

## **The abuse of charity in London : the case of the five royal hospitals.**

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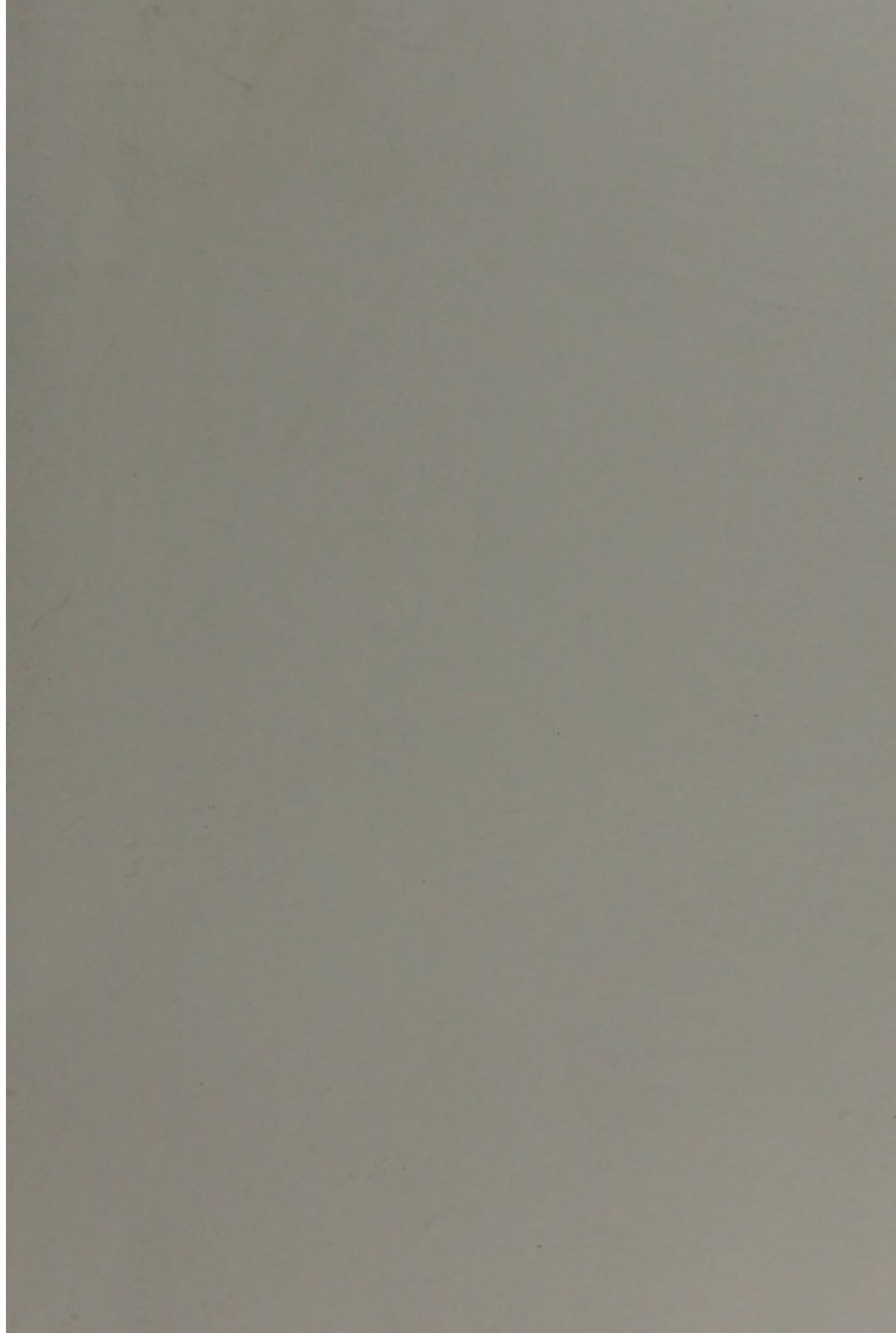
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## THE ABUSE OF CHARITY IN LONDON:

THE CASE OF THE FIVE ROYAL HOSPITALS.

*March. 1876*

**I**N order that the reader may form a clear idea of the great abuses which at present exist, and which year by year are becoming greater, in the administration of some of the chief London charities, it will be necessary to give a very brief description of the origin of our five great Royal Hospitals.

### I.

Most people are aware that, by the dissolution of the religious houses at the time of the Reformation, the poor were deprived of the charitable relief which had been bequeathed to them by the piety of former ages. This was especially the case in London, where the indigent had to be supported by the private charity of the citizens, who were not only called upon to relieve their own poor, but multitudes of others still more wretched, who, tempted by its great reputation for wealth, flocked into the City. By the dissolution of the religious houses not only was much misery caused, but disorder, demoralization, and robbery were increased to such an extent that the administration of justice, sanguinary as it was in those days, could not entirely subdue them. It is to the credit of the clergy of the Reformed Church that they exerted themselves manfully in the cause of the poor, and insisted in vigorous language on a more liberal distribution of alms for their support, not only from the City authorities, but the nobility and clergy as well. Bishop Latimer, when preaching a sermon at Paul's Cross on the subject of the distress among the poor of the City of London, and the wealth of the citizens, nobility, and clergy, said that

"byshopes, abbotes, pryores, parsons, canons resident, pristres, and all, were strange theves, yea dukes, lordes, and all; the king, quod he, made a mar-



vielles good acte of parlamente that certayne men shoulde sowe every of them two acres of hempe, but it was all to littel were it so muche more to hang the theves that be in England. Byshopes, abbotes, and such others, should not have so many servauntes, nor so many dysches, but to goo to their first foundation, and kepe hospitalite, to fede the nedye people, not jolye felows with golden chaines and velvet gownes; ne let them not ones come into the houses of religious men; let them call them knave byshope, knave abbote, knave pryor, yet fede none of them all, nor ther horses nor ther dogges."\*

Again, Bishop Ridley, in a letter he wrote to Cecyl for permission to use Bridewell as an asylum for the poor, says:—

"Good Mr. Cecyl, I must be a suitor to you in our master Christ's cause. I beseech you to be good unto him. The matter is, sir, alas! he has been too, too long abroad as you do know without lodging in the streets of London, both hungry, naked, and cold. Now thanks be unto Almighty God the citizens are willing to refresh him, and to give him both meat, drink, clothing, and firing, but, alas! sir, they want lodging for him, for in some one house I dare to say they are fain to lodge three families under one roof."

