

**Observations on the present condition and future prospects of St. Thomas's Hospital / by John F. South.**

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OBSERVATIONS  
ON THE  
PRESENT CONDITION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS  
OF  
ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL.

By JOHN F. SOUTH,

SENIOR SURGEON.



LONDON:  
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, 14, CHARING CROSS.  
1862.

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## ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL.

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THE forlorn and helpless condition into which St. Thomas's Hospital, with its income of about *thirty-two thousand pounds*, is plunged, has induced me, with little pleasure, to draw the attention of the Public to this very important subject. I use the words "forlorn and helpless condition," fully believing that such words will not be considered unfitting when it is fairly and plainly stated, that on the *26th day of July next* the present buildings pass away from the possession of the Governors and from their occupation by five hundred patients, and that up to the present time no preparation has been made to meet the great emergency, nor even any suggestion made (or, if it be, is most carefully concealed from the physicians and surgeons) by which the poor may enjoy their right of hospital relief and assistance, till permanent provision for them is made. This pressing need seems to have been entirely overlooked, and attention alone directed to the choice of a site for the erection of a new Hospital, which I venture to assert will not be completed within four years after the new locality has been fixed on and the architect's plans have been approved. During these years is the Hospital to be a well-endowed name without a being? and are the poor to be destitute for that



time of the medical comforts to provide for which its pious Founder had taken so great care, and which, up to the present time, have very largely and freely afforded help and solace to the poor suffering from disease or injury, specially in its immediate and populous neighbourhood?

The difficulty of finding or providing immediate temporary accommodation for five hundred patients within little more than three months from the present time, seems hardly possible to be overcome; and it can scarcely be imagined that some one or other of the Governors should not have had his attention drawn to this subject since the Charing Cross Railway Company obtained their Act in the summer of 1859, had it not been suggested that, from some presumed cause or other, the Company would not persist in exerting the powers with which their Act endowed them. All doubt about the matter, however, was put an end to by the Company persisting in their determination to carry out their scheme, and their various attempts to make arrangements with the Governors, by which they would have bound themselves to pay to the Hospital for the land over which their line passed a rental of 6,000*l.* a year till they could conveniently purchase the entire site. This arrangement was accepted, and the agreement drawn out for signature, when, at the very last moment, the arrangement was broken off by the Company being called on to engage to pay 9,000*l.* a year instead of 6,000*l.* It can hardly have been expected that the result should have been



otherwise than it has; and the natural consequence followed, that, from that time to the present, the Hospital and the Company have become fiercely hostile to each other, and both involved in enormous legal expense, which, by more prudent conduct, might have been avoided, ample time afforded to the Governors for choice of a new site and erection of necessary buildings, the present Hospital being still occupied by the patients till the new arrangements were completed, if, on more mature consideration of circumstances which till recently have unfortunately attracted little attention, it had been fully shown that it was utterly impossible to remain on the present spot, which, with all the inconvenience and damage that must accrue to the Hospital from the close neighbourhood of the Charing Cross Railroad, appears to be *best suited for the pressing wants of the densely populous district in which it is situated*, and which cannot be provided for by Guy's Hospital alone, as has been asserted by persons unacquainted with the matter. As things remain at present, the Governors must give up their possession of the hospital buildings on the 26th July next, and discharge the five hundred patients to get help where they may chance to find it, unless they can make some arrangement with the Charing Cross Company for a time at such rent as can be arranged.

It is only just to the Company to state that at the hearing of the case for the determination of the price to be paid by them for the purchase



of the Hospital property before the umpire, Mr. Stuart, their counsel, Mr. Lloyd, made two proposals on the subject of the Hospital becoming, for a time, tenant of the Company, the first at a rental fixed by the Company, which was immediately refused by the managers of the case on the part of the Hospital, and the second that the Hospital should be tenant of the Company at such rent as Mr. Stuart should fix, which proposal was also refused by the Hospital managers. Under such circumstances, it is very clear that any arrangement with the Railway Company for even temporary occupation of the Hospital buildings, so that the poor may not be deprived of their just rights, will be attended with very great difficulty.\*

