

**The debate on the motion of Captain H.G. Boldero, M.P. for Chippenham, 'that the accommodation provided for the assistant surgeons on board Her Majesty's ships of war is inadequate and insufficient for securing the full benefit of their professional services', House of Commons, Monday, April 8, 1850.**

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THE DEBATE PRESENTED

*for  
Mr. William*

ON THE

MOTION OF CAPTAIN H. G. BOLDERO,

M.P. FOR CHIPPENHAM,

“THAT THE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDED FOR THE

ASSISTANT SURGEONS

ON BOARD HER MAJESTY'S SHIPS OF WAR IS INADEQUATE AND INSUFFICIENT  
FOR SECURING THE FULL BENEFIT OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL SERVICE.”

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HOUSE OF COMMONS,

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 1850.

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1850  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

LONDON:  
GEORGE WOODFALL AND SON,  
ANGEL COURT, SKINNER STREET.

## NAVAL ASSISTANT SURGEONS.

THE Order of the Day having been read for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of Supply,

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair."

CAPTAIN BOLDERO—after presenting petitions from the medical faculties of the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh; King's College, London; Guy's Hospital; Leeds; Charing-cross Hospital; Greenwich, Manchester, Stockport, Reading, Gravesend, Canterbury, Sheerness, Brighton, and numerous other places,—said, that the prayer, in spirit and substance, of all these petitions was the same—namely, that the assistant surgeons in the Navy should be removed from the cockpit, and mess with the officers in the gun-room; and that, in respect of rank they should be placed on an equality with assistant surgeons in the Army. His object in bringing this matter forward was to have a fair, full, and impartial consideration of the question; and he would endeavour to lay before the House such facts connected with it as would lead them to a just conclusion, leaving it to the House to decide whether this state of things should be continued any longer. The House would see from the petitions which he held in his hand that they came from all quarters of the kingdom; he believed from every university or college entrusted with the education of youth for the medical profession. Petitions had also been presented from the large public hospitals of London. Every one would ask how it was that the medical practitioners in all parts of the empire bestirred themselves in

favour of the assistant surgeons in the Navy. It was on account of the unwise and systematic neglect which had been practised towards them, by which the medical profession had been degraded, the naval surgeons insulted, and the naval service at large treated with injury and injustice. It was not necessary to enter into any arguments to prove what he had advanced. He found that as far back as 1805 an Order in Council was made that the naval assistant surgeons should be assimilated in every respect to the assistant surgeons in the Army. Till 1838, however, no steps were taken towards ameliorating their condition. In 1838-9 the reigning Monarch appointed a Commission to inquire into the Navy and Army expenditure. They made their report; and the Commissioners, who were some of the most eminent and distinguished men of the empire, recommended that the medical officers of the Navy should be assimilated, in respect of rank, pay, and retirement, with the Army, which recommendation was ordered by the Queen in Council to be carried out. What he wanted to know was, why that Order had not been obeyed, and why that recommendation had not been carried out. Had anything occurred between that time and the present which militated against it? Nothing whatever. The Committee which was appointed in 1847 to inquire into the expenditure of the Army and Navy made a report, in which they stated that the director general of the Navy had presented a memorial from the medical inspectors of naval hospitals and fleets, alleging that every me-

