

Parochial medical relief : considered in a letter to the 'Poor Law Commissioners,' developing an entirely new system of medical remuneration, alike conducive to the interests of the rate-payers, the well-being of the poor, and the respectability of the profession / by E.T. Meredith.

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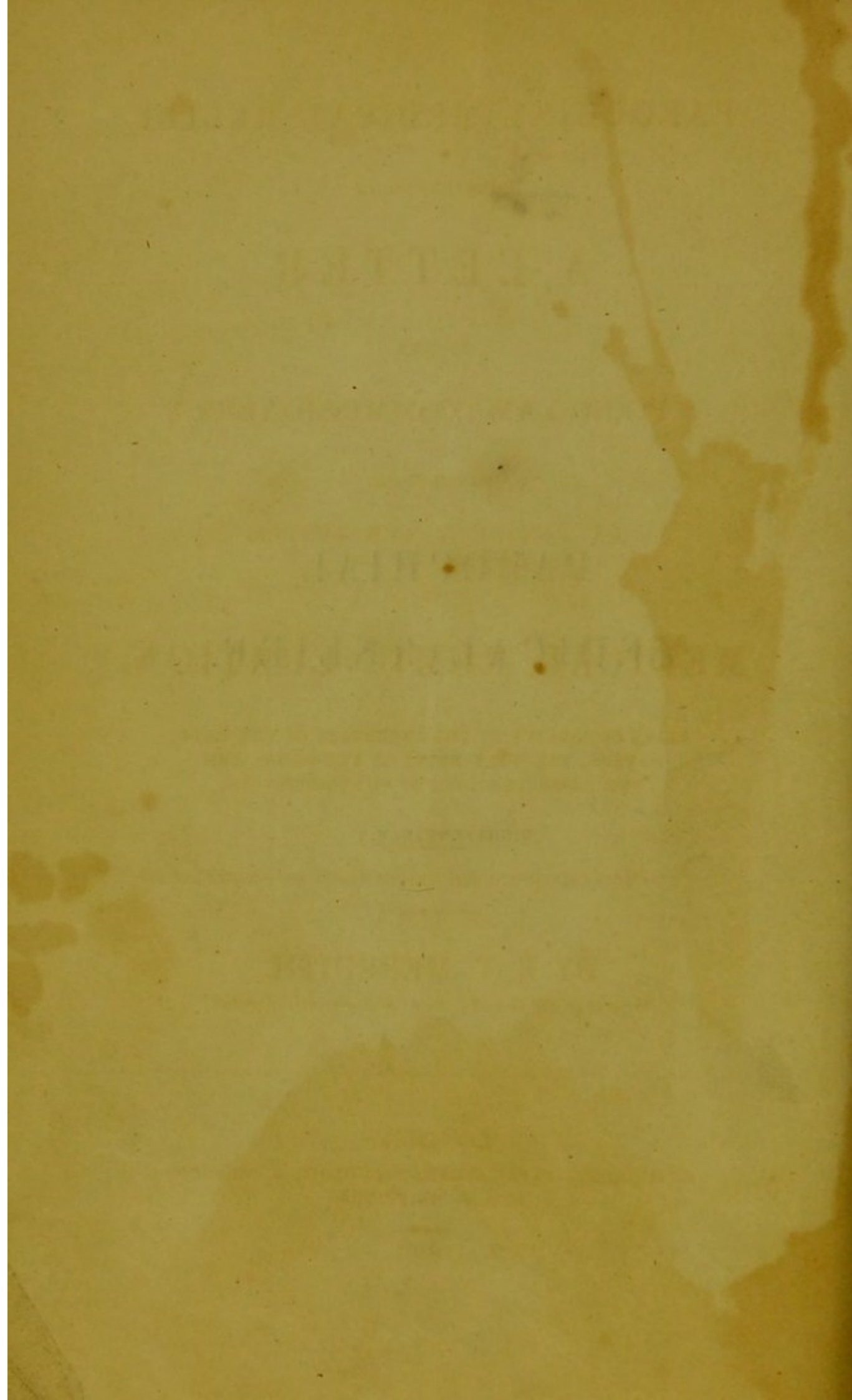
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PAROCHIAL
MEDICAL RELIEF.

[EIGHTEENPENCE.]



PAROCHIAL MEDICAL RELIEF
CONSIDERED IN
A LETTER
TO THE
"POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS,"
DEVELOPING
AN ENTIRELY NEW SYSTEM
OF
MEDICAL REMUNERATION,

ALIKE CONDUCTIVE TO THE INTERESTS OF THE RATE-
PAYERS, THE WELL-BEING OF THE POOR, AND
THE RESPECTABILITY OF THE PROFESSION.

