

Hospitals : their funds and management, their abuses and remedies : with special reference to the proposed foundation of a children's hospital : a letter to Arthur Ryland, Esquire, Mayor of Birmingham / from a hospital surgeon.

Contributors

Hospital surgeon.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

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HOSPITALS;

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THEIR FUNDS AND MANAGEMENT,

THEIR ABUSES AND REMEDIES,

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PROPOSED FOUNDATION

OF A

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

A LETTER

TO

ARTHUR RYLAND, ESQUIRE,

MAYOR OF BIRMINGHAM,

FROM

A HOSPITAL SURGEON.



BIRMINGHAM:

E. C. OSBORNE, 29, BENNETT'S HILL.

1861.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

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HOSPITALS ;

THEIR FUNDS, MANAGEMENT, &c.,

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PROPOSED FOUNDATION
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TO ARTHUR RYLAND, ESQUIRE,

MAYOR OF BIRMINGHAM.

SIR,

I was present, though silent, at the Meeting, convened by you, the 12th inst., in the Council chamber, to consider the propriety of "Founding a Hospital for Sick Children." The object was a good and great one, and those who took a leading part were all men distinguished for undoubted philanthropy ; some, for learning, others, for great business talents and experience. The results were two resolutions ; one affirming the desirability of establishing a Hospital for sick Children in Birmingham, the other appointing a numerous and highly influential provisional Committee for the purpose of carrying the foregoing resolution into effect.

Of the speakers was Mr. S. S. Lloyd, who took upon himself the somewhat unpleasant, but independent, honourable and useful function of sprinkling a few dry, hard, and pointed facts over the soft parterre of flowers so profusely strewed about by the preceding speakers, and particularly by Dr. T. P. Heslop who, towards the close of a speech delivered with a politic reticence calling for congratulation, and in a manner

at once characteristic of the well stored and ready mind, of the anxious thinker and of the practised expounder of specious truths, "denied that such a Charity was likely to injure any "other medical charity. It would be another rill in the "stream of charity; persons would give to this who would "give to no other, and subscribers to existing charities would "not withdraw their subscriptions to give to the new institution."*

Mr. S. S. Lloyd "observed † that it was all very well to "come there and make speeches in the interest of philanthropy, "but had they calculated the difficulty of carrying such a plan "into effect? The General Hospital was at present more "than £4000 in debt, and he believed the Queen's was also in "debt. Both these institutions were already doing a great "work; they had wards for the accommodation of patients, "they received children, and had every possible facility, "except *fresh air*, for the treatment of diseases. Although he "should be happy to give his support to the scheme, if the "Meeting resolved upon establishing the institution, he asked "whether they were prepared to carry out a large undertaking, involving an expenditure of some £2000 a year at "least? if not, it should be distinctly stated that the Children's "Hospital was merely intended for dispensary work."

In the latter quotation we have the banker fresh from his mathematically accurate ledger, full of figures, pre-occupied with the contemplation of an enormous deficit; just before we listened to the votary of science, fresh from devotion at its altar in his *sanctum*, oppressed by meditation on the multitude of human ills, and especially by a vision of an endless unrolling panorama of the Slaughter of the Innocents, yet not utterly downcast, because cheered by a vision of a high-placed exhaustless reservoir of charity, only requiring to be tapped in a fresh place, to give forth pure and healing waters in another rill, without the stream, through its numberless other outlets, being thereby affected in fulness and evenness to its onward course.

* *Aris's Gazette*, July 13, 1861.

† *Ut supra*.

In point of fact we have been witnesses of but one more illustration of the different effects produced in minds, naturally equally powerful and well disposed, by such various, though in their sphere equally honourable and useful, pursuits, as that of science and of commerce.

Theoretically the Doctor's view is defensible, and even experience lends it some support, in opposition to the seeming paradox involved in the proposition that, with given powers, increased demands admit of being supplied with greater facility than lesser ones. The paradox would be a reality if the argument affected physical conditions and forces. It is otherwise with the organic the moral and the intellectual attributes. Exercise increases them, and that not only by directly increasing results, but by actually augmenting the productive force. It is in accordance with this law that cultivation affects the land, that education affects the mind and the heart. The more a man thinks deeply and generously, within certain very wide limits, the greater does his power of meditation and affection become. So does the mind develop; so does faith grow, and the spirit of charity become larger, stronger and purer. This is true of peoples as of persons; the pursuit of good and noble objects ennobles them and fits them for yet better and higher purposes. This is the foundation of the speculative defence possible in Dr. Heslop's position. But experience proves that in individuals as in communities the exercise of the moral attributes of our nature is subject to practical considerations. Every student has to curb his growing thirst for learning, and his desire to buy books and to travel, according to the measure of his means. So every parent in the education of a family; so every good clergyman in spreading the Gospel in a populous parish; so every legislator in enacting laws for public instruction and charity. The great philanthropist, the man ambitious to promote the diffusion of learning and of the comforts of life amongst all classes, ever and anon, finds his path intercepted

