

The second annual report of the Southam Dispensary.

Contributors

Southam Dispensary.

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THE
SECOND
Annual Report
OF THE
SOUTHAM
DISPENSARY.

F. Smith, Printer, Southam.

THE
SECOND
Annual Report
OF THE
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DISPENSARY

President.

Sir GRAY SKIPWITH, Bart.

Committee.

BARNARD, Rev. ROBERT, Lighthorne.
BROMFIELD, Rev. T. R. Napton.
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PALMER, Rev. C. Ladbroke.
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TOMES, EDWARD, Esq. Southam.
WILSON, Rev. W. C. Priors Hardwick.
WATKINS, Rev. C. Fenny Compton.
WISE, Rev. HENRY, Offchurch.

*** Surgeon.**

Mr. H. L. SMITH, M. R. C. S.

And Surgeon to the Infirmary at Southam, for Curing
Diseases of the Eye and Ear, established in 1818.

† Treasurer.

Mr. JOSEPH CAMPBELL.

Secretary.

Mr. EDWARD BICKNELL.

Housekeeper.

Mrs. KINGMAN.

* According to rule the 8th, *all* and every regular Medical Practitioner residing in the district, can be admitted into the establishment, at the discretion of the Committee.

† A List of Donors will be printed with the next Report.

At the Adjourned Meeting of the Committee of the Dispensary, supported by the Subscriptions of Independent Labourers and Mechanics, held at Southam, October 25, 1825,

JOHN SHUCKBURGH, Esq. IN THE CHAIR.

Present,

RICHARD BURMAN, Esq. Southam.

Rev. Dr. CHANDLER. Southam.

EDWARD TOMES, Esq. Southam.

Rev. THOMAS LEA, Bishops Itchington.

Mr. H. L. SMITH.

As Visitors,

Rev. JAMES CHAMBERS, Willoughby.

Mr. J. T. GARDNER, Surgeon, Southam.

IT WAS RESOLVED,

1st. IT appears by the Secretary's report, that the Subscribers to the Dispensary are *a* 336—of whom *b* 270 have been benefitted by its means.

2ndly. IT appears these subscribers are persons whose earnings are adequate to their ordinary support, but are too limited to defray the expenses of medical attendance in case of sickness at their own homes. These persons, had they been visited by sickness, must consequently have been driven to one or other of these inconveniences,—either they must have had recourse to their *c* parishes for assistance—or they must have incurred bills, which according to the customary practice would not have been improperly charged, but which the patients had not the means to pay—or they must have foregone medical aid in many cases where it might have been available:—from every one of these inconveniences, it is obviously desirable, on the score of true benevolence, to rescue the labouring classes.

3rdly. IT appears that the subscriptions from the members amount to 44 11 11
 For journies 26 0 6
 £.70 12 5

If from this be deducted the cost of drugs, subscriptions to Northampton hospital, bathing institution at Leamington, collectors' gratuity, wages, rent, &c. amounting to £.63 6 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ —there remains a balance in favor of the Dispensary of £.7 5 7 $\frac{1}{4}$.

4thly. IT appears that in the early stages of the Dispensary, the proportion of subscribers needing medical aid to those who have not been burdensome to the Institution, has been greater than there is reason to hope may hereafter be the case. It has been calculated that there are within six miles of the Dispensary 6000 persons who, according to its rules, are admissible. All, or any considerable number of these persons, becoming subscribers, would materially promote its interests. And from the recent increase of subscribers, the consequence of the Institution being better understood and appreciated, and in particular from the manner in which it has been supported in an adjoining parish, there is great reason to hope that the balance in favor of the Institution, (to be divided amongst the medical practitioners) will become progressively greater.

5thly. THE donations for the outfit have amounted to £.22 18 6. These have been faithfully applied to the intended purpose,—but, as they are inadequate to complete the outfit, without intrenching on the annual income of the Institution; and as the Dispensary professes and hopes to proceed, independently of the aid of the rich in all respects excepting this—it is hoped their benevolence will be extended to it for the accomplishment of this single object.