"Non est vivere sed valere vita."——MART.

BY E. T. MEREDITH,
Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, London.

LONDON:
S. HIGHLEY, FLEET-STREET: LUDLOW, J. HEATON,
AND T. GRIFFITHS.

1840.

ERRATUM.

Page 20, line 27, FOR, in the lowest degree; READ, to the lowest degree.

LUDLOW: PRINTED BY HEATON AND PARTRIDGE.

A

LETTER.

GENTLEMEN,

THE Legislature having intrusted to you the charge of superintending the administration of the "Poor Law Amendment Act,"—to the fundamental principle of which I fully agree;—and having invested you with the necessary powers to carry its provisions into effect, and to ensure its successful issue: I feel that any suggestion in reference to the operation of that measure, would be in the first instance most properly submitted to your judgment; and when I reflect on the high character of the present Commission, no greater pledge is required, that any attempt, having for its object the supply of adequate Medical Relief to the Sick Poor, will receive that attentive consideration which the importance of the question demands, and meet with that indulgence which the inquirer into so complicated a subject needs.

It is with these feelings that I am induced to offer the following System of Medical Remuneration for your sanction, as on an equitable adjustment of this question wholly rests, that of providing adequate Medical Relief; for it is evident, that if the returns be not proportioned to the services required, the contract will be ill performed. Now, although the liberality which characterises the respectable part of the Profession, leads them to exact but a small portion of their usual fees for attendance on the Sick Poor, and in many instances to remit them altogether; yet it must be acknowledged that those who undertake the responsible duties of Union Surgeons, should be at least protected from loss. I cannot do better than introduce here a very apposite remark made by Dr. Calvert, (in alluding to the management of Dispensaries), who after recounting several motives why the interests of the Medical Officer should be protected, concludes "It is not on these accounts you must attend to his interests, but because, if he is injured, *the Poor are the first to feel it*:"—It has likewise been justly observed by Dr. Yellowly, an able and impartial writer on this subject, that, "If a Tradesman or Artisan were to offer to furnish an article of known value, at a rate at which it could not be afforded, there would at once

appear to be something underhand and suspicious in the transaction," — again, — " The greatest stickler for economy would never think of offering a sum which he knew was totally inadequate to procure the article in question ; there would thus be an appearance of a temptation to obtain it in a fraudulent way."

Coinciding in the remarks above quoted, and feeling strongly their application to the present mode and rate of Medical Remuneration ; I cannot refrain from expressing my conviction, that the " Case System" as now constituted, in combination with the anomaly of " Family Tickets," (of the value of which I hold it utterly impossible for any one to form, or even approach, a correct estimate); will open a wide field for the exercise of intrigue, and prove a fertile source, nay, offer a premium upon the accomplishment, of fraud ; for the object of the ill-paid Medical Officer, will assuredly be to increase the number of applicants, and so *impose* on the Rates ; and the object of the Relieving Officer will be to protect the Rates, and so *deprive* the Sick Poor of that relief to which the Law entitles them. This conclusion may be questioned, — it may be said that the character of the Profession is above such a suspicion, — that the Relieving Officer can have no motive for so abusing his trust ; — nevertheless it

must be admitted that the system is open to this most serious objection. How desirable then any plan must be that tends to relieve the Profession from the imputation of selfish, mercenary, and faithless conduct,—and the Relieving Officer from such an embarrassing position,—and also removes the source of that interminable contention inseparable from such contingencies, and which cannot be otherwise than prejudicial to all parties interested in the contract. Although I am not so sanguine as to suppose, that my plan will wholly effect this great end, still, that being one of its principal aims, I indulge the hope that it will prove a strong claim in its favor, and furnish an additional title to your support.

The subject of Parochial Medical Remuneration, has I am aware engaged many able and zealous writers, from whose researches much valuable information may be gleaned; men alike interested in the well-being of the Poor, and the respectability of the profession; and, at the same time, no less anxious to prevent unnecessary expenditure: and I am far from presuming that the plan I am about to propose is perfect in its details, far less have I any pretensions to mathematical accuracy in the calculations, but I think it approaches nearer to what a well regulated system should be, than those at present in oper-

ation, or any I have examined, and will meet most of the difficulties, and avoid the dilemmas, to which they are exposed, and from which the Poor are continually suffering, without compromising the just interests of the Profession or greatly increasing the expenditure; indeed it is not too much to assert, that a judicious and well directed system of Medical Relief, — with efficient and zealous Officers, — would rather *lessen* than *augment* the burdens that press on the Rate-payers.