by the monitor, "Ways and means." It is a great fallacy to regard the resources available for objects of public beneficence, as if contained in a reservoir capable of giving forth rills whenever tapped. Let any one enquire of those who have the collection of the funds for the Birmingham hospitals, let him endeavour to ascertain the vast expenditure of money and labour which were required, on the part of a large number of the most influential ladies and gentlemen of this Borough, to get up the bazaar which resulted last spring in an addition of £1,000 to the funds of the Lying-in Hospital. Any one who looks at the facts impartially must admit that it is more true to say the springs of charity lie very deeply, under strata which require powerful boring tools to reach them. The stream does issue, but only after enormous pumping, instead of flowing, as suggested, in the pretty but illusory rill.

The position taken by Mr. Lloyd admits of statement in other words, and, I think, with even greater force. Within the last eighteen months the Boards of our two principal hospitals have made unprecedented efforts to increase the number of their subscribers, and to swell the donation lists. They have been aided by a marvellously Catholic appeal, from the Clergy of all denominations to their congregations, which resulted, on two occasions, in the aggregate amount of something like £8,500. The whole has been absorbed by debt, and I believe I am within the mark when I put down at another £6,500 the debt which has accumulated between the two hospitals, since the first of the congregational collections was made in the autumn of 1859. What is even more noteworthy is, that the debt is increasing daily, nay hourly, and that, in spite of the exertions made by the committees of the two institutions, on which sit a considerable number of the very best men of the town and district. Substantially, though in a less degree, the same may be said of our other smaller charities for the relief of sickness. Under these circumstances, the

occasion of the proposed foundation of a new hospital appears to be propitious for the examination of the financial basis and the collateral supports of the existing hospitals and dispensaries, with a view to the economy of the resources, which experience has already abundantly proved unequal to check a largely and constantly increasing state of indebtedness.

The subject is a wide one ;—those need not approach its study who are only prepared to take narrow and partial views. The subject is a complicated one, and beset with many sources of fallacy ; those will do well to eschew it who expect to solve it readily. All the first requisites to a complete understanding of the question in its many bearings are not at hand, and those who are impatient for speedy answers and complete evidence on many disputed points will be disappointed. All that can be reasonably aimed at is, to approach the truth, to eliminate some great fallacies, to dispel some of the most transparent illusions, to clear the path of some rubbish, and make the way level for further advances.

Happily the question can be discussed on broad public grounds, No man's susceptibilities are in the least danger of being wounded, though many men's loose ideas on matters which they have often thought of, but only superficially worked at, are, if they be honestly open to conviction at all, liable to be seriously shaken.

It is very important in approaching the subject, to sober the mind by dismissing too lofty philanthropic ideas. This is a business matter, amenable to the laws of supply and demand, susceptible of being arithmetically gauged.

Birmingham is peculiarly situated,—a large town in the centre of a vast district, abounding in populous townships and sending flocks of patients to its hospitals, labouring under the most serious illnesses, and sufferers from terrible accidents, cases generally very expensive to treat. Hence it is, that, in a great measure, the Birmingham hospitals are the hospitals of the town *and district*.

The hospital funds are derived 1stly, in a very small proportion from funded property, which only increases very slowly indeed, although it is only fair to admit the result, in this respect, has been very much more encouraging, relatively to the years of existence, in the most modern of the two institutions—the Queen's. 2ndly,—from donations; under this head I include all personal gifts, and the collections in churches. This source of income is so industriously cultivated, that I very much doubt if any material addition could be made to it. The question, indeed, is whether, now that the novelty is passed over and people have learned that the congregational collections are to take place annually, they will not fall to a lower average than the admirably high ones of the last two years. 3rdly,—the General Hospital has its world-renowned triennial Festival, which cannot, prudently, be regarded as an *improving* source of revenue to meet rapidly growing demands. On the contrary there is only too much reason to fear that, with the enormous price of musical talent, with the vastly greater number of first-class concerts over the country, the festival may require all the energy and devotion of its indefatigable managing committee, to keep up the proceeds to recent averages. The Queen's Hospital has its annual ball, which is a small revenue, also of problematical promise. 4thly.—The subscriptions; now these are so low, and the subscribers, for the most part, avail themselves so largely of their privileges, that the loss under this head is very heavy. This is more particularly true at the Queen's, where the subscription is so trifling, the privileges so large, not only nominally but really, that it is quite an illusion to look upon the subscription list as income.