Having thus reviewed the present condition of the Hospital, and the circumstances which render the provision of temporary accommodation of very great difficulty, the question naturally arises whether it be advisable to endeavour to retain the present site and to erect buildings thereon capable of meeting the necessary requirements of a large hospital establishment like St. Thomas's, or whether the objections arising out of the neighbourhood of the Charing Cross Railway are so grave as to set aside the superiority of its present location which the Hospital has over any other that can be obtained; and if these objections cannot be disposed of, whether any one of about forty sites offered to the Governors since their

\* Proof of this is afforded by the Railway Company's advertisement in the 'Times' of the 11th instant for the sale of the Hospital.



advertisements for new sites, ordered at their General Court on 4th February last, *only five months before they will be hospitalless*, is fit for the purpose, and suitable for the convenience of the sick and injured poor who are received into the house, independent of the enormous number of out-patients which flocks daily to the Hospital from the present immediate neighbourhood for medical and surgical advice and assistance.

To prove the fact that the Hospital *cannot be removed from its present site without very great inconvenience to the poor* who enjoy its benefits, I copy the following statistical report which has been drawn up from his office books by the Steward, Mr. Walker, whose correctness and precision in the matter of figures is well known to every officer of the House, as it may be to the Governors when they take the trouble themselves to look into the matter. The following is Mr. Walker's document:—

SUMMARY of PATIENTS DISCHARGED (including deaths) from ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL during the Year 1861, with their places of abode, and in Accident Cases the District in which the Accident occurred.

	Acci- dents.	Other Cases.	Total.
1. A radius of two miles from the Hospital, south side of the River .. .. .	280	1,092	1,372
2. Ditto ditto north side ..	92	717	809
3. South-Western District, from (beyond) the two-mile radius, including Battersea, Wandsworth, Tooting, Mitcham, Clapham, Brixton, Norwood, Dulwich, Camberwell, and part of Lambeth ..	35	181	216
4. South-Eastern District, from (beyond) the two-mile radius, including Peckham, New Cross, Deptford, Greenwich, Woolwich, Plumstead, Charlton, Eltham, Lee, Lewisham, Sydenham, Beckenham, Bromley, and part of Rotherhithe.	69	579	648
5. North-Western District, from (beyond) the two-mile radius, including Pimlico, Kensington, Bayswater, Hampstead, Highgate, Holloway, Islington, and part of Westminster .. .. .	2	133	135



Summary of Patients Discharged from St Thomas's Hospital, &c.—*continued.*

						Acci- dents.	Other Cases.	Total.	
6. North-Eastern District, from (beyond) the two-mile radius, including Bethnal Green, Victoria Park, Limehouse, Poplar, Bow, Blackwall, Plaistow, Stratford, Hackney, Tottenham, &c.						6	163	169	
7. Kent, beyond 10 miles from London ..						Exclusive of Cases in each County mentioned in No. 4. No. 3. Nos. 5 & 6 No. 6.	15	163	178
8. Surrey .. ..							14	71	85
9. Middlesex .. ..							2	28	30
10. Essex. .. ..							0	53	53
11. Hertfordshire .. ..						0	18	18	
12. England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Jersey, &c. .. ..						2	157	159	
March 21, 1862.						517	3,355	3,872	

From this very clear statement it is quite evident that of the 517 ACCIDENTS admitted, 280, or  $\frac{4}{7}$ ths of the whole number, occur within the two-mile radius south of the Thames, and 92, or  $\frac{2}{11}$ ths, within the like radius north of the river; whilst in addition to these the river neighbourhood in the South-eastern District whence the greater number of its 69 accidents occur, in consequence of the passage of trains from Woolwich and Greenwich almost every twenty and thirty minutes throughout the day, and thus of their speedy transmission to the Hospital, may fairly be included in an equivalent condition to those of the two-mile radius. So that out of the gross number of 517 accidents, 441 are brought from within the two-mile radius and from the South-eastern District with facilities which neither Lewisham, Camberwell, nor the Surrey Gardens could furnish were St. Thomas's Hospital removed to either of those localities. Of the MEDICAL AND OTHER SURGICAL CASES, amounting to 3,355 in all, 1,092, or one-



third, come from within the two-mile radius south of the Thames, and 717, or upwards of one-fifth, from the like radius north of the river, and the South-eastern District yields 579, or nearly one-sixth of the gross number.

