this remark at once to screen myself from the charge of over-refinement in what I am about to say. With all possible care, such children, removed from home and collected in masses, can scarcely be kept clean enough to secure such health as shall make them robust. Considerable attention is paid at Cowley to this point. The children all have a cold or warm bath once a week. This may be advantageously extended to twice. The general washing should be down to the waist daily, with an ample supply of water. It is indispensable that the washing-troughs should be renewed on a different plan. Trusty elder children should be responsible under direction for the thorough cleanliness of the lavatory and of the washing basins.

The Bed-linen and Beds have next to be considered. Whenever a bed is soiled the ticking should be removed and sent to the wash, and the flock be air-dried and

occasionally cleaned ; or, which is better, the whole bed should be steamed in a closed chest, and afterwards dried in the hot-air closet. No sheets should be used for more than a fortnight. If soiled, they should be changed at once. If children are carelessly or wilfully unclean they should be punished, and should sleep on straw-chip beds, the straw being burnt as soon as soiled^b. Blankets are to be washed as they appear to become dirty, or, at all events, once a-year. The boys should have their linen changed at the least twice in the week if they sleep in their day linen, once a week if they have night linen provided. Fire should be occasionally lighted by rotation in the dormitories for a few hours.

On occasion of the present enquiry all the clothes and all the bed-linen of every child that has had a cutaneous affection, or any clothes or bed-linen that have been used by any that have it, should be forthwith steamed or boiled, and fresh clothes should be served out as the children are reported to be cured. Meanwhile, there being ample space for the purpose, the children affected are to be kept separate till the cure and change of clothes has been completed.

3. FOOD.

FOR clearness' sake I append in the following table the diet which I should suggest for the present, stating the quantities in their *weekly* amounts. The upper line is the present dietary : the lower that which it is proposed to substitute for it.

^b Mr. Tufnell tells me that cocoa fibre, which can be washed and replaced, answers well.

TABLE

*Shewing the present and the proposed dietaries, in pints and ounces.
The quantities are those allowed weekly.*

COWLEY SCHOOL.	Bread.	Potatoes.	Greens, Turnips, or Carrots.	Mutton.	Beef.	Rice Pudding.	Butter.	Milk (pints).	Soup (pints).	Suet Pudding.	Porridge (pints).	Cheese.
Ages, 2 to 5.												
Present diet	61	18		6		8	$1\frac{3}{4}$	$5\frac{1}{4}$	1	8	0	0
Proposed diet	61	16	16	6	6	8	$3\frac{1}{2}$	7	0	0	0	0
Ages, 5 to 9.												
Present diet	78	24		9		0	$1\frac{3}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{4}$	10	$5\frac{1}{4}$	0
Proposed diet	88	20	20	7	7	10	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{1}{4}$	0	10	0	0
Ages, 9 to 16.												
Present diet	98	24		12		0	0	$3\frac{1}{2}$	3	12	7	7
Proposed diet	110	20	20	8	8	0	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$	1	12	0	7

The general principle upon which the changes recommended are based will be found to be an increase of meat, especially for the youngest class; an addition of green food; an increase of milk in the two younger classes; an addition to the bread of the two older classes; the abstraction of porridge from the two elder classes, and of suet pudding from the infants.

Experience has shewn, and will, I believe, in this case also prove, the value of such a Dietary here respectfully proposed to you. But in my judgment, no Dietary, however excellent, will suffice, unless accompanied by open-air exercise, and by, as far as can be secured, such mirthful life and child-like elasticity as can be obtained in a system necessarily and confessedly not favourable to the best development of the body and mind of a child. No diet whatever which is monotonous is safe for children. A little skilful management in varying the flavour and mode of cooking will often secure the

assimilation of a diet not absolutely so nutritious, as one which is left untouched in consequence of a natural instinct that demands variety.

4. OCCUPATIONS.

THE occupations generally proper for Industrial Schools are now so well defined as to require no elucidation here, save in so far as local or special circumstances bearing more directly upon health may tend to suggest modifications.