I am so convinced of the soundness of the principle, (part Salary, part Case), herein advocated, that I am more desirous to secure your assent to that, than to risk the success of the whole scheme, by contending for details which may appear objectionable;—some regarding the amount of Remuneration which those details establish, as too high, others as too low:—on the whole however, after deliberately weighing the results, I think, the calculations, deduced from the data assumed, will be found to give a fair estimate of the value of the services performed: while the operation of the system cannot fail to be appreciated by the Profession, (without whose cordial approbation it is doubtful if any plan can permanently work well), as it will yield the Medical Officer a more equitable

rate of compensation, although he may not receive, as in my own case, a greater emolument : * provided, nevertheless, the Medical expenses should be increased,—which I candidly allow will be the effect in most instances, it being the general feeling of the Profession, that the present rates are on an average 50 per cent too low, to meet the necessary outlay ; †—I yet hope that the advantages, which I anticipate will follow the universal adoption of the scheme, will more than counterbalance any objections that may be raised on the ground of extravagance, (more apparent than real), by those who contribute to the general fund for the maintenance of the necessitous Poor ; the preservation of

* The district I attended last year, ending the 25th of March instant, comprises an area of 24 square miles, Population 3235, averaging formerly 300 cases annually; the lowest tender for which was £120. Since the introduction of my plan the cases average about 200—the aggregate salary for which would be £.113 6s. 7½d. according to the scale here advised:—my contract was £50. standing salary, and 5s. per case. This district formerly comprised only 17 square miles, Population 2580, the salary being £100.

† Although the Medical Officer may, perhaps, be 50 per cent BETTER PAID, it must not hence be inferred that the expenditure in general would be 50 per cent increased ; for in consequence of the reduction in the number of cases, the gross amount of salaries may not be increased 10 per cent.

health in whom, if they would but for a moment reflect, must always be considered, not only as a paramount duty with all christian communities, but, in the end, as the most politic species of economy, and most permanent source of national wealth. The Country is aroused, and is now shewing a praiseworthy anxiety on the subject of general health, evidenced by the inquiry lately called for by the House of Lords, and now about being instituted by the House of Commons.* with a view of establishing sanative regulations for the public welfare ; and shall it be said, Gentlemen, that you with your Assistants and the several Boards of Guardians, by lending your countenance to plans and regulations opposed to this national feeling, stand confessed of an indifference to such momentous truths, and insensible to the sympathies and wants of the Poor ?—no, no, it cannot be ;—Hear it not, Philanthropy !—Forbid it, Humanity ! Oh ! forbid it !

—“ Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,

Where wealth accumulates, and men decay ;

Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,

A breath can make them, as a breath has made :

But a bold peasantry their country's pride,

When once destroyed can never be supplied.”

* See Mr. Slaney's motion for a select Committee on the subject March 12th.

In making an exposition of the system of Medical Remuneration, which I have now the honor of submitting to your notice, I shall adopt the form of Propositions, as best calculated to interpret my views, and to give a clear explanation of the details, accompanied with such remarks,—without I hope appearing tedious,—as may be necessary to elucidate the several calculations, establish the correctness of the data, and give force to the general principle.

It is indispensable that the extent and nature of a work should be known before an estimate of the value of the labour and materials, required to execute it, can be formed ; consequently a definition of the duties of Medical Officers to Unions, very naturally precedes the question of Remuneration ; these two questions being resolved, that of adequate Medical Relief is answered, “ *ex necessitate.*”

The duties of Medical Officers to Unions, (trusses and unusual bandages being paid for at cost price), should be to attend upon, and furnish all necessary medicines and surgical assistance, (including operations* and vaccination), to

* I have seen no good reason alleged, why an extra fee should be allowed for operations,—such however has been suggested by many, for whose opinions I entertain a high respect ; notwithstanding which I cannot assent to their views on this occasion.

the Sick *Paupers*, disabled by accident or otherwise, residing in the Union, *upon their own application* ; each Officer certifying every case as it occurs, in his own district, to the Relieving Officer, who should as early as possible, visit the same, in order to detect any imposition that may be practised on the part of the applicant, and check any unnecessary attendance on the part of the Medical Officer ;—an exception must be made of difficult midwifery cases, for which an *extra* fee of 10s. 6d. should be allowed ;—other cases of sickness, or accident, happening to those not strictly Paupers, and not being in the receipt of more than 14s. per week, but who have an order for Medical Relief from the Relieving Officer, or any authorised Person, Guardian, or Overseer, should be equally attended to ; these cases not being charged without producing the authorised orders. Others again whose income does not exceed £1. 1s. a week, should be entitled to the same attendance, &c., by obtaining a Loan Ticket, for which they should pay 7s. 6d. ; (if midwifery 10s. 6d. by giving one month's notice, and paying 5s. in advance ; or £1. 1s. on the emergency) ; to the Relieving Officer, to be paid by him to the Medical Officer, who will return the Ticket as a receipt ; these loan cases, of course, will not