In addition to the Steward's Report I would further observe, that if a curved line be swept over the map from west to east, commencing at Lambeth Palace, crossing Westminster Road at the New Cut, crossing Blackfriars Road at Nelson Square, crossing High Street at St. George's Church, thence down to the Bricklayers' Arms, and terminating at the Grand Surrey Docks, it will be immediately seen how it happens that so very large a portion of the accident cases come from the immediate neighbourhood of the Hospital, even within the two-mile radius.

With the fact, undeniable from the Steward's statistics which I have quoted, that its *present locality* is the *most convenient* for the sick poor of the neighbourhood, for whom the Hospital was founded, that it is *most needful* for the *ready accommodation* of the accidents which are continually occurring in its crowded thoroughfares, wharves, and numerous manufactories, and from the certainty that the five hundred beds of Guy's Hospital are utterly insufficient to meet the necessities of the neighbouring poor, I have arrived at the firm conviction that its *present* site, with all the inconveniences to which it must necessarily be subjected by the establishment of the Charing Cross Railway, is PREFERABLE to any other at present offered, or likely to be found, and



that every effort ought to be made to bring about this most desirable result. This opinion I do not hold alone; *every one of my colleagues*, the physicians and surgeons, take the same view of the matter, after very careful consideration of all the circumstances. I am aware that in giving this decided opinion, I shall most probably be twitted with the evidence I gave before the House of Lords' Committee on the Charing Cross Bill; and those who direct the Hospital affairs, I fully expect will say that they have proceeded in the course they have adopted, as consequence of the statements made before that Committee by my colleagues and myself. In answer to this, I have no hesitation in stating as boldly and plainly as I did then, that the railroad noise and shaking, and the interference with its ventilation, would render the north wing of the Hospital *useless for occupation by patients*, and that if we continue our present habitation, that wing must be pulled down, or used for some other purpose, certainly not for residences for the Chaplain, Apothecary, Steward, and Matron, as suggested by some Governor, who perhaps held them of the same station as the upper servant in a Common Councilman's family. I do not deny, however, that it might be set apart for the six or seven General Courts, including the annual dinner which a few Governors of the whole number have thought sufficient for looking after the health and well-being of our venerable Hospital during its last three years of trouble and perplexity, from which it is yet far from escaping. I would take the liberty of adding



that about July last those officers who had given evidence before the House of Lords' Committee signed a document, prepared for them, in which they still held to the opinion they gave of the damage which would accrue to the Hospital from the Charing Cross Railroad. I mention this circumstance to prevent it being thrown in our face, that we have twice asserted the unfitness of the present locality of the Hospital under its increased inconveniences. We readily admit we have made this statement twice—yes, twice—and what then? The real question is, Can the Hospital be removed elsewhere, affording to the public the same convenience as at present? The plain and unanswerable answer is, No, THE HOSPITAL CANNOT BE REMOVED FROM THE VERY SPOT WITHOUT GREAT PUBLIC INCONVENIENCE AND LOSS.

Whether those who direct or manage the Hospital affairs have ready any plan or proposal to bring before the General Court of Governors, to be held on Tuesday the 15th, I do not even surmise, still less pretend to know; but this I do not hesitate to state, that neither of the physicians or surgeons, who are responsible to the Public for the welfare of the patients, have ever been in any way consulted on the matter, and know no more of what is doing, or proposed to be done, than if they had no connection with the establishment. Perhaps it might be well known, that all, with one accord, hold the advisability of remaining where they are; but it would seem to have been courteous to them had their opinion been asked officially, although it were not to be acted on, more especially



after the very modest and respectful address to the Governors which was published in the 'Times' in February last, of which, however, not the slightest notice has been taken.