The half-time system gives ample opportunity for out-of-door work or play, if both of a suitable description be provided. Health being all in all to a working lad, and vital power being generally deficient in pauper children, sedentary industrial work, such as shoemaking and tailoring, are among the least desirable for health. Carpentry, stable or farm work, smithing, gardening are among the best for the boys, if they be not over-taxed; cooking, housework, washing are suitable for the girls. These for the most part develop the muscular system, and exercise usefully the mental qualities. Smithing is named as specially desirable, because an increasing number of lads can find places in connection with agricultural or other smaller steam engines, which are being largely brought into use throughout the country. A small steam engine for pumping water would, if the plan of irrigation with the sewage be carried out, be useful for the House; the man who managed it might be an industrial teacher in iron-working. A greater supply of water is wanted than the work of the lads should be expected to produce; and, as is the case at Annerley, the steam boiler might supply hot water and steam heat for

the laundry, the kitchen, and the baths—one man superintending the whole and teaching the lads^c.

It has been already said that the play-grounds should be in the sun to the south: they might be fitted with plain and circular swings, and Norwegian poles, at trifling expense, and from this one change very good results might be anticipated.

The girls at Cowley are not quite so easily provided with useful and healthful occupations as the boys. They are not strong enough for washing, excepting in the case of a few, who can do the lighter parts. They may aid in the kitchen to some extent; but the wholesale cookery of a large establishment is comparatively useless to them afterwards. Two or three might with advantage be taught in turn to prepare on special cottage grates smaller portions of diet. They would soon acquire handiness and knowledge which would be of real use to them in after life, whether in service, or in their future homes^d.

I am but too well aware of the difficulty of organizing such details in a small establishment; but I feel it a duty nevertheless to record them because of their bearing on the cheerfulness, life, and so on the health, of the inmates. Could not unpaid help be found to aid in superintending work of this kind?

I will only say further with respect to the occupations

^c I submit to the Guardians whether it might not be worth while to consider this addition to the establishment before deciding on the position of the sewage tanks. Should the School be much increased, there would be little doubt of the value of the arrangement.

^d This arrangement was proposed for the convalescents of the Hospital in this place several years ago. If every provincial Hospital would act on it, in a very few years economical and palatable cottage cookery might be practised in thousands of poor homes.

that it has been found that Music is a source of the greatest pleasure, and, when on a large scale, of profit also to district workhouse schools. Of pleasure, because a cheerful band keeps up, as is well known on board ship, an elasticity attained in no other way; of profit, by training boys to be fit to enter good Bands. That can be only partially done under ordinary circumstances in a small school: but if music be attempted care should be taken to cultivate cheerful secular music as well as devotional.

5. HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.

THE Hospital is to the north of the main buildings, exposed on all sides. The window in every ward faces the north; the passages only have a south aspect. The wards are inconveniently small. It is now difficult to make it a satisfactory building in any way. It would be better if certain partition walls were removed, and windows made to the south. In such a situation the wards ought to have been placed east and west. I am informed that diarrhœa arose some time since from a temporary defect in the drains, but this has been remedied and the illness has ceased. The children are well cared for by the Nurse; but her duty is now heavy.

6. MANAGEMENT AND EXPENDITURE.

AT the outset I ventured to say that certain general principles would be stated as those that had guided me in this Report; and they will explain why I have entered on topics which may at first sight seem to be only collaterally connected with health.

The *first principle* of a Pauper School is, it may be presumed, to train the children in such a way as to make them so useful and so independent that they might

be raised from the pauper class, and in future kept off the rates. Whatever falls short of this is at once scant charity and bad economy. If this be admitted, there follows *a second principle*, viz. that the low condition of the children of this class, who have no homes and are without hope, requires greater care, and in some respects higher training, physical and mental, than is sufficient for a class above them, and almost necessarily involves a larger proportional expenditure. I do not see how the necessary training is to be had in any school without considerable expense ; and expense less than is sufficient is a simple waste.