It will be found that in both institutions a considerable number of the supporters are the same; while the district, comparatively speaking, furnishes but a small number of contributors, although it is but just to acknowledge a few of these are really munificent. In town and district the great

bulk of the people give nothing whatever to the hospitals. Debt accumulates by thousands annually, but only a small circle hear of it profitably, and contribute to its liquidation. Multiplying subscribers, with a view to increase income, is a grand fallacy, for it only results in augmenting the deficit; the funded property hitherto has augmented by a *very* few hundreds a year, the festival and ball cannot be expected to produce more, the secretaries could not possibly be more efficient; the editors of the local papers could not more powerfully and more liberally promote their efforts; the paid collectors may *try* for more donations; the clergy may *appeal* anew to their flocks; but the former have been so industrious, the latter so eloquent, so fervid, so gloriously one, that they cannot be expected to do more. The Christian world has offered no greater spectacle than that of our clergy, the last two autumns, forgetting all differences, in the Name of One God, labouring for one suffering people. The stern Calvinist relaxed to do good cheerfully, as with a brother, with the Romanist, the high Churchman descended, and the low one rose to, the conviction that charity has no sect; while the faithful Israelite made the largest concession, bowing in his temple on the Christian Sabbath, that the prayers might be one not only in thought and word, but in the very instant of expression.

The spectacle cannot be rendered more impressive, the appeal cannot be more fervent; I do not see on what grounds greater proceeds are to be expected, and yet the authorities at the General talk of building a new wing, while the accommodation at the Queen's is wholly taken up, the fever building is invaded as part of the general hospital, a great effort having been required to reserve a couple of small fever wards; new wards have been added to the main building, and yet patients are refused admission almost daily. And all this, though the physicians and surgeons act gratuitously and the poor old night nurses sit up all night, and scrub a good part of the next day,

for very little more than one shilling. And withal debt grows on the two institutions at a rate nearer three than two thousand a year. I can only make an approximate estimate, however; all the returns necessary to an exact one not being available; but even were they before me, as annually prepared, I should only attach a limited value to them. Not that I should in any way doubt the perfect good faith with which they had been drawn up, but because I have an utter distrust of the system of amateur auditors, whose names are suffered to figure ornamentally on reports. It is to be hoped the appearance is more profitable, than the inspection of accounts is close. It is quite clear that the audit of the accounts of a public institution is work for professional men, and I apprehend the majority will agree with me that no society, be it a commercial company or a great public charity, can spend any of its income to greater advantage than in a public audit.

Now, let any one who has followed me thus far go back a moment, to look upon Dr. T. Pretious Heslop's hyperbolical rill and Mr. S. Sampson Lloyd's inexorable ledger. It is sad to think that myths and realities seem destined, yet for a long while to come, to be the special domain of speculative philosophers and hard-headed men of business, respectively.

I owe the reader a confession. He is not to expect to find in these pages a complete fulfilment of the promises in the title which it was necessary to render attractive, that it might not be utterly passed over when the profitable moment for considering the question had passed. But, though I disdain all pretence to exhaust the subject, and though I may now and then deviate from the prescribed order for its consideration, I hope it will be found that, on the whole, I have been faithful to the theme.

Under Hospital Abuses I intend to offer a few remarks on the misapplication of the funds of the charities, to persons who have no moral right whatever to enjoy them, and who thereby augment the debt and divert charity from deserving objects.

I shall relate one or two cases, as types, from a large number within my own experience. A tradesman in a small but prosperous business, having fallen in his own house, sustained a fracture of the leg, for which he caused himself to be conveyed to the hospital, where he remained nearly two months. The case was a serious one and absorbed great attention from the officers and nurses. Recovery was perfect, and the man returned home, remarking before leaving, that "hospitals were splendid institutions." He spoke very gratefully, but his words were empty. Had this man been attended at home a surgeon might fairly have charged him ten pounds, which I have the means of knowing he is perfectly able to pay. In the hospital he was additionally saved his expenses of nourishment and nursing. The charity of such a man being let off free, to the damage of the funds for the poor, I cannot fathom. Once he was admitted we had no alternative. The evil appears to be due to the *indiscriminate* admission of accidents. All that occur in the streets and other public places, and in manufactories, should, under any circumstances, be admitted at once. In such cases fellow workmen, or the police, testify to the place and manner of the occurrence, but, in other instances, I think it might be possible to require, as a condition of free admission, the statement of the patient and sometimes the testimony of a householder that he was in poor circumstances and unable to pay. Of course we except manifest paupers. If the person paid something a week, say ten shillings, that would indemnify the hospital to some extent, and the patient would still have the advantages of the constant vigilance of the hospital attendants, both officers and servants.