become chargeable to the Union, further than being considered as forming part of the annual average number of cases. In order to prevent any equivocation, as to the *cure* of a case, and repeated attacks of the same, or the accession of another disease, in the same person ; I propose that a *case* should be considered as lasting three months, after the expiration of which, the application must be renewed, if the case continues, or a fresh illness arises, but the same individual should not be charged more than twice in the year. The Medical Officer should as now make a weekly return of the Sick under his treatment, accompanied with such observations as the cases call for ; which return should be examined by the Board, and certified by the Chairman as approved, or otherwise, as the case may be ; but all other reports, involving opinions not *immediately* connected with cases under his care, he should not be expected to make, without receiving a proportionate fee for his trouble. Some provision should be made to ensure *promptitude*, in the execution of the necessary orders for extra diet, &c., issued by the Medical Officer ;—this at present is badly arranged,—would it not be well to allow the Medical Officer to send his orders direct to the parties contracting for the several articles, at least in those cases, where

the applicants are receiving pauper relief? The Medical districts should be limited to a surface of forty square miles; and no district should furnish on an average more than 600 cases, nor less than 50, annually; neither should a district of forty square miles exceed 300 cases annually,—thirty miles 400, and other districts in the same proportion.* I have made no separate provision for attendance, &c., at the Workhouse, believing the duties thereof may safely be included in the general arrangement.

These conditions being observed as nearly as possible, consistently with a due regard for the peculiarities of different localities, and the boundaries of Parishes,† in respect to the extent of the several districts; I beg leave to submit the the pecuniary consideration for the faithful discharge of these duties should be based upon the following

* It has been proposed to found the calculation of the value of Medical Salaries, upon the extent of the District, and the amount of Population; this principle, however, can never safely be applied, because the sickly, or healthful character of a district may be quite uninfluenced by the amount of its Population; again, the Population may be comparatively rich or poor.—An area of forty square miles I know is by many considered too extensive, but with the reservations here laid down I think the objection vanishes.

† No circumstance should justify the division of a Parish except where its cases exceed 600 annually.

PROPOSITIONS ;

First,—That the Medical Officer should be Remunerated by a “ Fixed Annual Salary,” and a “ Sum,”—proportioned to the number of cases attended during the year ;—but, as the amount of this “ Sum” cannot be ascertained before the end of the year, and as the payments are made quarterly, I would advise a portion, from three to five pounds less than the average, to be paid with the quarterly “ Fixed Salary,” leaving the balance to be adjusted at the last quarter when the total number of cases will be known.

Second,—That the “ Fixed Salary” should consist of two sums ;—the first, depending upon the *extent* of the *district*, and the progressive *value* of the whole of the *cases* occurring therein, and which may be considered as “ Milage ;”—the second depending upon the annual *number* of cases, (the *value* and *number* being taken on an average of the three preceding years)* and which may be regarded as a “ Per Centage” on stock in trade.

* In adopting this system where the Remuneration has been by a sole annual Salary, the first year will necessarily be experimental in regard to the average, as the present returns will scarcely afford a just criterion of the number of BONA-FIDE cases ; taking this into consideration, I therefore think that ONE FOURTH of the reported cases may be safely and fairly deducted from the three preceding annual returns and the average taken on the remaining three fourths.

The "Fixed Salary" thus established will guarantee the Medical Officer from loss ; (it is much to be feared that Boards of Guardians attach little import to this), the necessity of which will perhaps more readily be conceded, when I affirm that the expenses* incurred in conducting a Country Private Practise of 300 cases annually, average 12s. 6d. per case ; and still more apparent will the necessity be to guard against anything like risk, when it cannot be disguised, that as surely as the Medical Officer finds the chances running against him, so certainly will the Poor be neglected.

Third, — That the "Milage" should be determined at a rate per square mile, *progressively decreasing* as the miles *increase*. That this *rate* should be such as to give, for forty square miles of surface yielding 200 cases annually, the sum of £40.

A progressive rate is absolutely necessary, to afford a fair estimate of the value of the *outlay* and *labour*, required to work unequal surfaces ; and the same is equally applicable in respect to unequal numbers of cases. I have assumed, that to work forty square miles of surface yielding 200 cases annually, it will be worth £40.

* These expenses do not include the CAPITAL sunk in education, &c., the interest on which cannot be estimated at less than £50. per annum.

granting this,—which is but reasonable ;—I find by arithmetical progression, that the value of the first mile descending, will be £1.19s.0 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. $\frac{7}{11}$ f. and that the last will be only of the value of 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. $\frac{3}{4}$ f. I shall perhaps better explain myself by the following example. If forty miles be worth £40. to work, twenty miles will be worth £29. 15s. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. by progression, instead of £20., by simple proportion ;—in the same ratio, ten miles will be worth £17. 6s. 4d. ;—and five miles £9. 5s. 4d. By the same rule the value of any given surface may be found.