Again, Stowe, quoting from a pamphlet published at Nurenberg, says:—

"O ye citizens, if ye would turn but even the profits of your chauntries and your *obits* to finding of the poor with a politic and godly religion! Whereas now London being one of the flowers of the world, and touching worldly riches, hath so many, yea an innumerable number of poor people forced to go from door to door and to sit openly in the streets a begging, and many not able to do for others, but lie in their houses in most grievous pain, and die for lack of aid of the rich, to great shame of thee, O London! I say if ye would redress these things as ye are bound, and sorrow for the poor, so should ye be without clamour of them which also have cried unto God against you. . . ."

And again:

"I think, in my judgment, under heaven is not so little provision made for the poor, as in London of so rich a city."

The poverty and misery in the City of London at length reached such a height that in the thirtieth year of the reign of King Henry VIII. (1538), the mayor and commonalty of the City of London prayed that they might from henceforth have the order, rule, government, and disposition "of the Hospitals or Spitals, commonly called St. Mary's Spital, St. Bartholomew's Spital, St. Thomas' Spital, and the new abbey at Tower-hill, with the rents and revenues appertaining to the same, for the only relief of the poor, sick, and needy persons." Nor did the worshipful body in any of their supplications attempt to conceal from the King the real state of the poor in the City of London, for they reminded him that the three great Spitals named were

"fownded of good devocon by annceyent fathers, and endowed with great possessions and rents, onely for the relyeff, comforte, and ayde of the poore and indygent people not beyng hable to helpe theymselffs, and not to the mayntenance of preastes, chanons, and monks, carnally lyvyng as they of late have

\* Quoted from a letter written by Thomas Dorset, then curate of St. Margaret's, Lothbury, to the mayor of Plymouth.



doon, nothyng regardyng the myserable people lying in the streete, offendyng every clene person passyng by the way wt theyre fylthye and nastye savors . . . so that all impotent persones not hable to labor shalbe releved by reason of the sayd hospitalles and abbey, and all sturdy beggers not wyllyng to labor shalbe punisshed so that wt Godd's grace we or no persones shalbe seene abrode to begge or aske almesse; for the whyche doyng yo<sup>r</sup> grace shall not alonely meryt more toward God, and yo<sup>r</sup> people, than any of yo<sup>r</sup> most noble progenitors whiche have fownded so many abbeyes."

Although his Majesty granted the prayer of the corporation to have the above-named Spitals placed under their management, a lapse of six years seems to have taken place before any direct system was organized for their management. The first Spital which was handed over to the civic authorities was that of ST. BARTHOLOMEW, which was for ever after to be styled "the House of the Poor in West Smithfield, in the suburbs of the City of London, of King Henry VIII.'s foundation," in order, as Stowe tells us, "that there might be comfort to the prisoners, visitation to the sick, food to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, and a sepulchre to the dead." In consideration of his Majesty's bounty the citizens agreed that within three months after their charter was sealed they would sustain a priest, to be called Visitor of Newgate, and provide other priests for Christ Church; and that they would also make and provide at the Spital sufficient lodging for one hundred "poor" men and women, and for one matron, and twelve women under her, to make the beds, and watch and attend on the sick men and women, finding for all of them perpetually sufficient meat, drink, bedding, clothing, wood, coals, and all other things necessary; and also eight persons to be beadles, to bring to the said hospital such poor, sick, and impotent people as should be found going abroad in the City and suburbs, not having wherewith to be sustained. Also that they would find one physician and one surgeon, and provide "all manner of 'pothecary ware, and other things meet, necessary, and convenient for the help or healing of the poor, sick, or impotent people." They further undertook that after supporting the vicars, priests, ministers, and other officers, the whole of the endowments of the hospital should go to the relief and sustentation of the poor.

In the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Henry VIII. (27th of December, 1546) the King further granted that the said mayor, commonalty, and citizens, and their successors, should be masters, rulers, and governors of the hospital or house called ST. MARY OF BETHLEM, without and nigh the gate called Bishopsgate; and should have the order, rule, and government of the said hospital and people there; and should have full power and authority to see and cause the rents, revenues, and profits of the lands and possessions of the same hospital to be employed and bestowed to the relief of the poor distracted people there, according to the true meaning of the foundation of the same, or otherwise as it shall please the King.



Although St. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL did not then receive its charter, the King granted all the endowments which had formerly belonged to the hospital by way of purchase to the City for the sum of £2,461 2s. 6d. It seems to have been intended for the relief of the poor,—or, in other words, was an institution somewhat similar to our parish workhouses,—and not solely for the cure of the sick. In his letters-patent the King says:—

“Know ye that we, weighing and considering the exhausted and miserable state and condition of the poor, sick, and infirm persons going about and begging in the public streets and places of our City of London, *and suburbs thereof*, and also for the cure and support of the poor as aforesaid, . . . and further, of our more ample grace, we will for us, our heirs and successors, and do grant, that the said hospital in Southwark from henceforth may and shall be a place and house for poor persons there to be relieved and supported; and shall be called the House of the Poor in Southwark, in the county of Surrey, of our foundation.”

The Hospital of BRIDEWELL did not receive its charter from Edward VI. till the year 1552. Although the sick poor, and infirm and impotent persons, had been greatly relieved by the establishment of the three royal hospitals already named, two other sources of anxiety were perpetually pressing themselves on the notice of the mayor and aldermen. The City, it appears, was at that time infested by a vast number of sturdy rogues and lazy vagabonds, who, too indolent to work, lived upon alms they extorted from the citizens by their audacity, and occasionally caused great disturbances. There were also numbers of destitute and helpless children whose parents were dead or had deserted them. At length the citizens petitioned the King to assist in establishing hospitals or refuges for both classes—one, where the vagabonds should be obliged to work; the other for the reception of poor and destitute children. The supplication made in the name of the poor to the King's Majesty for obtaining the house of Bridewell, in 1552, says:—

“For Jesu Christ's sake, right dear and most dread sovereign lord, we the humble, miserable, sore, sick, and friendless people, beseech your Majesty to cast upon us your eyes of mercy and compassion. . . . But, most gracious lord, unless we find favour in the eyes of your Majesty, our hope of deliverance from our wretched and vile state cannot be obtained, for lack of harbour and lodging; and therefore, most gracious Sovereign, hear us speaking in Christ's name, and for Christ's sake have compassion on us, that we may lie no longer in the streets for lack of harbour. And that our old sore of idleness may no longer vex us nor grieve the commonweal, our suit, most dear Sovereign, is for one of your Grace's houses called *Bridewell*, a thing no doubt most unmeet for us to ask of your Majesty, and also to enjoy, if we ask the same for our sinful living and unworthiness' sake. But we are the poor members of our Saviour Jesu Christ, sent by Him most humbly to sue your Majesty, in our said Master's name Jesu Christ, that we for His sake, and for the service He hath done your Grace and all the faithful commons in your realm, in spending His most dear and precious blood, may all be in reward at your Majesty's hand.”