dical rank in the Navy was placed one grade below that of the Army, and that the pay and retirement were proportionably inferior. This report also showed how injuriously this circumstance operated on the character of the naval medical service, and increased the difficulty of inducing men of ability to enter it. So sensible were the Admiralty of this that they wrote down to the University of Edinburgh, and, what was very extraordinary in public men, placed a share of the patronage of the Admiralty at their disposal. Well, the first year after this, not one appointment was applied for, and only one application was made in the second year; finally, the College passed a resolution not to avail itself of the Admiralty privilege so long as the assistant surgeons in the Navy remained in a false position on board ship. There might be candidates for these situations now, but they were not of the best description, for the *élite* of the colleges and universities would not enter the naval service. In all other professions there were plenty of candidates. There were 700 or 800 young men now waiting to enter the Army, and it was the same with every other profession in life. The exception in this particular instance was traceable to the treatment experienced by the profession, and to nothing else. In any future war the new instruments of destruction would cause such indescribable havoc in a moment, that more surgeons would be required, and it must be remembered that pressgangs could not be sent to colleges and universities to make heroes of men whether they would or not. If the House would look across the water they would find that Brother Jonathan took care to have better qualified persons. He would take the case of two young men from the University of Glasgow, moving in an equally respectable class in life, and qualified to practise medicine and surgery in any part of the empire. He would suppose one fortunate enough to get a medical commission in the Army, and other so unfortunate as to get one in the Navy. The Army assistant surgeon was received kindly by his commanding officer, introduced to his brother officers—two-thirds of whom were older than himself—installed a member of the mess, and admitted to all the privileges of social and friendly intercourse with the officers of the regiment. His room in the barracks was his castle, and he could retire to it for study whenever he pleased, by which means he was enabled

to extend his professional knowledge to the great advantage of the service. In the Navy, however, immediately after an assistant surgeon reported himself to the captain, he was turned into the cockpit and who were to be his companions in the place? Some of them might be boys thirteen years, for that was the age which they admitted naval cadets. He had to sleep in a hammock or cot in the place, and had to dress and perform his ablutions before these boys, over whom he had no control. The result of being placed with such a body was to prevent his pursuing his professional studies, and to have due time for reflection. The more zealous an assistant surgeon might be in the performance of his duties the more strongly must he feel the degradation of the situation in which he was placed. It should be recollected, that a combination of art and science was necessary in the medical profession, and by a combination of both many hundreds might be recovered; but if there was a deficiency of either, the most disastrous consequences might ensue; and such was likely to be the case, if they allowed an inferior class of medical officers to enter the Navy. But what was the cockpit? It was a place in the hold of a ship where the sun never penetrated, where the only light was afforded artificially by means of lamps and candles, where an impure atmosphere constantly prevailed. What antagonism was there not between a cockpit and the idea of study, when the study was to be carried on in the midst of middies fond of larking and full of fun! The qualities associated with that disposition were to be admired in a man who had spent his time at a university in quiet study was not in his proper place where such was the ruling spirit. He was subject to interruption and noise; he had no facilities for referring to works; His spirit was broken; his self-respect was destroyed, and, with it, his self-confidence, one of the first requisites to great undertakings. Under such circumstances, the men often became careless, and resorted to ardent spirits, and when the ship arrived at port left the service. These might be called petty grievances when taken singly but became of the most serious consequence when taken in the aggregate. With regard to their pay he had no fault to find and his Motion did not involve any additional expense to the Government, for if he had done so, he should have hesitated before he brought it forward. As for the

rank or position of assistant surgeons on board ship, it was a perfect mockery. By the regulations of the service they were told that they should have the rank of a lieutenant in the Army, or of a first lieutenant of the marines; but, in fact, this was not regarded. The instant a first lieutenant in the Army joined his regiment he assumed his proper rank, and was placed above all the cornets or ensigns, and had instantly assigned to him all the advantages of his rank; but this was not so with an assistant surgeon in the Navy. An assistant surgeon in the Navy was placed in the same rank as a first lieutenant of marines; but on being appointed and going on board a ship of war, the former had to go to the cockpit, while the other went to the gunner's ward-room. In addition to this, if an Army assistant surgeon went on board of a man-of-war with troops, he was admitted, not as a matter of favour but of right, to the ward-room, from which the assistant surgeon of the Navy was excluded. Then, what was the course taken with the second lieutenants of marines, who were one rank below the assistant surgeons in the Navy? Some of these lieutenants might be youths of sixteen, who had just passed an examination—for something of the kind was now required—but one infinitely inferior to that required to be undergone by the candidate for an assistant surgeoncy: they would also go into the ward-room. Then, again, the gunner, the boatswain, and the carpenter, who were inferior officers, receiving scarcely half the pay of the assistant surgeon, each had their separate cabin. He admitted there might be some reason for these classes to have cabins, but it was an anomaly to exclude their superior officer from such a privilege. He might be told that there was no room for these assistant surgeons; but he disputed the correctness of the assertion. He found, within the last few years, the change which he now proposed had been extended to two additional classes of officers. Formerly, the schoolmaster messed in the cockpit with the midshipmen; but it was found that that functionary was not treated in a proper manner by the youths under his charge, and he often lost his own self-respect. The consequence was, the Admiralty determined to appoint a naval instructor in each ship, giving him a higher pay, and placing him in the ward-room. The result was, they got a better class of men to attend to the social and moral education of these youths. It had been the same with