Should this proportion be objected to, as not adapted to all circumstances, an uniform rate of £1. 5s. per square mile would best meet the difficulty, and would perhaps give more general satisfaction ; at the same time I am rather inclined to adhere strictly to the progressive rate, as being far more equitable. For although certain expenses may be incidental to the performance of a given work, over a given surface, it does not follow that those expenses will preserve an equal or simple proportion to any other space, having the same duties, much less if those duties are not uniform. One Horse may be equal to forty miles ; but one Horse must be had to do twenty ;—therefore for working twenty miles, you ought to receive more than one half the

value of forty miles, the *expenses* being nearly the same, notwithstanding, that the *labour* may be diminished exactly one half. I have said the "Milage" should have reference likewise, to the progressive value of the whole of the cases, (forming the "Fluctuating Salary" which will be described hereafter), and this rather than simply to the number ; inasmuch as each individual case will be of unequal value. To illustrate this, I assume 200 cases occurring in a district of forty square miles, for attendance on which, *in that space*, I allow £40. as "Milage,"—but as 200 cases will give £40. for forty miles, 300 cases would give £60. for the same space by simple proportion ;—this, however, is too much, because the additional 100 cases, would not increase the *expenses* or *labour*, by one half ; i. e. in the same proportion. I therefore say, let the "Milage" previously determined for any given surface, bear also, a simple proportion to the *progressive value* of the whole number of cases ; 200 being the standard for any district. I fix upon 200 because that number will average nearly 12s. per case,* on the whole annual receipt in a district of forty square miles ; which I con-

* It will rarely happen that the average per case will exceed 12s. 6d. if this however should appear to be PERMANENT, the district may be altered to meet the difficulty, or the "Per Centage" may be reduced.

sider as only a fair remuneration for the faithful attendance on, and the due supply of medicine, (during one year) for, 200 *bona-fide* cases of sickness, or accident happening in a district of that extent ; e. g. as £49. 19s. 4d. the progressive value of 200 cases, is to £67. 9s. 3d. the value of 300 cases ; so will £40. the value of the milage for forty miles, with 200 cases, be to £54. 0s. 1¼d. the value of the milage sought for forty miles, with 300 cases ;——

£49. 19s. 4d. : £67. 9s. 3d. : : £40. : £54. 0s. 1¼d.)

instead of £60. which simple proportion would give : the milage then for forty miles, averaging 300 cases annually, will be £54. 0s. 1¼d. ; for the same space with 100 it will be £21. 19s. 11½d.

Fourth,—That the amount of the second portion of “ Fixed Salary,” — the “ Per Centage,” — should be estimated at the rate of £15. per cent on the average annual *number* of cases.

This portion of the “ Fixed Salary” does not require a progressive rate, as the “ Stock” in trade necessary to be kept, will nearly always bear a direct proportion to the number of cases. A valuable feature in the operation of this portion of “ Fixed Salary,” will be found in its reducing the *difference* of value between each case in the lowest degree, consistently with the value (£180)

of the whole 600 cases herein assumed; and yet the *difference* will be great enough to preserve the Principle of the progressive rate,—e. g. the first of 600 cases according to this *joint system*, will be worth 8s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. $\frac{313}{601}$ f., and the last will be worth 3s. 0d. $\frac{288}{601}$ f.;—according to *progression only*, the first of 600 cases will be worth 11s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. $\frac{25}{601}$ f., the last being of the value of $\frac{576}{601}$ f. This will appear more striking if we calculate upon 200 cases; the value of the first being, by my system, (avoiding fractions) 9s. and the last 7s. averaging 8s. per case;—by *progression only* the value of the first of 200 cases will be 12s. and the last 8s., averaging 10s. per case;—the difference between the first and last case, in the first instance being 2s., and in the last 4s.

Should the estimates I have formed be considered too high, the Per Centage here advised may be reduced, but the integrity of the other financial parts must be preserved, at least so far as not to *reduce* the data on which they are founded.

Fifth,—That the remaining “Sum,”—which may very appropriately be called the “Fluctuating Salary,”—should be ascertained by the same rule as was applied to the “Milage,”—i. e. the *value* of each case pro-

gressively decreasing as the number of cases increase; the amount of this "Sum," together with that of the "Fixed Salary," jointly constituting the aggregate Annual Remuneration.