The original charter of CHRIST'S HOSPITAL resembles so closely in



its wording those of the other hospitals, and the full control of its funds and management is given to the Lord Mayor, commonalty, and citizens of London in such equally explicit terms, that it would be a useless waste of the reader's time to go into the details. Stowe, in his summary, 1556, when speaking of Christ's Hospital says: "It was established to take the chylde out of the streete, which was the seede and increase of beggary, by reason of ydle bringing up. And to nourysh the said chylde in some goode learninge and exercise profitable to the commonweale." He goes on to say, that in one month from the opening of the school, November 21st, 1552, "chyldren had been taken from the streetes to the number of fower hundred." Machyn also, in his "Diary" about the same time, makes frequent mention of the children in this school, all tending to prove that they were taken from precisely the same class of children as those which now come under the authority of the Poor-law Board.

## II.

From this short description of the foundation of the five Royal Hospitals the reader will easily perceive in them the original model of the present Poor-law administration in the metropolis. If further proofs were wanting they might be produced in abundance from different records still existing in the City archives, all tending to show that for more than a century after they received their charters the hospitals strictly fulfilled the uses for which they were instituted. Nor were they solely dependent upon their endowments, for, in case of any insufficiency of funds for their maintenance, the Corporation had the power to levy taxes for their support. For example, the Corporation, by an Act (5 Philip and Mary), which on several occasions was put in force, had granted to them the profits of sundry offices, &c., for the use of the hospitals, especially duties on "the balance commonly called the King's Beame, the gawginge of wyne and fyshe, and the measuryng or measurs of silk and woollen clothes, &c." The revenue of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, in consequence of its expenditure being more than its income, was supplemented by a tax levied on the citizens, and one curious circumstance connected with the power of raising money for the support of this charity was that the Livery Companies were called upon to supply a large portion of the amount required. In the year 1548, an Act was passed by the City Council for assessing the City Companies in the sum of 500 marks, to be paid annually to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The Livery Companies afterwards attempted to relieve themselves from the responsibility, but the governors of the hospital, in the year 1712, commenced a suit in Chancery against the Companies, and obtained a decree in their favour which exists now. Again, in the first year of the reign of Edward VI. (1547), the Common Council made



a grant of half of a fifteenth to be assessed on the citizens and inhabitants of the metropolis, "towards sustaining, maintaining, and finding the poor personages in the house or hospital lately erected and founded by King Henry VIII." Again, on the 26th of July, 1552, a rate was levied on the citizens for the repairing of the Gray Friars' house for poor fatherless children. These and other passages, far too numerous to cite, all tend to show how closely the original institution of the five great Royal Hospitals resembled our present Poor-law administration.

Nor was the legal authority possessed by the Corporation less than that at present placed in the hands of our Poor-law authorities. We find the following order issued by the Lord Mayor, on the 13th day of October, in the eleventh year of Elizabeth's reign:—

"On the Quenes Majesties behalf, we straightlie charge and command you that ye forthwith, callinge before you your deputie constables, bedell and bedelles of your said warde, doe give unto them straightlie in charge that they doe make searche from time to time betweene this and the Feaste of All Saintes next cominge, for all such poore people sicke and diseased, and having no place to dwell in of their owne, or shall be founde lyinge under stalles, or at mens dores within your said warde. And such as they finde as aforesaide, forthwith to cause to be hadd and conveyed to one of the hospitalles of *St. Bartholomew* in *West Smithfelde*, or of *St. Thomas* Hospital in *Southwarke*, where we have given order they shalbe received in avoidinge of further daunger of infection that might happen and growe by their lyinge in the fields. Faile you not hereof, as ye will answer to the contrarie at your perrill. Given at the Guildhall of the Citye of *London*, the xiiith daie of *October* above written."—*Letter-Book* V., fol. 259 b.

The duties of the governors of the hospitals were not then by any means the sinecures or honorary appointments they appear to be in the present day. In the rules of *St. Thomas's Hospital*, as they stood in the reign of Elizabeth, we find, where they treat of the duties of the hospital beadles:—

"And also on all such days as the governors of this house shall sit in this hospital for the affairs of the same, ye shall separate and divide yourselves into sundry parts of the city and liberties thereof, every man taking his several walks. And if in any of your walks ye shall happen to espy any person infected with any loathly grief or disease which shall fortune to be in any notable place in this city to the noyance and infection of the passers by, and slander of this house, ye shall give knowledge thereof unto the almoners of this hospital, that they may take such order therein, as to them shall seem meet."

From the foregoing it will be seen that the medical charities were not solely used for acute diseases as they are in the present day, but for all infectious and incurable cases, and also for sheltering the aged and impotent. Beyond that, they were asylums for lying-in women; and a clause in the charter of *St. Bartholomew's* ordains that in case of the death of the mother, the child shall be maintained by the hospital authorities till it is seven years of age, and then be transferred into the *Blue-coat school*.



Of the latter hospital, as also of Bridewell, we must say a few words, if only that the reader may be the better able to judge how widely they both now differ from their original uses.

Christ Church for more than a century continued to perform strictly the work for which it was originally instituted, that of being the pauper school of the metropolis. The education received by the children was such as would enable them to obtain the means of existence by honest industry; in fact, it was such an education as that at present given in our better-class pauper schools. In a rule published about the time of Charles I., we find it ordered that,—

“The treasurer with one other of the governors at the least shall put forth any of the children of this house to service, having a careful regard to whom they be put, chiefly that they be honest persons, and such as will be well able to keep them, and to bring them up to such faculty, service, or occupation as they may hereafter be good members of the commonwealth, whereas without such regard taken they may happen to become more poor than their poor parents . . . and before they are put forth, being men children, they may write and read and cast accounts, *being found apt thereto*. And that such of the children as may be very pregnant and very apt at learning, be reserved and kept in the grammar school, in hope of preferment to the Universities, where they may be virtuously educated, and in time become learned and good members of the commonweale.”