the engineers engaged in the steam navy. At first, the Admiralty placed that class of officers in an inferior position, but eventually they were forced to change their rank and increase their accommodation. He believed many of the chief officers of engineers ranked as commanders, and those immediately under that class were entitled to places in the ward-room with the rank of lieutenants. Now, if it were necessary for a man dealing with the machinery of a steam-vessel to have superior comforts and a superior rank, how much more necessary was it for them to deal liberally with men who had the care of so delicate a machine as the human frame! Under the existing system, who could wonder if there was an inferior class of men in the service, if they were not treated with that respect which their station entitled them to? A friend of his recently told him an anecdote which would serve to show what respect was entertained for the opinion of a naval surgeon. A captain commanding a British man-of-war received a wound in his leg after a sharp contest, and his ship surgeon advised him to have his leg amputated, declaring that he could not live a day without it was removed. The captain, however, refused to take the advice, and having the wound bandaged up, he made for the nearest port, where his leg was dressed, and so far from amputation being necessary, he soon recovered, and was now walking upon his two legs. They should also remember that seamen were more full of prejudices than any other class of men; and if they thought they were slighted and proper care was not taken of them by the medical attendants, they fretted, and became reduced to a sad condition. There were other points which he could bring before the House in support of his Motion; but, without detaining it further, he thought he had stated sufficient to show the necessity of a change in the system. He did not make this Motion in behalf of the assistant surgeons, for he was not acquainted with a single one, nor had he had any communication with that body. It was from a pure, honest, and conscientious belief that there was an injury done to the naval service generally that he made this Motion, and he hoped the House would have no difficulty in agreeing to it.

Amendment proposed, to leave out from the word "That" to the end of the Question, in order to add the words—

"It is the opinion of this House, that the ac-

commodation provided for the assistant surgeons on board Her Majesty's ships of war, is inadequate and insufficient for securing the full benefit of their professional service,"

instead thereof.

ADMIRAL DUNDAS said, that there were two points in the speech of the hon. and gallant Member which he felt called upon to reply to. The hon. and gallant Member said that there were no candidates for the situation of assistant naval surgeons. Now, at the commencement of last year there were 178 applicants on the list who had passed, and there were now on it 263 names. Of these 23 had been placed on half-pay, and 39 were waiting for appointments. During the present year they had only been able to take eleven names from the list for appointments. He believed there were more candidates for the office than there had been for many previous years. He did not believe, also, that the hon. and gallant Gentleman was right in speaking in terms of disparagement of the assistant surgeons in the Navy; he (Admiral Dundas) was of opinion that they were fully equal in efficiency to the assistant surgeons in the Army. With regard to their accommodation, the Admiralty some years ago issued an order directing that on board every ship in the Royal Navy a cabin should be prepared twice the size of any other in the vessel, for the accommodation of the assistant surgeons, mates, and midshipmen. Surely in such an apartment they might pursue their studies without any trouble. If this concession was made, it must also be conceded to the mates, who had served six years as midshipmen, and often for a longer period. If they looked to the dimensions of the ward-rooms, he would ask what accommodation could be afforded them? In a man-of-war the dimensions were generally 26 feet by 20 feet, and in this cabin alone 22 officers had to find accommodation. If they added to this number four mates and three assistant surgeons, they would run the number up to nearly 30. He was quite sure that the adoption of this proposition would be against the feeling of the service. He did not believe, also, that the officers in the Navy entertained feelings of prejudice against the medical officers in the service; and for his own part he believed the best surgeons then in the Navy were those who had been brought up in the cockpit. He should feel it his duty to oppose the Motion.