Another case. A person in very easy circumstances was tottering home half drunk, when he slipped and broke his thigh. He was carried on a stretcher to the hospital, where his friends called to visit him; they were all *very respectable* people; and one, a near relation, frequently called in an elegant equipage. Many months have elapsed, but neither the

man nor his kin have given the hospital one solitary shilling. Very obviously these are ungrateful folk, yet I have no doubt they were not much worse than the generality of people, and only wanted the asking, to pay. Had there been some rule to the point, I am disposed to think they would have complied with it cheerfully. It is the old story of that which costs nothing being little appreciated, and of every one being disposed to keep good fires with others' coals. The fact is all seems so flourishing; no money is seen, yet everybody's wants are supplied; though tradesmen be not paid, the bankers are lenient, and everybody seems to be agreed it is the proper thing to get into debt, which will be paid off when the cry is raised that a part of the institution must be closed unless assistance pour in. It does so; but all the time the spendthrift, mis-called charitable, financial policy is in full operation to create a fresh deficit of thousands, and so on and on through the chapter without end.

One subscriber, who I am credibly informed has an independent income of £600 a-year, gave an in-patient ticket to his brother, on whom I operated. Recovery took place in about two months. The treatment required an expensive instrument; wine and other delicacies, and costly medicines; and for which, as two in-tickets were sent in, about twenty-five shillings were paid, the cost to the institution being little less than nine pounds!

A woman presented herself amongst the out-patients one morning with two children. The three were very comfortably, I might say luxuriously, clad. One little girl had a slight scrofulous affection, for which cod liver oil, quinine and iron were prescribed. To my question, what ailed the other child, the mother answered "Nothing, I brought her with me as she wished to travel by train." I ascertained that the return ticket for the three cost three shillings and four pence. I remarked that this was not really a case for a hospital, as the person seemed in easy circumstances and the case required the

use of expensive remedies for a long while. She rejoined that her motive for coming to the hospital was to have the advantage of advice from a hospital surgeon. Thus the very repute of the officers is a source of financial embarrassment to the institution; and it is too much to expect that they can refuse well-to-do people who attend with notes, for they are an introduction to people still better off and thus may bring grist to the mill—not to the hospital mill. Such a state of things is not surprising. History tells us that the men who enter into the medical profession are not usually rich. The education, if complete, is very expensive; the canvass for a hospital appointment generally costs several hundred pounds, the outlay of which is regarded as a good investment, all service being gratuitous; it would be quixotic to suppose that the physician and surgeon do it *all* for the advancement of science and for that noble object expressed in the stock phrase—*the relief of suffering humanity*.

I might mention very many other cases similar to the above within my own experience, but they would only be a reiteration of the story told. I find my own conviction is shared in by others who have very good means of forming an opinion, that the hospital privileges are so absurdly cheap as to tempt persons to become subscribers for the sake of them, thereby offering a premium for the augmentation of the debt; neither is there much reason to doubt that some beggars collect the tickets and then sell them.

For the sake of argument, suppose some one might here interpolate “all this may be very true, but what has it to do with the proposed foundation of a Children’s Hospital?” Reserving for the present a full reply, I deem it convenient in this place to remark that I consider an inquiry into the present hospital expenditure, not only proper but essential, when it is proposed to increase it, notwithstanding the very disturbed state of the finances. Such an enquiry can only be profitable. Experience teaches that if such matters be not gone into when