Of Bridewell itself, beyond the fact that it was intended for the reception of sturdy vagabonds,—in other words, was the City workhouse,—little need be further said, excepting that the school which was established in it might almost be considered as an industrial school attached to Christ's Hospital. One item connected with Bridewell may be quoted as tending to show that the training of the children in Christ's Hospital and Bridewell was identical:—

“Yt was orderyd and agreyd by this courte that th' aldermen and governors of th' ospitalles of *Brydewell* and *Christes* Hospitalle shall consyder of the request made unto the same courte by *Nycholas van Benscenn*, a pynne maker, for the havinge and injoyinge of a convenyent place within th' ospitalle of *St. Thomas* or *Brydewell* to make pynnes, and there to teache and instructe certeyn of the poore chyl dren of *Christies* Hospitall in the sayd arte of makynge of pynnes, and to make reporte unto this courte of their doynge therein.”—*Ref.* 18, fol. 396 b.

Altogether the organization of the five Royal Hospitals, as originally instituted, did immense credit to the citizens of London, not only in the way of humane, charitable feeling, but also by the admirable, shrewd common sense they showed in their administration. A certain Bishop of Durham, quoted by Strype, says of these Hospitals, particularly Bridewell:—

“Look ye into London what hospitals be there founded in the Gospel time; the poor indeed relieved, youth godly brought up, and the idle set to work. Popery would sometimes feed the hungry, but seldom correct the unprofitable drones that suck the honey from the labouring bees, nor bring up children in the fear of God. But to feed the belly and not teach virtue is to increase vice. Well forth Bridewell, for it is a good school.”



But though the foundation endowments of the five Royal City Hospitals were supplemented by the voluntary contributions of the citizens, it will certainly strike the reader, that these institutions, admirable in their conception and administration, would be totally inadequate to the requirements of the present day. The population of the City in the latter end of the reign of Edward VI. and the beginning of that of Elizabeth numbered, perhaps, 100,000, and we learn, from a note in Manningham's Diary, that there were of these no fewer than 30,000 dependent, more or less, upon charitable relief. It would, of course, be impossible now, when the population of the metropolis exceeds four millions, for the hospitals, much as their buildings have been increased in size, to supply our present wants. At the same time, it may be shown that the disparity in their means for that purpose is not as great as might at first be imagined; even when taking into consideration the difference in the value of money in the time of Edward VI. and in the present day. When St. Bartholomew's Hospital received its charter in the time of Henry VIII. its endowment amounted to only £666 per annum,—half of this sum being bestowed by the King from confiscated ecclesiastical property, the other half derived from endowments of landed property given by the Corporation of the City of London. The balance necessary for its maintenance was derived from voluntary contributions from the citizens. At the latter end of the reign of Edward VI. the revenue of St. Thomas's Hospital does not seem to have exceeded £3,291 per annum. And of this sum £2,914 was contributed from the private purses of the citizens. In the time of James I. the population of the City greatly increased, and with it the poor increased in equal ratio. But it can be shown that the value of the hospital endowments,—the greater portion of which was in lands or houses, either in the City or suburbs,—had increased in greater ratio. With every further growth of population in the City of London the advance in value of the hospital endowments not only kept pace, but was further augmented by legacies and charitable donations, till, in the year 1750, we find the expenditure of the Royal Hospitals\* amounted to the sum of £10,000 per annum. From that time to the present, the revenues of these hospitals, mainly in consequence of the rise in the value of land in the metropolis, have continuously increased in far greater proportion than the population. The endowments in the time of Edward VI. may be set down as at most worth £50,000, but now, if we take into the reckoning the amount of the actual revenues, the value of the hospitals themselves and the ground they stand on, together with the reversionary value of the leases about to fall in, the total value cannot be less, in round numbers, than from ten to eleven millions sterling. This, whether adequate or not, is at least an astounding sum.

Let us now turn to the amount of benefit derived from this

\* Strype, on Stowe.



enormous capital, and inquire to what extent the present application of the income is made according to the stipulations of the hospital charters.

In the case of Bridewell, there appears to be but one of the many duties formerly insisted on that is in any way now fulfilled. This hospital is no longer used as a house of detention. Originally vagrants were first taken there to have their cases inquired into: the blind and impotent, the paralyzed, and pregnant women, were sent to St. Bartholomew's Hospital; the curable sick carried to St. Thomas's Hospital; the idle were set to work at the hand-mills and other labour; the disorderly were punished; and unruly apprentices and servants were incarcerated for longer or shorter periods. Of all these duties none is now performed; the only injunction mentioned in the charter which is at present carried out is that for the maintenance of charity children, some three hundred of whom appear to receive an education of no higher description than that given to the children in the Metropolitan District Schools.

As regards funds, it appears from the Governors' Report for 1869 that the income then of Bridewell Hospital was admitted to be £18,175 16s. 6d. To this, however, should be added the value of the ground and building opposite the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway in New Bridge Street, Blackfriars, now used solely as a residence for the clerk and for the meetings of the governors of the school, which itself has lately been removed into Surrey. This building is estimated to be worth at least £2,000 a year. Besides this, since the report alluded to was published, a very large plot of ground at the back of the building, belonging to the hospital, which had remained idle and unproductive for more than twenty years, has been covered with magnificent houses, the rents of which will raise the gross income to at least £25,000 a year. It follows that, reckoning the reversionary interests in the increase of rents from leases falling in, the hospital's gross assets cannot amount to much less than a million sterling.

We will now see what, in 1869, was the expenditure of this hospital for the maintenance of 217 charity children, for at that time there were no more. The salaries paid in Blackfriars, which are wholly additional to those of the school officials, amount to no less than £565 16s. a-year. The stipends of the officials at the school, for the education and superintendence of the 217 *charity* children, are given at £1,840 a-year; the majority of the officers being also boarded and lodged. Although the pupils of these schools are certainly treated with great kindness, their education, as before stated, is no better than that given in our National schools, nor are their food and raiment superior to those of the children in any respectable orphanage. To look after the spiritual welfare of these 217 charity children there were two chaplains, the senior having a residence, partly furnished, and a salary of £450 a-year; the assistant receiving £124. Besides these,



there were twenty-four schoolmasters, trade instructors, and other officials, employed in the establishment,—being at the rate of one official or servant for every nine of these charity children. Without dwelling longer on Bridewell Hospital, we ask the reader, whether the above was a sufficient result for a gross capital not much less in value than a million sterling.