Mr. HUME felt obliged to the hon. and gallant Gentleman who brought this subject forward. The question was, whether the Navy, as a branch of the public service, was not entitled to have as able medical men as the Army. It was notorious at present that no man would go into the Navy as an assistant surgeon who could find employment in that capacity in the Army. It appeared to him that the system of accommodation on board ships for the assistant surgeons was a gross injustice to the service generally. The gallant Admiral said that there was no room for the accommodation of this class of officers in the ward-room; but the Admiralty gave the same answer seven or eight years ago but since then three additional officers have been placed in the ward-room. The gallant Admiral also stated, that there was a very numerous class of candidates for the office of assistant surgeon in the Navy; but Sir W. Burnett, the head of the medical department in the Navy, said, in his evidence in 1848, that he hardly ever saw a candidate for such an appointment who he should wish to see attached to the naval medical service. He was happy to find that Sir W. Burnett, since he had been at the head of his department, had greatly raised the character of the medical men in the Navy, and had so rendered it that these examinations should be of improved and extended character. It had been said that there were few or no complaints made against the present system by the assistant surgeons themselves; but it was not very encouraging to come forward and make complaints, when they found even admirals snubbed by civilians at head-quarters. He knew, however, that he could procure the signatures of three-fourths of the assistant surgeons in the Navy, expressing the dissatisfaction at the present state of things as regarded themselves. He admitted that this was a matter of detail, and which, if possible, should be left to be settled by the Board of Admiralty; but as that body would not do anything in the matter, he certainly should support any Motion which was calculated to carry this object into effect. He trusted the House would express its opinion in such a manner as to show that it had the same sympathy for the medical men in the Navy as for the other officers of that branch of the service.

Question put, "That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the Question."

The House divided:—Ayes 40; Noes 48: Majority 8.

*List of the AYES.*

Anson, hon. Col.	Lascelles, hon. W. S.
Baring, rt. hn. Sir F. T.	Lewis, G. C.
Barnard, E. G.	Lushington, C.
Berkeley, Adm.	Mackinnon, W. A.
Berkeley, C. L. G.	Martin, J.
Cowper, hon. W. F.	Maule, rt. hon. F.
Dalrymple, Capt.	Morgan, H. K. G.
Duncan, Visct.	Mowatt, F.
Dundas, Adm.	Norreys, Lord
Ebrington, Visct.	Palmerston, Visct.
Elliot, hon. J. E.	Parker, J.
Evans, J.	Power, N.
French, F.	Romilly, Sir J.
Glyn, G. C.	Russell, F. C. H.
Gordon, Adm.	Somerville, rt. hon. Sir
Greene, T.	W. M.
Grey, rt. hon. Sir G.	Stansfield, W. R. C.
Hawes, B.	Vane, Lord Harry
Hayter, rt. hon. W. G.	Wilson, J.
Hodges, T. L.	TELLERS.
Jervis, Sir J.	Hill, Lord M.
Lacy, H. C.	Bellew, R. M.