the occasion requires, they are put off *sine die*. When a gentleman of the Reverend Canon Miller's character and position lends his talents and his colossal energy to the collection of thousands upon thousands for the hospitals in the churches, he may with good reason hold that others should devote themselves to the function of administrators; but I am not disposed to concede that he has a right to permit, much less to foster, the foundation of new hospitals, without making himself fully acquainted with the financial deficiencies of the existing ones, and endeavouring to ascertain the causes of the disequilibrium with a view to remedy. It is undoubtedly splendid to witness a philanthropic Hercules buckle on his armour to vanquish the obstacles in the way of his great and good projects; it is unquestionably inspiring to watch the advance as "Alps on Alps arise," and so the French General thought who looked on at Balaklava: he exclaimed, "*c'est magnifique*," but he could not see the science or the prudence of the lavish expenditure of human life. If dashing enterprise may be censurable on the field of battle for want of a due combination of discretion, how much more so in the affairs of civil life, where men cannot plead in excuse the heated brain, if they aspire to recognition as philosophical workers for the good of their kind. Men of active minds know that they must be satisfied to rest below their aims, and therefore they give rein to ambition that it may soar to a level as near the climax as possible. But lest like the bright ascending rockets, they fall dark as their sticks, some men who have something more than ambition—really great powers of achievement—learn that it is not wise to deviate from those rules, which sound experience proves, are as essential to the welfare of nations and their institutions, as of individual citizens.

If the projectors of the new Children's Hospital had shewn an inclination to commence with small beginnings,—to have a Dispensary and two or three beds, the matter would be less serious than it is; but they have taken for their programme

that of the Ormond Street Hospital in London with its £5,000 per annum income. A better commentary on their intentions is, that afforded by the fact that before the meeting of the 12th instant, it was rumoured pretty loudly that one gentleman had already entered into treaty for the building in Steelhouse Lane, at present occupied as the Eye Infirmary, which is expected shortly to be removed to the Royal Hotel, purchased expressly by its committee. These rumours have gained consistency, and the treaty has advanced. Setting aside the financial consideration of such a mode of proceeding, admitting its great value as evidence of the aspirations of its promoters and *pro tanto* as a caution, I invite attention to the matter for a moment in a sanitary point of view. I am not engaged, though I very strongly feel the temptation to do so, in a discussion of the question just now so fashionable in medical serials and popular magazines, "Nature and Art in the cure of Disease," neither shall I examine what foundation there is in fact for the allegation, that homœopathic globules do well with children, because they want no medicine. The action of medicines is a study fraught with enormous difficulties, and the Science of Therapeutics is only dawning, if indeed the pursuit can yet be said to have attained the dignity of a Science. One thing is very certain, that the administration of medicines is only a part of the treatment of disease. Pure air and abundant light, good food for the body, and the conditions necessary to cheer the mind, are grand requisites. This is certainly at least as true of children as of adults. Now can one conceive a place less fitted for a child's infirmary than the one named in Steelhouse Lane, with its crowded neighbourhood, with Weaman-street and its thronged garrets and workshops on one side, and that nest of filth and worse abominations, Slaney-street, on the other, and last, but very assuredly not least, with the tannery in its immediate rear. The thing seems too monstrous for belief, but my authority for the statement that its perpetration has been contemplated is so undoubtedly good, that it is not possible to admit a doubt on the mat-

ter. Let any one visit the proposed site, and then walk to the Queen's Hospital and up the stairs to the first floor, and into the old Committee room, which months since was set apart for a Children's ward to carry out a project in last year's report, and which has not been furnished sooner, because during several months, the entire hospital has been painted and otherwise repaired, and many wards have necessarily been kept empty, rendering indispensable every inch of space for urgent medical and surgical cases. Now the children's ward at the Queen's, with its look-out on the lawn, in as beautiful a situation as any in Birmingham, is really a room in which poor sick babies may be treated with some prospect that medicine may relieve them, while foul air is prevented killing them; but I shudder to think of the place in Steelhouse Lane. I write thus plainly without any scruple, because the matter is one which admits of easy solution by any one who will devote twenty minutes to walk from the bottom of Slaney Street to Bath Row. This is not an abstruse question of medical science; it is a very simple question of very common sense, which I confidently leave to the body of gentlemen of the provisional committee, amongst whom is Mr. S. S. Lloyd whose name I venture to introduce here, with reference to ventilation, to observe, that, in his speech already quoted, he can only be admitted to have spoken with partial correctness, when remarking that our hospitals had every facility for the treatment of diseases *except fresh air*. The situation of the General is in truth so unfavourable that only one cause can be assigned to its moderate rate of mortality, the distinguished ability of the members of its medical and surgical staff; but the Queen's is one of the best situated, and, so far as ventilation is concerned, one of the best built hospitals I have seen: to be strictly correct, I must qualify this statement with the remark that I admit the very superior advantages of the original building have been slightly, though I think immaterially, deteriorated by the extension of the wings.