Injudicious and extravagant as the administration of the funds belonging to Bridewell Hospital may be, it sinks into utter insignificance in those respects when compared with that of Christ's Hospital. With respect to the funds of the latter it would appear, from a report drawn up by Mr. Thomas Hare for the Charity Commissioners in the year 1864, and which appears to be as just and impartial a document as was ever published, that the expenditure in that year for the working staff of this charity, including masters, teachers, officers, clerks, and servants, amounted to no less than £21,444. Mr. Hare further calculated that the gross cost per head of the children, including house-rent, was £58 2s. 6d. per annum. In 1864 he valued the premises and grounds in Newgate Street at £200,000. But property has vastly increased in value in that locality since the date of his report, as may be gathered from the fact that, three years since, the trustees were offered for the Newgate Street property alone—about five acres in extent—no less a sum than £600,000, and declined it as being insufficient. The property is now considered, on competent authority, to be fairly worth £700,000. In 1864 the gross annual revenue of the hospital, including house-rent, was reckoned at about £70,000 a-year, to which should be added some £20,000 a-year more for the increased value of its ground and house property since that date, and the reversions on the falling-in of leases of the hospital's property in the neighbourhood of Great Queen Street, Westminster. The gross total of the hospital revenue may be fairly computed at £100,000 a-year, representing a capital of something more than three millions sterling.

It is very pertinent now, we think, to ask what amount of benefit the population of London derives from the enormous income belonging to Christ's Hospital; for it should be understood that, although governed by nominees of the City Corporation, it was to be open for the reception of children from the whole of the metropolis. The gross number at present in the schools, including those at Hertford, is about 1,200; of these about 650 are residing in Newgate Street. It is estimated that not above 16 of the whole of the 1,200 pupils are really eligible for admission under the original charter; the remainder are the children of middle-class parents whose incomes may average about £300 a-year. It may be urged, however, and rightly, that assuming the gross present and reversionary income of the school to be £100,000 a-year, there should be deducted £7,000 for the blind charity, and some few thousands a year more for the mathematical school, which would lessen by that amount its annual revenue for general educational



charitable purposes. But without going intricately into figures upon the subject, we will place before our readers one simple calculation, which will give some idea of the enormous amount of waste permitted in the management of the strictly charitable funds of this hospital. There can be no doubt that, whatever other endowments may have been mixed up with Christ's Hospital since its foundation, the ground on which it stands was given for charitable objects. Let us compare, then, the expenditure in the shape of *ground rent* alone in the case of the 650 boys resident in Newgate Street with the gross *house rent* paid for the thousand boys in the richest and most aristocratic school in the world—Eton. As before stated, for the property in Newgate Street the trustees of the hospital were offered £600,000, which offer they declined. The value of the school buildings and masters' houses at Eton has been estimated at £225,000. If, then, the value of the ground rent of the charity school for 650 children was reduced to the level of the gross rent of the richest school in the world, calculated at 5 per cent. interest, the saving made would be sufficient for the maintenance, education, and clothing of 1,000 destitute children, calculating the cost at that of a boy in Mr. Spurgeon's Orphanage, or of a girl in the Orphanage at Clewer.

Adding the income of King Edward's schools connected with Bridewell Hospital to the strictly charitable portion of the revenue of Christ's Hospital, and limiting the annual expenditure for each child now in these schools to £40, the saving effected would be sufficient for the education, clothing, and maintenance of the two thousand orphan children at present in the Metropolitan District Schools, without inflicting any tax whatever on the ratepayer.\*

### III.

Let us now turn to the Royal Hospitals endowed for the benefit of the sick, aged, and distracted poor "of the City and suburbs thereof;" and we will commence with Bethlem.

This institution, when it received its present charter, was situated in Bishopsgate Street; but, the number of applicants increasing in

\* As the reader is no doubt aware, besides Christ's Hospital and Bridewell Schools, there are many charitable and free endowments in London of almost a similar character, each possessing enormous revenues: for example, (1.) Dulwich College, "designed for the better maintenance, education, relief, and sustenance of poor and needy people—men, women, and children." The poor children to be orphans, or "at least such as their parents receive the weekly alms of the parish," &c. Also the day school in which the children of Dulwich are to be taught "without recompense or reward." (2.) Charterhouse, on the educational side, a free school for instructing, teaching, maintaining, and educating poor children or scholars. (3.) St. Paul's School, mainly intended to give free education in a day school. Besides these, there are other like endowments amounting altogether to £312,265 per annum. This sum, however, does not include the value of the buildings, or of the land on which they stand, or the increase in the value of their endowments during the last ten years; so that it will be no exaggeration to estimate the charitable and free educational endowments of the metropolis at £500,000 per annum.



proportion with the growth of the population, a new building was erected for their reception in Moorfields. This, again, notwithstanding the providing, by private charity, of St. Luke's Hospital for the insane, became so crowded that it was at length determined, about the year 1809, to remove to the present site in St. George's Fields. A large space of ground was there purchased by the Corporation for that purpose, and the present building erected upon it. The reader should bear in mind that Bethlem Hospital, unlike St. Luke's, is really, by its charter, the property of the inhabitants of the metropolis, and is managed by their trustees, a body selected by the Corporation of the City of London, so that every ratepayer has a pecuniary interest in the institution. What the gross income of the hospital now is, it would be difficult to say, but three years ago it was admitted, in the Governors' Report, to be no less than £23,854 per annum. This, as is the case with the reports issued by the other hospitals, does not include the value of the building, nor of the enormous space of ground surrounding it, which for ground rents alone is estimated to be worth £6,000 a-year. Looking to the general increase in the value of property in the metropolis during the last seven or eight years, this would raise the real gross revenue of Bethlem Hospital to a sum certainly in excess of £30,000 a-year, representing a capital of fully a million sterling. For this sum, seven years since, it managed to maintain about 260 patients, and it appears from the report of the last Parliamentary Committee that the number does not now exceed 270, notwithstanding the increase in its revenue.