*List of the NOES.*

Anstey, T. C.	Humphery, Ald.
Baillie, H. J.	Keating, R.
Baldwin, C. B.	Lindsay, hon. Col.
Beresford, W.	Macnaghten, Sir E.
Broadley, H.	Matheson, Col.
Brotherton, J.	Molesworth, Sir W.
Castlereagh, Visct.	Mulgrave, Earl of
Charteris, hon. F.	Muntz, G. F.
Chichester, Lord J. L.	O'Brien, Sir L.
Cobden, R.	Ogle, S. C. H.
Cubitt, W.	Packe, C. W.
Dick, Q.	Pearson, C.
Divett, E.	Romilly, Col.
Duff, G. S.	Salwey, Col.
Duff, J.	Sibthorp, Col.
Duncan, G.	Stanford, J. F.
Duncombe, hon. O.	Stuart, Lord D.
Egerton, W. T.	Thicknesse, R. A.
Evans, Sir De L.	Thompson, Col.
Fox, W. J.	Vyse, R. H. R. H.
Fuller, A. E.	Waddington, H. S.
Gibson, rt. hon. T. M.	Willcox, B. M'G.
Goddard, A. L.	TELLERS.
Hall, Sir B.	Boldero, Capt.
Harris, R.	Hume, J.
Hastie, A.	

On the Question that the House agree to the resolution,

ADMIRAL BERKELEY said, he was sorry he had not risen to address the House at an earlier stage of the discussion. No man in the House of Commons entertained a greater feeling of respect for the assistant surgeons of the Navy, nor could any one in that House wish to see them placed in a higher position than himself; but he not only believed that it was not only for their good that they should not be placed in the ward-room, but also that it would be a great blow to the efficiency of the service if they at once sent the assistant surgeons to mess in the ward-room. With respect

to a separate cabin, which had been alluded to, he would ask whether it was likely that an assistant surgeon would like to mess in his own cabin alone? The hon. and gallant Member said this class of medical officers were in a worse position than the officers of the Royal Marines. He would venture to say that many a young man who entered the service in the Royal Marines, and who had not the assistance of friends to provide him with an outfit, had to borrow money for that purpose, who, after his introduction into the service, and after taking his place in the ward-room of a man of war, found the expenses of the mess to which he belonged so heavy that of that charge, together with the debt he had incurred, he was unable to clear himself, and was at length obliged to leave the service. An assistant surgeon in the Navy, who had received no pecuniary assistance from his friends, would be placed in the same position in which a young marine officer so often found himself if he was made a member of the ward-room, and would thus incur debts which he would not be able to liquidate. As it was at present he need not place himself in such a situation of difficulty. It might be said that the midshipmen were skylarking boys, or it might be said they were school boys; but then it should be recollected that for the most part they had received their education in the best private seminaries, and in the public schools, such as Rugby, Eton, and Harrow. He should like to know how many assistant surgeons received a superior education to the class which he had described. But if they gave way on this point, what would be the result? There had always been a difficulty in transferring assistant surgeons from a line-of-battle ship to a ten-gun brig, on account of the superior accommodation they enjoyed in the former; but that difficulty would be greatly enhanced if the service should require one who had messed in the ward-room of a line-of-battle ship to descend to a ten-gun brig, where there would be no ward-room for him. This attempt to place the assistant surgeons over the heads of their superiors in rank in the Navy, and their equals as gentlemen in every way, was one of the greatest blows that could be inflicted upon the naval service of this country. He wished to know why the hon. and gallant Member for Chippenham did not, when he was connected with the Government, go to the Admiralty and endeavour to induce it to adopt his ar-