It were unbecoming in me to illustrate these maxims at length where they are well understood. At the same time, the question referred to me could not be considered with advantage between us, unless you knew the point of view from which the School was considered by me as your medical adviser on this occasion. I entertain no doubt that a somewhat higher scale of food and of cleanliness and of care is required for these children, in order to keep out the disease from which they have so long suffered. It is in itself, as I said at the outset, an index of a low state of vitality, or of cleanliness, or of food, or of care, or of all together. If any of the Guardians should point at the existing dietary and the general scale of comfort, and remark that they are even now far higher than these children would have in their own homes, were they not of the pauper class ; I can only answer that, true as that is, the loss of the freedom of home, the absence of the care of parents, and the deadening influence of unexercised affections, entirely counterbalance the supposed advantages in food, and air, and clothing ; and that had the Guardians been wholly satisfied with their condition they would not have required the present inspection.

There is nothing in the condition of the children which leads me to doubt the soundness of the principle on which the Industrial School was founded. That it has hitherto failed in practically becoming, as was intended, a District School, is unfortunate; and yet it is no objection to the principle of such establishments. The nearer, indeed, it can be brought to its intended condition of a *large* school the better. Well-paid Officers with ample help when required, liberal diet, cheerful amusements outside the building, will keep the Hospital clear, and give good material back to society and independence.

At the same time, I beg leave to guard myself against even the appearance either of advocating the opinion that District Schools are in all places the only, or even the best, method for the education of pauper children; or of objecting to orphan pauper "Homes," if under adequate inspection, and to all Workhouse Schools. I have not been called upon to enter on those questions, but only to discuss the "Sanitary condition generally" of the Cowley Industrial School, which was devised for a District School; and I have had to consider whether there be causes for low health inherent in it. I think that there are no such inherent causes. If the judgment of the Guardians should lead them to conclude, on examining the details of this Report, that any alterations are desirable for the purpose of checking the tendency to low pustular affections for so long prevalent there, the most important points will be suggested in the following summary of what has been stated above. They are the general conditions requisite for the health of such inmates, in such a building, and under such conditions as those you have to regulate.

The Guardians will no doubt notice that I have not

gone into financial statements, such being wholly beside the question of what it may be desirable to do, if it be possible. But then I take leave to add that I have suggested no expense but what I believe to be reasonable and judicious, and, should the School increase, also remunerative.

I. As respects the Dwelling and its site.

1. The southern slope should be in the hands of the Guardians.
2. The sewage may be turned on the land.
3. Play-grounds to the south should be provided.
4. The lavatory arrangements to be remodelled.

II. Clothing and Cleanliness.

Flannel to be provided.

Beds and clothes to be *steamed* as required.

Linen frequently changed.

III. Diet,

To be somewhat increased, and to be varied.

IV. Occupations.

Tailoring and Shoemaking not in themselves so desirable as employment out of doors or not involving a sitting posture, such as Carpentry, Smithing, Gardening, &c.

Cheerful recreations to be encouraged as such: music, drum and fife band, drilling, walks into the country.

V. Hospital,

If School increases, to be remodelled.

VI. Expenditure.

Experience has shewn that liberal expenditure and full numbers are essential for maintaining the vigour of children in District Schools, and for securing the ultimate objects of the Institutions.

It may be satisfactory to the Guardians to know that, notwithstanding the suggestions which it has been my duty to submit to their notice, I consider their School

capable of securing the highest sanitary condition for a considerable number of the class of children for whom it was destined.

It is a pleasure and a duty to acknowledge the ready kindness with which Mr. Carleton Tufnell, the accomplished Inspector for the Privy Council, has accompanied me over all the details of the Central London and North Surrey District Schools. I am greatly obliged to the Rev. S. V. Edwards, the Chaplain, to Dr. Coster, the Medical Attendant, and to the Superintendent of the Central London School: to the Rev. O. J. Vignoles, Dr. Wilkinson, and Mrs. Smith, of the North Surrey School; as well as to Mr. Harries of the Poor Law Board. Without the minute information these experienced persons were so good as to give me in the most obliging manner, I could not have decided without a much longer enquiry on several of the details that are here hinted at rather than fully described.