According to the above report, the cost of the staff of Bethlem Hospital, for the care of less than 270 insane patients, including the superior officials, nurses, and servants, was no less than £5,108 8s. a-year, and this, it should be understood, does not include house-rent. What the present salaries amount to it would be impossible to say; but, assuming that they do not exceed the sum named, the reader will admit that the salaries of the staff are most liberal, if not extravagant. This may be judged from the fact that in the Idiot Asylum at Caterham, where the patients are in every respect as well treated as in Bethlem Hospital, the building being far more commodious, and the staff in every respect equal in point of excellence to that of Bethlem, the cost of the management of 1,800 patients does not exceed £6,361 per annum. It may possibly be said that the patients in Bethlem Hospital are of a description more difficult to manage than those at Caterham. Admitting that patients suffering from acute mania require a greater amount of supervision than imbeciles, let us contrast the expenditure of Bethlem with that of the late Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Fisherton—the criminal class of insane patients being the most difficult of all to thoroughly control and superintend. At Fisherton we find that the total cost of the patients, including the salaries of officials of every description, as



well as house-rent, did not exceed 11s. a-week per head. But even taking into consideration the great increase in the price of provisions, the cost of the 270 patients at present in Bethlem, including house-rent and establishment charges, should be defrayed for the sum of £12,000 a-year, leaving a surplus of nearly £20,000 per annum, which might be applied to the use of "the distracted poor" of the metropolis, for whom the hospital was instituted, or for easing the pockets of the ratepayers to that amount.

But before quitting the subject of Bethlem Hospital, a curious fact connected with it may be placed before the reader, as showing the total disregard paid by the Court of Chancery to the original purposes of many of our charitable institutions. By its deed the charity of Bethlem Hospital was intended solely for those too poor to contribute to their support. All others were obliged to pay a moderate weekly sum, in proportion to their means, to indemnify the hospital for the care bestowed on them. By a decision of Lord Chancellor Eldon, all patients too poor to contribute anything to the charity are now rigorously excluded from receiving any benefit from the institution, and are thrown upon the ratepayers for relief; while those who to a greater or lesser extent are able to pay for the benefits they receive are admitted gratuitously.

One reason given for the maintenance of Bethlem Hospital in its present position and management is, that it serves as a model school for the study of mental diseases, and that on this account alone it ought not to be interfered with by interlopers or reformers. But, excellent as the management of Bethlem undoubtedly is, the treatment of the patients is not superior to that witnessed in any of the large lunatic asylums in the kingdom; nor would it appear that any great improvement has been made in its management since the middle of the last century, about which time great and beneficial changes were introduced into the treatment of the insane. Strype tells us (1754), "By God's blessing, for twenty years ending 1753, there have been in Bethlem two patients in three cured." It may be further added that in 1754 there were 200 patients under treatment in Bethlem Hospital. At the present time, although its income is at least ten times the amount it was at that date, there are, as we have said, only 270 patients under treatment.

The two Royal Hospitals which now remain to be mentioned, St. Bartholomew's and St. Thomas's, being each used solely for medical purposes, may be taken together. The joint income of these two institutions, without taking into account the value of the ground on which they stand, is certainly in excess of £100,000 per annum. The revenue of St. Thomas's alone is admitted by the Governors, in their Report to the Charity Commissioners, to be £42,000 per annum. A few years since it was quoted at £48,000, the reduction being caused by the enormous expenditure on the present building. The income



of St. Bartholomew's is certainly not less than £60,000 a year; but that does not represent the whole, inasmuch as recently the Governors were threatening to enforce the payment of a rate of 2*s.* 9*d.* in the pound on the rack-rental of the parish of Christ Church, Newgate Street, as well as calling for arrears amounting to £30,000, to which they are indisputably entitled by their charter. At present we believe the suit is in abeyance, inasmuch as their title to this immense revenue is based on the charter given by Henry VIII., which provided for the relief of the sick, aged, blind, and impotent poor, and pregnant women. A trial might raise the curious question, by what right they have relieved themselves of these responsibilities. We must, also, in estimating the income of this hospital, take into consideration the reversionary value of the leases about to fall in, which will certainly add a considerable sum to the revenue account. The value of the hospital buildings and grounds also is enormous. Judging by the sum offered by the Railway Company for Christ's Hospital, the value of St. Bartholomew's would certainly be £400,000; while on the buildings and ground of St. Thomas's alone no less than £600,000 have been expended. These figures, together with the capital from which income is derived, will raise the gross assets of these two Hospitals to a sum fully equal to £5,000,000 sterling.

Possibly the best example which could be given of the mode in which the revenues of St. Bartholomew's might be made most useful to the inhabitants of London, is furnished by the hospitals erected under the supervision of the Local Government Board. Of these there are several, but the one which will best suit our purpose as an illustration is that known as the Poplar and Stepney Sick Asylum. In excellence of construction and sanitary appliances, no hospital in Europe can excel it; no cost has been spared in thoroughly adapting it for hospital uses; and yet the whole cost of the building of this magnificent hospital for 600 patients did not exceed £100 per bed, while that of St. Thomas's was certainly not less than £800. Indeed, it has been estimated that had the present inmates of St. Thomas's Hospital, 300 in number, been located in mansions in Belgrave Square, they would have been accommodated at less than half the house-rent they incur in the present hospital.

But another fault may be found with the management of these two wealthy hospitals,—the locality in which each is placed deprives the poor of much of the advantages which might be derived from them. In the commencement of the present century, St. Bartholomew's was situated in the centre of a densely-populated poor neighbourhood, to which it was indisputably a great advantage. Since that time more than 120,000 of the working classes have been driven from the City of London, their dwellings being destroyed. So few, in fact, now live near it that the average distance patients have to walk to the hospital for advice is estimated to be a mile and a-half, the great majority of them



living in Hackney, Shoreditch, Kingsland, and other thickly-peopled districts. The present position of St. Thomas's Hospital is equally objectionable. It was originally situated in the Borough of Southwark, and remained there till the site was purchased by a railway company. Much discussion then arose as to where the new hospital should be built. The City authorities in this case, greatly to their credit, insisted on its being erected in some populous poor district. The medical staff, however, most of whom resided in the West End of the town, insisted on its being built in its present position, apparently indifferent to the fact that there were as few—perhaps fewer—of the working classes resident in that vicinity as there were near St. Bartholomew's Hospital. How far this was justifiable on their part, may be judged when we remember that in the north-eastern and south-eastern districts of the metropolis, there is to be found an aggregate population of not less than a million souls without a general hospital for their relief—a state of things which can be found in no other metropolis in the world. The reader may probably remember the case of a poor girl who, a few years since, died from wounds inflicted on her at Eltham in Kent. When she was discovered she was in an almost moribund condition, but notwithstanding this, she was placed upright beside a policeman in a street cab, which had to be driven over Blackheath, through Greenwich, Deptford, Rotherhithe, and Bermondsey, a distance of eight miles, to Guy's Hospital, that being the nearest.