rangement? If the hon. and gallant Gentleman had brought forward the present Motion at that period, he (Admiral Berkeley) believed the Admiralty of that day would have opposed it on principle, as strongly as the present Board of Admiralty. Allusion had been made to the circumstance that within a short time separate cabins had been given to the chief engineers on board vessels, but this could only happen on board of steam-vessels as they were not wanted on board of men-of-war, or ten-gun brigs. The hon. and gallant Gentleman had asked why a cabin was given to the chief engineer? The answer was, that when the weather was bad, and lives might be in danger, the chief engineer was obliged to be up at all hours of the night, and he could not be put where the assistant surgeon was, inasmuch as that part of the ship was occupied during the day. The hon. and gallant Officer had also asked why the junior engineers had a cabin? It was because they messed there. As they did not mess with the midshipmen, and could not be asked to associate with the ship's company, the junior engineers had cabins. There was no ward-room except in ships of the line; in small vessels, commanded by lieutenants, the assistant surgeons could have no other mess-place except with the mates and midshipmen. The House should bear in mind that every foot that was taken off the deck of a frigate was a foot taken also from the comfort of the seamen, and that every foot taken away from a line-of-battle ship encumbered the management of the guns when the ship was to be cleared for action. Upon these grounds he refused to put the assistant surgeons above their superiors in the Navy, and he denied that the feelings of officers of the Navy were in favour of the proposal.

CAPTAIN BOLDERO, in answer to the question put to him, by the hon. and gallant Officer who had just resumed his seat, why he had not, when a Member of the Administration, brought forward such a proposal, said, that the hon. and gallant Gentleman had surely been long enough in office to know that it was not customary for a person attached to one department to interfere with another. At the same time, he had always made every effort in his power to accomplish the object of his Motion. The House had confirmed that Motion, and he now left it in their hands.

SIR F. T. BARING regretted that the House had expressed its opinion upon the proposition submitted to it by the hon. and

gallant Gentleman in the way it had done and that he (Sir F. Baring) had not had the opportunity of speaking upon it. Although, however, the majority had so declared its opinion, he was not prepared again to divide the House upon the subject. The question, after all, depended upon the practicability of carrying out the views affirmed by the House. From the statement made by naval officers themselves, it appeared there were practical difficulties in the way, which he was afraid would prove an insurmountable barrier to the attainment of the object in view. There was no disinclination whatever on the part of the Admiralty to make any such change as was recommended. That board had no object whatever in treating assistant surgeons in any other way but in a kind manner. But the great difficulty in the case was in reference to accommodation. In 1840 there was a commission appointed to inquire into the matter, before whom many arguments were adduced in relation to the accommodation to be afforded to assistant surgeons. That commission considered and inquired how far they might be enabled to meet the difficulty, and they reported, that upon the fullest consideration of the subject they found that there were practical difficulties in the way of making any improved arrangements in respect to those officers; that they had ascertained that the accommodation afforded them of late years was so improved as to render any movement for a change unnecessary; and, therefore, they were not prepared to make any recommendation. As he had said before, it was not his intention to take the opinion of the House again upon the subject; but he thought it unfortunate that they should be holding out expectations which he was afraid the Admiralty could never realise. The vote just carried in the House of Commons could have no practical effect. There was not the slightest disinclination on the part of the Board of Admiralty to give the fullest accommodation to this as well as every other class of officers in the Navy but he was afraid it would be found impossible to accede to the recommendation of the hon. and gallant Member.

MR. HUME said, the report of the commission of 1840 recommended various alterations and improvements, which, if carried, would have conferred the greatest improvements in the way of increased accommodation. But though it certainly stated that the evidence went to show there

was a practical difficulty in finding room for an additional cabin, yet it should be recollected that since that period they had found room for three additional cabins. If any hon. Gentleman would read over that evidence, he must come to the conclusion that if "there's a will there's a way." There was a want of will on the part of the naval officers to afford this accommo-

dation. Their habits of education made certain impressions upon them, which induced a certain portion of them, at all events, to oppose such an arrangement as was now called for.

Question, "That the proposed words be added," put, and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put, and agreed to.

## APPENDIX.

*The following are among the Petitions presented in favour of the foregoing Resolution.*

The humble Petition of the President and College or Commonalty of the Faculty of Physic in London under their common seal.