I come now to consider whether, if the Governors fall in with the opinion of *all the physicians and surgeons*, that it is best, under existing circumstances, the Hospital should remain on the same spot, whether it is possible to arrange the building there of a new Hospital, capable of holding the same number of patients. I answer distinctly—Yes; there is room for ample hospital accommodation, not only for our present number, five hundred, but for perhaps five hundred and fifty patients, if the accommodation now set apart for the Nightingale nurses, not only without consultation with the physicians and surgeons, but in direct opposition to the wishes of the greater number of them, and which opinion remains unchanged, be withdrawn. I admit that the passage of the Charing Cross Railway through the northern part of the Hospital enclosure will seriously interfere with the ventilation, that it will greatly increase the noise, and that it will render the north-west wing entirely unsuitable for patient occupation. But I must look further than this in estimating the possible objections to retaining the present site. No one can doubt that few years will elapse before the Brighton Railway Company will be desirous of obtaining a better approach to their most important station, and that they will determine on having a direct and immediate approach of



their own from Wellington Street, instead of the circumbendibus (if I may be allowed to use the expression) route they now put up with from the South-Eastern incline; and if they determine on this they will assuredly get it, for the railway interest not less in the Hereditary than in the Representative House of Parliament is sufficiently powerful to set aside all interests, public or private, which interfere with railway accommodation. Now if my presumption be correct, another large slice of the Hospital ground will be taken off, and the present site of the north-west wing of the building will become the approach to the Brighton Station. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but any person of common sense giving a thought to the subject must at once see that my presumption will certainly be realized not long hence: how soon it may happen I do not pretend to assume.

Well, notwithstanding abstraction of Hospital area now in progress by the erection of the Charing Cross Railway, and the abstraction of still more for a better approach to the Brighton terminus, which I feel positive will be effected, I still believe (always putting aside the interference with the ventilation we now enjoy from the north, and the noise, which we shall certainly have increased), that hospital accommodation for five hundred or more patients on our present site can be obtained, not, indeed, with such large airing-grounds as we could wish, nor equal to those which Guy's and the London Hospital alone enjoy in the metropolis, but



at least equal to that of our elder noble brother, St. Bartholomew.

The present area of St. Thomas's Hospital is nearly four acres, an oblong from west to east, with its eastern end running off obliquely, from its south-eastern corner, north-westward to the South-Eastern incline, so that the length of the north side of the oblong is only about 390 feet, whilst the south side, bounded by St. Thomas's Street, measures about 550 feet from Wellington Street westward to Joiner's Street eastward, and on this south side is included St. Thomas's parish church. Now besides the Hospital bounds, the Hospital is the owner of four houses on the same side and west of St. Thomas's Church, and on the east side of Wellington Street, between St. Thomas's Street and the south-west wing, it owns three houses, altogether occupying, the Church included, an area of about half an acre. On the south side of St. Thomas's Street our Hospital owns the whole of the street from Guy's Hospital westward to High Street, to wit, St. Thomas's School, a large carriage shed, and seven houses, which, together with two houses in High Street from the south-west of St. Thomas's Street, another house and piece of land and St. Thomas's burial ground, both south of the south side of St. Thomas's Street, occupy nearly a quarter of an acre.

Now my plan consists in this—the occupation for Hospital use of the area of St. Thomas's Church, of the houses on the north side of St. Thomas's Street, and of the two houses between



that street and the south-west wing in Wellington Street, of the school-house, of the seven houses on the south side of St. Thomas's Street, and of the two houses in High Street, together with the house and the burial ground south of the St. Thomas's Street houses. As to the house property there can be little difficulty, as most of their occupants are tenants-at-will, and have been served with notice to quit several months since. For the removal of St. Thomas's Church on the north, and of the burial ground on the south side of the street, I am aware that an Act of Parliament must be obtained, but I do not anticipate any difficulty on these points. The inhabitants of St. Thomas's parish, since the establishment of the Brighton Railroad, have been in a steady course of diminution, and should my proposal be carried, will be still further lessened, and, exclusive of the families of the resident officers of St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospital, almost cease to be, and the remaining few might with advantage be tacked on to either of the adjoining parishes of St. Saviour or St. Olave, with an equivalent addition to the endowment of the chaplaincies of the former, or the rectory of the latter, from the sum now paid by the Hospital, according to their charter, to the ministership of St. Thomas's, whilst the remainder of such minister's salary might be fittingly applied to the improvement of St. Jude's, in Kent Street, incumbent's salary, in which district the Hospital holds considerable property. As to the burial ground, I presume Government would readily assist in