I have limited the number of cases which any district ought to supply, to the extent of that district: I likewise limit the number of cases which any one Medical Officer should have under his charge to 600 annually. These limitations I think most essential to the perfect working of this system, and therefore it is most important that they should be enforced as nearly as possible; this arrangement should not however preclude a Firm from holding two districts; neither should it debar the same Medical Officer from the same privilege, provided the *two districts jointly*, do not transgress the limitations above set forth.

Supposing the 600 cases to occur in a Town district, where the milage would be little or nothing;* I think £180. would be a fair compensation for attendance, &c. thereon, for one year, being at the rate of 6s. per case; this being a little more than the average expenses of Dispensary Practice; and less than the value of each case as estimated by the Medical witnesses,

* "Milage" need not be allowed in districts whose area does not exceed two square miles.

in their evidence before the select Committee of the House of Commons.* The “Per Centage” to conduct these 600 cases will amount to £90. this forming the “Fixed Salary,”—leaving £90. (the progressive value of the cases), as the “Fluctuating Salary.” Now, if 600 cases produce £90., each case progressively decreasing in value; the first case will be worth 5s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. $\frac{312}{601}$ f. and the last $\frac{285}{601}$ f.; the “Aggregate Salary” then for 600 cases will stand thus:—

Fixed Salary.....	£90.	}	Aggregate Salary	£180.
Fluctuating Salary... ..	£90.			

For 400 it will be;—

	£.	s.	d.		£.	s.	d.
Fixed Salary,	60	0	0	} Aggregate Salary,	139	19	4
Fluctuating Salary,	79	19	4				

I have now developed the whole scheme; and although its application appears easy, I am fearful I have not been happy in rendering the details very intelligible. The subject undoubtedly is complicated, and full of difficulties, involving as it does the reconciliation of several conflicting interests; but if I have been able to impress upon you the line of argument followed, and

* See likewise the Petition of the Medical Practitioners in Gloucester, on the subject of payment per case. In reference to this valuable Petition, I here take the opportunity of expressing my concurrence in its general prayer.

satisfy you of the value of the Principle advocated, I shall have accomplished the object I wished principally to achieve in thus addressing you; and most willingly do I resign the arrangement of the details to your hands, well knowing that whatever comes recommended with the weight of your authority as practically useful, is sure to meet with corresponding attention, and cheerful acquiescence, from those whose duty it is to provide Medical Relief for the sick Poor.

—“Facile est inventis addere:”—

I shall now offer a few examples in illustration of the financial working of the system: Take a District of forty square miles averaging 200 cases annually, the items will be as follow;

		£.	s.	d.
Fixed Salary, £70.	} Milage, - - - - -	40	0	0
consisting of		Per Centage on 200 cases,	30	0
Fluctuating Salary	} Progressive value of 200			
being the		cases, - - - - -	49	19

Aggregate Salary, - £119. 19s. 4d.

Averaging per case, - - - 11s. 11½d.

This district is assumed as the standard, from which the value of any other district is deduced.

EXAMPLES.

		£.	s.	d.	
Forty Miles and 300 cases.	Fixed } Milage,	54	0	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	Average Per Case 11s. 1d.
	Salary } Per Centage, ..	45	0	0	
	Fluctuating Salary,	67	9	3	
	Aggregate Salary,	166	9	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	
Thirty-two Miles and 200 cases.	Fixed } Milage,	38	4	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	Average Per Case 11s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.
	Salary } Per Centage, ..	30	0	0	
	Fluctuating Salary,	49	19	4	
	Aggregate Salary,	118	4	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Thirty-two Miles and 175 cases.	Fixed } Milage,	34	5	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	Average Per Case 12s. 0 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.
	Salary } Per Centage, ..	26	5	0	
	Fluctuating Salary,	44	16	3	
	Aggregate Salary,	105	7	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Twenty Miles and 215 cases.	Fixed } Milage,	31	10	1	Average Per Case 10s. 10d.
	Salary } Per Centage, ..	32	5	0	
	Fluctuating Salary,	52	18	2	
	Aggregate Salary,	116	13	3	

EXAMPLES.