We, the President and College or Commonalty of the Faculty of Physic in London, in the discharge of the trust reposed in us by the Legislature for the maintenance, honour, and well-being of the faculty of physick, in all its branches, do now approach your honourable House with an humble Petition, that you will be pleased to take into consideration, with a view to their removal, certain grievances, to which, under official regulation, the assistant surgeons of Her Majesty's Navy have long been subjected, and which materially impair their means of usefulness in the care and protection of their shipmates' health.

Your Petitioners have at various times been informed, and, upon due inquiry, have found full warrant for believing, that the position at present assigned to the assistant surgeons of Her Majesty's Navy, being in no way adequate to the consideration which they enjoy in civil life, or to what which attaches to the medical officers of corresponding rank in Her Majesty's land forces, is of necessity incompatible with the influence and authority which the nature of their professional duty imperatively requires.

We, your Petitioners, submit with confidence to the liberal feeling and deliberate judgment of your honourable House, that scientific men of mature age, and thoughtful habits, such as the assistant surgeons now serving in Her Majesty's Navy, are by us, your Petitioners, known to be,

should be admitted on equal terms to the society of the ward-room officers of the ship in which they serve; and that, in right of their official rank, defined by Order of the Lords of His Majesty's Council on January 23, 1805, they should no longer be deprived of the privileges implied by ward-room accommodation.

Instituted as a college of physicians on grounds of service to the public health, and zealous from national feeling in all that has regard to the comfort and efficiency of the seamen employed in Her Majesty's Navy, we, your Petitioners, should be wanting in our duty, did we hesitate to assure your honourable House, that from the nice manipulations, and the close, careful observations at present required from those engaged in the practical application of medical science, there is an urgent necessity that the assistant surgeons of Her Majesty's Navy should be furnished, while on ship-board, with all possible opportunities for study and reflection, and that they should not be compelled, from want of a separate cabin, to forget the responsibilities imposed upon them as officers of health.

In further support of our claim as public functionaries to be heard with indulgence by your honourable House, we beg further to inform your honourable House that several of the licentiates, and certain of the fellows, of the Royal College of Physicians are now serving, or in times past have served, as medical officers in the ships of war of Her Majesty's Navy.

Thus associated, in our corporate capacity, with the medical department of the

British Navy, and acknowledging, moreover, in the spirit of our royal charter, a fellowship of purpose and interest with all those of our countrymen who exercise the honourable faculty of physic in any part of Her Majesty's dominions, we, your Petitioners, respectfully press upon the attention of your honourable House this our earnest appeal in behalf of the assistant surgeons of Her Majesty's Navy, trusting, through the wise intervention of your honourable House, to secure for the future to every ship's company on the public service the best medical assistance that our country's institutions can afford.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

The Petition of the Royal College of Surgeons of England,

Humbly sheweth,

That the Court of Examiners of the said college are required to examine into the qualifications of the assistant surgeons of Her Majesty's Navy on their promotion, and have found many who have neither improved nor effectually maintained their knowledge of the art and science of surgery.

That the president and council deem it their duty to represent further to your right honourable House, that the cause invariably assigned for this deficiency is the want of such accommodation in the vessels of the Navy as is compatible with the requirements of study; and they are induced to believe, from the inquiries which they have made, that the assistant surgeons of the Navy are placed under circumstances which are unsuited to the position and pursuits of members of a liberal profession.

That the president and council, under the impression that the regulations at present existing tend to diminish injuriously the efficiency of the surgical service, and to deter able surgeons from entering Her Majesty's Navy, humbly pray your honourable House to consider the grievances of which the assistant surgeons of the Royal Navy complain.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

The Petition of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh,

Humbly sheweth,

That the assistant surgeons of the Royal Navy, many of whom are licentiates of this royal college, are subjected to certain grievances to which, in the opinion of your Pe-

tioners, a remedy ought to be applied by the Legislature.

That early in the present century an Order in Council was made, which your Petitioners understand has not been carried into effect, and in virtue of which the medical officers of the Navy were placed on the same footing in all respects with officers of corresponding rank in the Army.