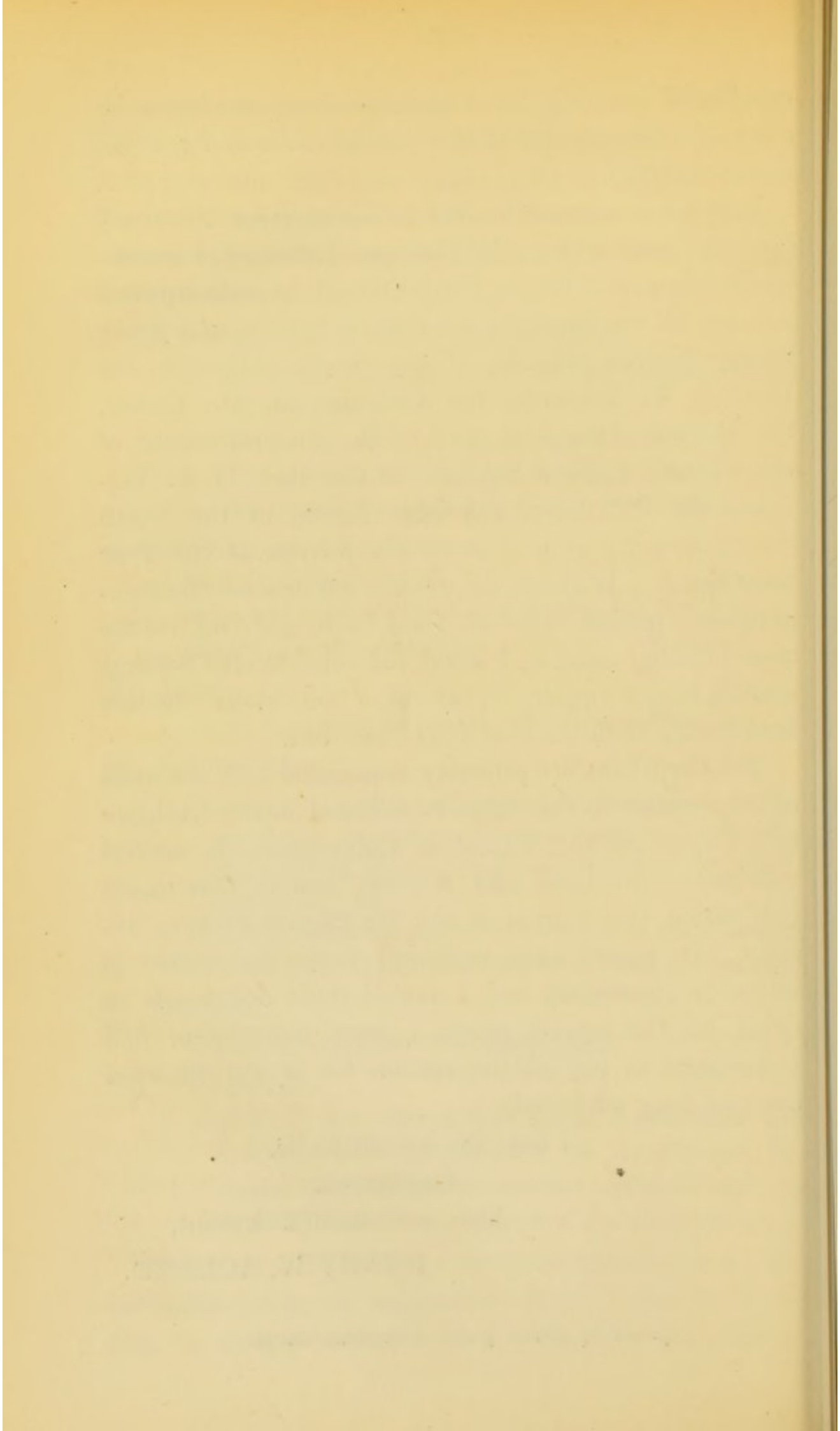
The Guardians are probably acquainted with the mass of information on the subject contained in the Evidence and Report of the Education Commission, in several volumes of the Poor Law Reports, and in that useful publication, the Journal of the Workhouse Visiting Society. It would have increased these few pages to unwieldy dimensions had I quoted these documents in detail on the several points I have named; or had I discussed in full all the reasons for or against what has now been advanced.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your most faithful Servant,

HENRY W. ACLAND.



NOTE.

The ova referred to in p. 4 have their counterpart in Plate IX., fig. 5, vol. ii. of the Sydenham Society's translation of Küchenmeister's Manual of Parasites. They were obtained by Mr. Charles Robertson and myself. Professor Rolleston also was kind enough to carefully examine them for me.

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