Besides the inconvenience of their positions, none can deny that the expenditure of these two hospitals—which by their charters are nothing more than metropolitan sick asylums—is far in excess of the benefits the poor derive from them. But although it is impossible to get rid of this fact, a plausible, and, alas ! an effectual defence is set up in their favour—that, owing to their admirable and scientific management, they should be accepted as models for other similar institutions to imitate; and that the professors attached to them are men unequalled in Europe for skill and medical science, as is proved by the multitude of pupils who flock to them for instruction, and afterwards disseminate over England and her vast colonies the knowledge they have acquired under such able instructors. These statements have been repeated so frequently that the public at last appear to have accepted them as an article of faith. A calm, unprejudiced inquiry into the facts of the case, however, would go far to dispel the mischievous errors. Not unnaturally, non-medical persons feel that it would be an act of presumption on their part to sit in judgment on the scientific reputation of the eminent men who are the professors in these schools, and who devote the whole of their lives to alleviating the sufferings of the sick, and instructing others to follow their example. They may remember that Sir James Paget, of St. Bartholomew's, has no superior in the world as a surgeon, and that the other chairs there, as well as in St. Thomas's Hospital, are filled



by men scarcely less eminent. That Sir James Paget has no superior in Europe we are perfectly ready to admit, but we are equally certain that men might be named in England, attached to different hospitals, who are unknown beyond the immediate localities in which they live, but who are, if the tree is to be judged by its fruits, at least the equals of Sir James Paget. If the practical test be applied, it will be found that in other medical schools in London, and in fact in some of the provincial hospitals, the professors are equal in scientific attainments to those of St. Thomas's and St. Bartholomew's.

Skilful, as a rule, as the surgeons of St. Thomas's and St. Bartholomew's Hospitals indisputably are, and strong as is their position in public favour, it is a singular fact that the mortality attending their operations, in common with those in other great hospitals, has by no means improved during the last fifty years or more. In order to show that this statement is not put forward without good data to support it, we will quote verbatim the words of one of the most eminent surgeons of the day, Mr. Erichsen, of University College Hospital. In his work on "Hospitalism" he says, "It would be worse than useless, and it would be reprehensible, to deny the fact that the mortality resulting from or consequent upon the greater operations has not only not diminished of late years, but has, there is every reason to believe, in some cases actually increased. The present death-rate after lithotomy—even when making allowance for the application of lithotripsy to the more dangerous cases—is quite as great as it was in the days of Cheselden (1760), or the great Norwich surgeons. Herniotomy is at least as fatal as it was in the hands of Hey and of Cooper. And the mortality consequent on amputations—the operations as to which we possess the most extended statistics—has certainly not decreased, but, if anything, is rather on the increase, since Phillips and Lawrie published their tables." The only hospital operations which Mr. Erichsen admits to have improved are those known under the name of ovariectomy, and that improvement has been made at such a cost as to throw serious doubts on the value of the operation, certainly as performed in large hospitals; and of the justice of this opinion the reader may judge for himself, from the startling fact given in Sköhlberg's report of one year's practice in five of the large London hospitals—in which, by the way, St. Thomas's is not mentioned. In this report he states, that out of ninety-three operations fifty-one of the patients died. Of this number St. Bartholomew's had twelve cases, of which only four recovered. In a valuable work published by Mr. Lawson Tait last year (1877), he says, "I have collected 271 cases of ovariectomy performed in hospitals having more than one hundred beds; of these 58 per cent. have died,—a mortality worse than that displayed in Dr. Sköhlberg's statistics. Mr. Spencer Wells and Dr. Keith have already proved, as fully as any fact in statistics can be displayed, that in a small hospital the mortality from this operation



should not much exceed 28 per cent., and that in private practice it probably would be less than 20 per cent. These figures have convinced me that this operation should not be performed in a hospital, in the ordinary sense of the term, of any kind whatever; and I think that the most enthusiastic conservative will hardly dare venture to support its performance in large hospitals." With respect to the medical practice in these two large hospitals we will not detain the reader further, beyond saying that, judging from the mortality returns (and it should be understood that no incurable cases are admitted into these hospitals), not the slightest improvement has taken place during the last quarter of a century, notwithstanding the constant laudation we hear of the skill of the professors.

But we may be told that in the schools attached to, or rather which have absorbed, these two large hospitals, there is another branch of science taught which deserves especial respect at the hands of the community at large, and of which the professors are admitted to be the most learned in England, if not in the world,—and that is sanitary science, the great object of which is the prevention of disease. So highly indeed is the authority of the professors esteemed on this subject that their opinions on any matter connected with sanitary science are accepted as law, not only by the public, but by our magistrates and judges as well. And yet if the matter were thoroughly investigated it might appear that great doubts could be thrown on the infallibility of their opinions. Let us take, in support of our view, the very hospitals which are immediately under their control, and what is the result? This: that while St. Bartholomew's Hospital during the last ten years has certainly improved in its sanitary condition, it is still not one jot superior to any of the large Metropolitan Sick Asylums under the control of the Local Government Board. From an article in *The British Medical Journal*, October, 1876, we find that during the previous year in the surgical wards alone of these two hospitals there were no fewer than 114 cases of pyæmia and erysipelas, and out of these 34 proved fatal, two-thirds of them being in St. Thomas's Hospital, which had more sanitary science displayed in its erection than St. Bartholomew's! Of the reasons given for this excess of mortality, the principal one is, that its situation is a most unhealthy one, in consequence of the atmosphere around it being impregnated with gas from the sewage in the river. But is this excuse, or any of the others which have been urged, really valid? If so, let us contrast it with another hospital under still more unfavourable circumstances—the Seamen's Hospital at Greenwich. Here, unlike St. Thomas's Hospital, which receives only such patients as are deemed curable, all cases are admitted without any selection whatever, whether infectious, typhoid, or consumptive. And what are the results? We find from the reports of 1875, that the gross death-rate was only 5 per cent.; the medical death-rate being about 8 per



cent., the surgical below 3 per cent. In this hospital, containing 250 beds, only 50 less than there are at present in St. Thomas's Hospital, the mortality, reckoning cases of pyæmia and erysipelas, is lower than in any general hospital in London. And let it not be forgotten that while the cost of St. Thomas's Hospital, owing to its scientific sanitary arrangements, averaged more than £800 per bed, a better hospital than the Seamen's could be erected for £80 a bed. But a still stronger contrast might be drawn between St. Thomas's Hospital and the Poplar Hospital for surgical cases, in which during one year more serious cases were received than in St. Thomas's in three years, while there was not one death from either pyæmia or erysipelas.