That the naval assistant surgeons are the only officers of adult age who are excluded from the ward-room or general officers' mess; that they are consequently compelled to mess and associate with midshipmen and naval cadets, gentlemen much their juniors, engaged in the acquisition of an elementary nautical education; that their position as gun-room or junior officers makes them ineligible to possess cabins, the only places of *bonâ fide* retirement for purposes of study; and that these circumstances are the sources of much vexation, discomfort, and sense of unmerited degradation to this most important class of Her Majesty's servants.

But the college are far from wishing to found the present Petition solely or even principally on the attention which is due to the feelings of the assistant surgeons inasmuch as its importance will appear greater when considered in relation to the efficiency, and, consequently in relation to the interests of the whole naval service. The assistant surgeons usually enter the service at twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and look forward to the higher responsibility of the office of surgeons at the end of seven or eight years. Their capability, not merely in their present rank but in the higher rank to which they aspire, will depend in a great degree on the devotion of a large portion of their time to purposes of self-improvement. They may at any moment be called upon to treat the most difficult cases, to combat the most formidable epidemics, to dress the most serious wounds, or to perform the most usual operations, without those advantages which the medical gentlemen of the Army for the most part possess of unlimited access to books, and of obtaining the advice and assistance, in all difficulties and emergencies, of the most distinguished medical men, military and civil. Thus, placed in situations of unwonted responsibility, and at the same time, left to their own resources in a much greater degree than any other class of professional men, they are by the present arrangements, deprived of the society of the educated part of the

ship's company, forced to associate with those whose inferior age and education render them unsuitable and unimproving companions, and deprived of the necessary facilities for uninterrupted study. In these circumstances your Petitioners do not hesitate to convey to your honourable House their fixed conviction, that not only is it impossible for these gentlemen to keep pace with the rapid march of the medical sciences, but it is not even possible for them to retain unimpaired the varied knowledge which they had acquired in the schools, and that no system of checks, or of re-examinations, on passing to the higher grade, will compensate to them for that self-culture of which, during a long term of years, they are thus deprived.

May it therefore please your honourable House to take the premises into your early consideration, and to remedy the evils set forth in this Petition by granting to the assistant surgeons of the Royal Navy the rank and privileges of ward-room officers.

JAMES SYME,  
President.

The Petition of the Faculty of Physicians  
and Surgeons of Glasgow,

Humbly sheweth,

That the assistant surgeons of the Royal Navy, many of whom are licentiates of this faculty, are subjected to grievances from which, in the opinion of your Petitioners, they ought to be relieved by the Legislature.

That these grievances are mainly due to an Order of the Lords in Council, made in eighteen hundred and five, not having been fully carried out, to the effect that medical officers of the Royal Navy should be placed in the same position in all particulars with

medical officers of corresponding rank in the Army.

That it appears that the assistant surgeons of the Royal Navy are the only officers, entering the service at an adult age, excluded the wardroom or general officers' mess.

That in consequence thereof they are exposed to many personal indignities, and compelled to mess and associate with midshipmen and naval cadets, gentlemen much their juniors, engaged in the acquisition of an elementary nautical education.

That their position as gun-room or junior officers renders them ineligible to possess cabins, which are the only places of *bonâ fide* retirement for the purposes of study.

That in consequence they are denied the opportunities of studying the diseases which come under their observation, as well as of reviewing the varied knowledge which they had acquired at the schools, and of keeping pace, through a consultation of the medical literature of the day, with the rapid march of the medical sciences; thus leading to a neglect of self-culture highly injurious to their own future prospects, and most detrimental to the public service.

May it therefore please your honourable House to take into your early consideration and to remedy the grievances set forth in this Petition, by granting to the assistant surgeons of the Royal Navy the rank and privileges of ward-room officers.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Signed for and in the name of the said faculty, by order and authority of a general meeting held at Glasgow, the first day of April, eighteen hundred and fifty,

JAMES WATSON, M.D.,  
President.