obtaining its clearance and conversion to the benefit of the living. Assuming the clearance of the whole area which I have mentioned, my plan will involve another condition, to wit, the removal of St. Thomas's Street further south, which could be easily effected without any inconvenience. If it were continued directly westward from the north side of Guy's Hospital into High Street, and of the same width as at present, it would enter that street over the area of the two St. Thomas's houses in High Street, and thus opportunity be obtained of absorbing the west end of St. Thomas's Street within the area of St. Thomas's Hospital. Should this plan be adopted there will be no difficulty in erecting a building with a principal frontage in St. Thomas's Street of 400 feet, behind which two blocks of buildings, with a length of 100 feet each, and an intervening space of 150 feet, might be placed northward, the ends of which would be distant from the Charing Cross Railroad, the east block about 320 feet, and the west about 250 feet from the railroad. All these buildings, if made to consist of four stories, with slight variation only from the arrangements of the existing western wards, would accommodate, in the same manner as the present, from five hundred to five hundred and fifty patients. I have carefully gone over this scheme again and again; and though I do not presume to go into the architectural detail, I have no doubt that our intelligent surveyor, Mr. Henry Currey, if he have not already thought about it, will readily furnish the necessary plan for the ac-



commodation of the number of patients, which, I believe, can be easily provided for; whilst the removal of the houses on the south side of St. Thomas's Street will furnish no trifling balance of ventilation lost by the trenching of the Charing Cross Railway on the north side of the Hospital. Fitting accommodation for the resident officers might also, I presume, be found as independent of the actual hospital buildings, as at St. Bartholomew's and Guy's Hospitals.

It must have been observed that I have scarcely adverted to the removal of the Hospital to either of the sites to which their owners, or pamphlet writers in their favour, have endeavoured to draw the favourable notice of the Governors or of the Public. I consider that the convenience of the poor would be best provided for by the Hospital remaining on the very spot whence, since the year 1552, it has been enabled to be the means of comforting and restoring, by God's blessing, to health, the neighbouring sick and injured poor, and I see no sufficient reason for its removal from Southwark to Leytonstone, eight miles; to Lewisham, six miles; to Coldblow Lane, New Cross, four miles; to Bushy Hill or Myatt's Strawberry Ground, Camberwell—the former two and a half, the latter two miles; and still less to Surrey Gardens, one mile and a quarter, or to the Fishmongers' Company's land close by. To get to either of these places would be more inconvenient and expensive, on account of the distance, to the poor, and either is far removed from the neighbourhoods in which the greatest number of accidents occur.



These objections present themselves so immediately to the attention of whoever fairly reviews the facts I have brought forward, and so completely overbalance any assumed advantage by transference of the Hospital to a country locality like Leytonstone, or Lewisham, or Walworth, that I have simply to state *neither* of them is suited for the reception of so important a medical establishment as St. Thomas's Hospital.

As to what may be the decision or what may be the course the Governors will take at their next General Court, which will be held on the 15th, "To read for confirmation the Minutes of the Grand Committee held since the 4th February last, containing the proceedings with reference to the Charing Cross Railway," I do not profess to have the slightest notion; but I frankly acknowledge that I look to it with fear and trembling, when I am informed, through a Governor, that the interest excited among the general body of Governors by the perilous condition of the Hospital during the last three years, has been exemplified by the average attendance of *twenty-two* Governors at the eighteen General Courts held during that period. Also that of the Grand Committee, consisting of thirty Governors, the average attendance at thirteen meetings in 1859 did not exceed *thirteen*, at seventeen meetings in 1860, and at fifteen meetings in 1861 never exceeded *nine*. Such has been the attention to the Hospital interests given by the two hundred or a few more Governors who are its Trustees, and responsible for its welfare.



True it is that thirty-eight of these Governors are so of right as City officials; and as they pay not a farthing for the honour they are appointed to, they may perhaps think it little worth, and be careless of taking any trouble about the efficiency of the Hospital arrangements. The consequence of this indifference of the Governors to the management of the establishment is now before the Public, and on the 26th day of July next ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL WILL EXIST BUT IN NAME, unless its direction shall be assumed by some wiser and more far-seeing power than looks after it at present.

JOHN F. SOUTH.

*April* 12, 1862.



1911  
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JOHN F. SOUTH

July 12, 1911.