Twenty Miles and 150 cases.	Fixed } Salary }	Milage,	23	8	7 $\frac{1}{4}$	Average Per Case 11s. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.
		Per Centage, ..	22	10	0	
		Fluctuating Salary,	39	6	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	
		Aggregate Salary,	85	5	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	
		<hr/>				
Fifteen Miles and 350 cases.	Fixed } Salary }	Milage,	35	18	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	Average Per Case 9s. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
		Per Centage, ..	52	10	0	
		Fluctuating Salary,	74	6	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	
		Aggregate Salary,	162	15	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	
		<hr/>				
Ten Miles and 400 cases.	Fixed } Salary }	Milage,	27	14	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	Average Per Case 8s. 4d.
		Per Centage, ..	60	0	0	
		Fluctuating Salary,	79	19	4	
		Aggregate Salary,	167	13	7 $\frac{1}{4}$	
		<hr/>				
Five Miles and 500 cases.	Fixed } Salary }	Milage,	16	4	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	Average Per Case 7s. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.
		Per Centage, ..	75	0	0	
		Fluctuating Salary,	87	9	7	
		Aggregate Salary,	178	14	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	
		<hr/>				

To shew the operation of the “Fluctuating Salary,”—let us suppose the preceding examples to give the three years average, and that we are about forming a contract for the ensuing year;—the “Fixed Salaries” *will* remain as they are there stated; but the “Fluctuating Salary,” as its name indicates, *may* not be the same:—e. g.

	£.	s.	d.
Fixed Salary; District Forty Miles; average cases 200,	70	0	0
Fluctuating Salary; 300 cases occurring during the year,			
Aggregate Salary,	137	9	3
Average Per Case 9s. 1½d.			

Fixed Salary; District Fifteen Miles; average cases 350,	88	8	5½
Fluctuating Salary; 285 cases occurring during the year,			
Aggregate Salary,	153	11	7
Average Per Case 10s. 9¼d.			

Again, taking the number of cases in these two last examples, as the average, the result, for the same districts, *may be* as follows; (I say *may be*, because although the “Fixed Salary” is determined before hand, i. e. at the commencement of the year; the “Fluctuating Salary” depending upon the subsequent number of

cases, cannot be ascertained until the expiration of the year;) e. g.

	£.	s.	d.
Fixed Salary; District Forty Miles; average	99	0	1½
cases 300,			
Fluctuating Salary; 258 cases occurring	60	14	5½
during the year,			
Aggregate Salary,	159	14	6½
Average Per Case 12s. 4½d.			

Fixed Salary; District Fifteen Miles; average	75	4	8
cases 285,			
Fluctuating Salary; 320 cases occurring	70	7	3
during the year,			
Aggregate Salary,	145	11	11
Average Per Case 9s. 1d.			

In taking a review of these examples, it will be evident that many districts as at present determined, must be reconstructed, in order that due and legitimate advantage may be taken of the financial operation of this system, in reference to density of Population or peculiarities of locality;—for instance, a Town should not be included in an extensive Country District, in consequence of the cases occurring therein tending to increase the amount of “Milage.”—Provided the *present* Town district of the Ludlow Union, comprising an area of thirty-two square

miles, was paid for according to this plan; it may be so disposed as to ensure a reduction in the Salary of £10. or £12. per cent; by separating the Town from the Country, and so forming two districts.*

It now only remains for me to recall your attention to the defects of the several systems at present in operation, with the view of contrasting the merits of that now submitted to your decision; and I appeal to your judgment the more confidently, as the feeling evinced in your Minute of the 6th of June, 1839, gives assurance of a more liberal policy, than has hitherto been acted upon. Although much has been advanced against the present systems of Medical Remuneration, it cannot be too frequently insisted upon, or too vividly borne in mind, that, that system must be faulty indeed, which takes advantage of the delinquencies, and petty jealousies, by which some members of the Medical Profession too often degrade themselves; and the peculiar, and oftentimes unfortunate,

* I believe a set of tables may be constructed that would greatly facilitate the working of these calculations.

circumstances of others; in order to obtain a mere nominal reduction in expenditure. I envy not the character of that man, who, influenced by a spirit of ungenerous rivalry, can so debase a liberal Profession: but for him whose unfortunate circumstances reduce him to so painful a necessity, as to accept terms unworthy of himself, the hand of pity must always be extended;—and truly do I pity him:—for those, however, who encourage, and join in a contract, based upon such narrow views of political economy, and fraught with so much sordidness, and illiberality; no censure can be too severe and loud; no indignation too great and lasting.

At the risk of repetition, I again urge the objections, which I lately addressed to the Board of Guardians of the Ludlow Union, and which I have always raised against the Medical Officer being Remunerated, either by a *sole* Annual Salary;—in which case there is no protection against, not only the annoyance of frivolous cases, but what is of greater moment, the unjust applications of many well able to provide Medical assistance for themselves;—or by a payment per case *only*; and the higher the value set upon each case, in the last instance, the stronger the objection obtains, so long as the urgency of the cases requiring Medical Relief, and the granting

of the Medical Orders, are left to the judgment and discretion of the Relieving Officer. So objectionable does the sole case system appear, that one or other of the following results may too confidently be predicated from its adoption; either the expenses* will be increased on the one