A singular silence is maintained by the hospital authorities on the causes of this enormous number of cases of pyæmia and erysipelas, as well as of enteric fever. It has been attributed to the large number of medical students attached to the schools; and it is urged as most objectionable that the dissecting rooms should be allowed to remain on the ground plan of the hospitals, or even near them. During the winter session at least eighty dead bodies are required for the dissecting rooms of St. Bartholomew's Hospital alone, and the students using these are allowed to walk the wards during the visits of the surgeons and physicians, as well as assist them with the out-door patients. Nay, more, it is a common practice, in a large London medical school, for pupils fresh from the dissecting rooms to be allowed to attend married women in their confinements, the average age of these young gentlemen possibly not exceeding eighteen years. Of the mortality in this class of patients little is known, but of those attended by the pupils of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, if the authorities did their duty, a tolerably correct idea might be obtained, as by its charter the children of all women dying in child-bed under its care should be maintained at its expense until seven years of age, instead of their being, as now, thrown upon the ratepayers. It may be said it is necessary that these young gentlemen should be under the supervision and instruction of the hospital physicians, so that they may learn that branch of their profession. But there are the wards of the workhouse infirmaries, in which, thanks to the skill of the parish surgeons, the mortality is not one-sixth (according to Dr. Edward Smith's statistics) of that occurring under hospital superintendence, and in these they might learn that branch of their profession.\*

One word more with respect to these Royal Medical Hospitals. It

\* During the six years that the lying-in wards in King's College Hospital were open, the mortality was not less than one in every twenty-three cases. In eleven London workhouses, comprising Bermondsey, Kensington, Chelsea, Clerkenwell, Fulham, St. James's, and five others, out of 2,413 deliveries, there was not one death. Notwithstanding this enormous hospital mortality, though it included cases of pyæmia, erysipelas, and enteric fever in St. Thomas's Hospital, no coroner's inquest was held, nor official inquiry instituted. Had a similar calamity occurred in the foreign cattle market at Deptford, there would have been no lack of prosecutions under the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act. It should, however, be added, that, for some unexplained reason, the Local Government Board is not allowed to interfere in the administration of the metropolitan hospitals.



is generally supposed that the physicians and surgeons are actuated solely by philanthropic motives in their attendance on the patients. This, however, is a great fallacy, for the appointments are valuable from a pecuniary point of view. In these two hospitals alone, there are no fewer than 700 pupils, paying on an average £30 a year each, making an income of no less than £21,000 a year. Nor is this all, for by way of increasing the attractions of these schools, the Charity Commissioners have not only allowed the professors of St. Bartholomew's to appropriate land for their use to the value of £40,000, besides donations of £5,000 or upwards, but within the last month they have permitted them to apply the sum of £50,000 of the Hospital Charity Funds towards the extension of the building and the advancement of the school of medicine; the latter sum being sufficient for the erection of a branch hospital for 500 beds, equal in every respect to the excellent Sick Asylum at Stratford already mentioned, in one of the crowded districts of the metropolis. We will leave it for the reader to determine whether the charitable funds bequeathed to the poor of London should be applied to the furtherance of a private speculation. It may be added that in the West End hospitals no contributions whatever are made from the funds towards the maintenance of the schools. Nay, more, at University College Hospital, a portion of the funds received from the pupils has been applied to the use of the patients, and yet the professors are not a whit behind those of St. Thomas's and St. Bartholomew's.

## IV.

Surely the metropolitan public are interested in this perversion of the funds of the five Royal Hospitals from their original uses; the educational charities being only to a very small extent applied for the benefit of the poor, and the medical ones being used almost entirely for the advantage of the professors—no cases being admitted into the hospitals but such as tend (indirectly) to their personal benefit. In their defence it may be urged that the poor are no losers by the present system; that all who require gratuitous medical relief, or need education for their children, are supplied in abundance by taxes levied on the ratepayer; and that nothing can be fairer than this system, since all pay in just proportion, without regard to social status,—the rich and the poor alike. But is this really true? Let us take the case of a man with an independent income of £10,000 a-year, who lives in a mansion costing £1,000 a-year, of which the rates and taxes amount to £200 per annum. Now there are at least a hundred persons whose independent income does not exceed £1,000 a year for every one with £10,000 a-year, and each will pay in rates an average of £50 per annum, or in the aggregate £5,000 a-year, in



hard cash; and so on downward, the tradesman and professional man paying in a greater proportion the smaller their profits may be, till we reach a man of the dockyard and bricklayer's labourer class, whose average earnings do not exceed £1 per week. Out of this sum he pays 4s. a week for his lodgings, in which is included at least £3 10s. a-year for rates and taxes. Admitting that there are only five thousand of this class to one man of £10,000 a-year, the total sum they contribute to municipal taxation is no less than £17,500 a-year against the £200 a-year of the latter. Again, the labourer has another tax to submit to, namely, to pay school-fees for his children, while at the same time it can be shown that if all educational charities and endowments were applied to their original uses, there would be sufficient funds in the metropolis for the elementary education of the whole of the population. Nay more, if to the revenues of the *whole* of the medical charities, supplemented as they now are by private contributions, there were added one-half the amount spent by the City guilds on their feasts and on their halls, there would be (this was the opinion of the late Lord Brougham) sufficient to do away with the whole amount at present levied for Poor-law relief within the area of the London Local Boards.

It is frequently urged by those who uphold the present system of rating, that if it were abolished the amount at present levied on the poor for rates and taxes would be still paid by them in the increased rents which would be levied by their landlords. But the experience of the last ten or twelve years in the metropolis tends to show a totally different result. Formerly, the rates in the parish of St. George's, Hanover Square, were 3*d.* in the pound, and in Paddington 2*d.*; now they are as proportionately high as in other parts of the metropolis; and the rents have increased in some cases nearly 50 per cent. In Blackfriars and St. George's, Southwark, the rates ten years ago were 6*s.* in the pound, but the rents of the working classes have not increased 5 per cent., and their dwellings are better. But admitting that the educated classes, having the power of remonstrance against it, are justified in allowing the poor to be deprived of their life interest in the valuable charities and endowments from which they have been so ruthlessly shut out, is it not most unfair that we also should allow the poor of the next two generations to be heavily taxed for the *lashes* of the present one? Take for example the rate levied by the School Board, to pay off the five and a-half millions they have raised. Of this vast sum they have spent two millions and a-half; the other three millions represent the accruing interest during the next fifty years, which will, the greater part at least, have to be paid by our children. Our whole system of education and charitable administration is full of anomalies and corruption, which nothing short of an energetic Royal Commission will be able to rectify.

WILLIAM GILBERT.