The particular admissions I have made, and the general

tone of my remarks have, I trust, effectually prevented me being misunderstood. I agree that greater accommodation is required for the treatment of sick children, as of the poor population generally, while I maintain that the relief should not be afforded on principles which, if persisted in, must reduce any exchequer to a state of bankruptcy. Now, as the object is to relieve infant suffering and infant mortality, I have a suggestion to make, which admits of being carried out at a small cost with good results.

Every body must have been struck, on reading the local papers, with the great frequency of inquests upon children, chiefly from burning. Those records in no way give a fair representation of the number of such accidents. Very many more are taken to the hospitals, and there treated until recovery. The cause is generally the same. The mother leaves home in the morning for her work, and the children, frequently very small ones besides a baby, in charge of a girl, often a small child, or of some old woman. Presently one thirsty one lays hold of the spout of the tea-kettle or the coffee pot, and swallows some of its boiling contents and drags the remainder on to its poor little self. Another plays with the fire; another falls off a chair into it. Such occurrences from precisely similar reasons occur in all populous towns, especially manufacturing ones. To remedy the evil, institutions were founded in Paris years ago, under the names of "*Crèches*" or Cradles, and they have been instituted in London as "Infant Nurseries." The mother takes her baby to the nursery in the morning and it is there cared for, and breathes pure and invigorating air, until she fetches it in the evening. She pays a trifle, I think one sou in Paris and one penny in London, for the accommodation, and if she be very poor she may have the loan of a blanket or quilt to carry the little one to and from home, safe from the cold nipping air. Any body interested may readily obtain information on the point. One of the London nurseries is in Portugal street, Lincoln's Inn. I have a very strong impression that

two or three such nurseries on high airy spots, in this town, would do more to save life, and to aid in rearing healthy children, than all the medicine that could be given, for a long time to come, to all the children that could be located in that miserable place in Steelhouse Lane.

In reviewing the foregoing considerations, I am very forcibly struck by their incompleteness. They at any rate fulfil the object of supplying material for discussion on a question which I think has been very hastily considered, with the usual result of hasty considerations—a jump at conclusions. The matter is certainly too serious to be trifled with. It is sometimes urged, that a man has no right to expose evils, if he be not prepared to suggest, if not to carry out, efficient remedies. I do not submit to the dictum. An evil loses a great part of its danger, and of its power to do injury, from the moment its nature and extent are adequately known. Hence exposure of ills, altogether apart from the suggestion of remedies, operates advantageously by checking their pernicious operation.

The discussion has been raised by the proposal to found a Children's Hospital, and by the resolution, to appeal to the public for the necessary funds. Under the circumstances, it has been deemed advisable to follow the parliamentary precedent of discussing financial and cognate matters fully, on taking a vote in committee of supply.

Partial views only prejudice the mind, and it must never be forgotten, that the seeming tautology of the legal expression used in administering an oath, is in point of fact no tautology at all. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," is a combination of words, not one of which can be sacrificed consistently with a full rendering of the idea. What is true in itself may be false if it be not the whole truth, and even the whole truth may be false, if with it be admixed any portion of untruth. Whatever be the issue of the discussion on the special matter which has given rise to it I think quite

immaterial, confident, as I am, that one good result, at least, will follow a comprehensive consideration of the whole truth,—the financial system of our hospitals and allied charities will be more carefully studied than it hitherto has been. In point of fact, there is no subject more interesting or important, in a social point of view, from its bearing upon the well-being of the people, than that of sanitary legislation, hitherto only very imperfectly considered as a part of our poor-law, with the exception of a few fragmentary Acts, bearing directly on some matters which, from their urgency have, it might be said accidentally, attracted the notice of the Legislature. In these days, when Royal Commissions have been issued so frequently to enquire into all manner of subjects, it is surprising that Hospitals have hitherto been overlooked. A more fertile field for thorough investigation cannot well be imagined.

Conscious of the many shortcomings of these remarks I shall only plead one excuse. To have made them fuller, which would have been a very easy task, would have necessitated the discussion of some topics not equally pleasant to every one. My great desire has been to expose fallacy and speak truth for its own sake, and without wounding any susceptibilities. For a similar reason knowing well that causes, however in themselves meritorious and heartily defensible, often suffer through their opponents seeking to detract from the main issue by raising collateral ones, I have elected addressing you, Mr. Mayor, as

Your very humble Servant,

A HOSPITAL SURGEON.

Birmingham,

22nd July, 1861