* It must not be overlooked that the **SOLE CASE SYSTEM** affords no protection against the increase of expense occasioned by a prevailing epidemic;—this, however, is in a great measure limited in my system, by the operation of the “**Fluctuating Salary**,”—as the following example demonstrates;—Assume a Town District averaging 300 cases, and the subsequent year yielding 500 cases: the “**Fixed Salary**,”—consisting of “**Per Centage**” only;—will be £45., and the “**Fluctuating Salary**” will be £87. 9s. 7d., making the “**Aggregate Salary**,” £132. 9s. 7d. averaging 5s. 3½d. per case. From this example it is evident how much safer the Union must be under this system, than where 7s. or 8s. are allowed **PER CASE ONLY**. This may appear inconsistent, with the declaration of the necessity of protecting the Medical Officer from loss; it is, however, far otherwise, as the next year’s “**Fixed Salary**” will be increased, and the probabilities being that the same Medical Officer will be reappointed, and that the cases will diminish in number, he will thus be reimbursed for any loss he had sustained the previous year;—if we reverse the example, this will readily be seen,—“**Fixed Salary**,” (Per Centage, upon 500 cases), £75., “**Fluctuating Salary**” (300 cases), £67. 9s. 3d. making the “**Aggregate Salary**” £142. 9s. 3d. averaging 9s. 5½d. per case.

hand, by an accession of cases, from collusion between the Medical and Relieving Officer; or, on the other, the Sick Poor will be the victims of *delay*, through the ignorance or apathy of the Relieving Officer, and the embarrassment he must experience in following the instructions of, possibly, a short-sighted and unfeeling Board of Guardians. Another effect which it is not difficult to foresee, and which cannot be contemplated without horror, is the certain increase of mortality, for it is self evident, that where disease has been protracted, from whatever cause, the probabilities of recovery will be reduced in proportion to the time lost before recourse is had to the controlling power of a systematic application of curative agents.

I now beg leave to direct your attention to the merits of the system herein proposed, with the earnest hope of securing your interest in its favor, and inducing you to recommend its being carried into immediate execution. The advantages that I contemplate will follow its introduction may be thus briefly stated;—that as the Relieving Officer has not so great a motive for withholding orders for Medical Relief: so the Medical Officer being better paid by *fewer cases*, has consequently not the inducement to increase

the number of applicants ; the Rates are likewise protected against extravagance, by the cases continually and progressively diminishing in value, as they increase in number ; and at the same time the Medical Officer is Remunerated in proportion to his labour, &c. ; and secures a guarantee for his capital. I need not say that the Sick Poor would have better skill ensured to them, and receive more prompt attention, when the Medical Officer, feeling himself equitably remunerated, can, without reference to pecuniary considerations—the mere profit or loss—reflect that he is holding an appointment of Trust, rendered honorable by being conferred by Gentlemen of intelligence and respectability, with whom perhaps he may have daily intercourse ; that honor becoming more distinguished by the appointment being confirmed by the assent of Her Majesty's Commissioners.*

However great the responsibility ; however onerous the duties ; that responsibility will be

* It has been proposed to take the election of Medical Officers out of the power of the Guardians, and vest it in the body of Rate-payers ; this I think would be unwise, so long as the Boards of Guardians shew a liberal feeling towards their Medical Officers, and treat their opinions with the respect that is due to men of education and honorable principle.

freely taken ;—those duties cheerfully performed, if you can but once impart HONOR ;—that great incentive to generous and noble actions,—to the Office of Union Surgeon. This desideratum being accomplished, and the appointment thrown open to the whole profession, without restrictions as to length of residence in a place, or time of being in Practice ;* let the qualifications of candidates be not only legal, but let it be likewise understood that the possession of Talent, Energy, Integrity, and Humanity, will have its due and just influence in directing the choice of the Guardians ; enforce this, and you will thus engender a generous, and an useful rivalry, and secure an efficient and respectable corps of Medical Officers, anxious to protect the interests of the Rate-payers, zealous in the discharge of their several and important duties, and invariably willing to co-operate in fulfilling the benevolent intentions of the Legislature, in its endeavour to ameliorate the condition of the necessitous

* It has been suggested as a protection to the resident Practitioners that two or three years residence in the Union should be required as an additional qualification, this, however, in my opinion, savours too much of monopoly, and appears inconsistent with the character of a liberal Profession.

Poor, by leading them to depend more upon their own resources, and less upon the fluctuating bounty of charitable Institutions, and by impressing them with a just and virtuous estimate of their own independence, so raise them in the scale of society, and render them more attached to the legal institutions of their Country, and thankful for the blessings they enjoy under a limited Monarchy.

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

E. T. MEREDITH.

Poor, by lending them to depend more upon
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