6thly. THAT the thanks of the meeting be given to Mr. H. L. SMITH for his zeal and intelligence in originating a plan, which appears calculated to be extremely beneficial to the labouring classes; and which, it is sincerely hoped, will in no respect be injurious to the medical profession.

JOHN SHUCKBURGH, CHAIRMAN,

REGULATIONS.

THIS Dispensary being open to persons in Southam and its vicinity, whose earnings *individually* are not sufficient to defray the expenses of Medical and Surgical attendance, applies itself to Servants, Mechanics, and Agricultural Labourers, with their families. The annual subscription for Adults, is 3s. 6d.—for Children, 2s.—by means of which respective payments they become members, and are entitled to medicine and attendance from the Dispensary. When the subscribers are sufficiently numerous to cover the expense in the several parishes, the members will receive necessary attendance at their own homes, by the medical officer whom they may request to attend them;—until that period, the journies must be paid for by the members who do not reside in the town of Southam, at the rate of 2s. 6d. if within three miles, and 1s. more for every mile above that distance. It must be observed, that Midwifery is not included in the above, though medicines on such occasions will be supplied.

THE annual subscription must be paid in advance by all servants; but may be paid quarterly, at the option of such members as have more than two in a family belonging to the Institution. By reference to the class of society before designated, it will be manifest that no person having sufficient property to maintain himself and family *without manual labour*—and *no pauper* receiving relief of a parish, can be admitted a member. If any question arises on these points, application must be made to the Committee. The quarterly days of payment are Michaelmas, Christmas, Lady Day, and Midsummer.

The following NOTES, and commentary on the preceding resolutions, are respectfully offered by Mr. SMITH to the President and Committee, and the Gentlemen of the counties of Warwick and Northampton, who are concerned in that part of our laws which respects the civil economy and comforts of the poor,—as well as the Clergy, and Members of the Medical Profession, who will feel the value of establishing a method where there has hitherto been, from the want of it, an opportunity for neglect and oppression to pass almost unnoticed and unredressed; or for attention and skill, however faithfully applied, and with the greatest mental and bodily sacrifices, to continue for a series of years unregarded and comparatively unpaid. He hopes the scheme and notes will be received with indulgence,—as the abuses they unfold have been of long standing, and have increased with our poor laws, and present a wide, though uncultivated field, of philanthropic inquiry.

1. District or Centripetal Dispensary appears a good name, to distinguish Institutions of this sort from Hospitals, Infirmaries, or other Dispensaries, supported by the annual subscriptions of the rich.

2. ^a 336 members, of whom 215 are adults, and 121 children. ^b 270 patients, their diseases generally slight, as they have been enabled to apply for relief at once, and without fear of expense or difficulty of access. 8 have died, 6 of which were cases of pthisis:—these cases are usually excluded from other Institutions, and when they come under the care of a parish surgeon as confessedly incurable, are frequently left to sink into the grave without those palliatives that medicine, occasionally given, can afford in this

untractable, as well as in many other incurable disorders. 48 of these 270 would have applied to their parishes for a surgeon, had it not been that they were members, although they had never done so before, but having small families it would have been imprudent to incur bills; and about 64 who had in their previous illnesses been attended by parish surgeons, have, and will for ever, if possible, in this respect, renounce parish aid. 30 are servants, taking small wages.

3. *c* THAT labouring families apply to their parishes for assistance on account of *medical expenses*,—and that alone in many instances may be learnt from this fact—that at Southam, previous to the establishment of the Dispensary, whilst only 145 individuals were considered as proper objects to be assisted with parish pay, upwards of 400 were occasionally supplied with orders to the parish surgeon;—of course 250 of these may be considered as floating between independence and pauperism,—belonging to the former in their youth and health and when wages and work are plentiful, and to the latter when they are deprived of any of these advantages; all of whom could at some time in the year, especially in the summer, or by quarterly payments, spare the money that would be required to become members of the Dispensary, particularly if they were stimulated to do so by their masters, and had any increased respect shewn them for this effort to keep from applying to their parishes

Besides these 250, who may be called occasional paupers, there are probably about the same number who incur bills which they either cannot or which distress them excessively to pay,—many die rather than get in debt, or apply to their parishes. The numbers thus situated are very considerable. Southam contains 1161 inhabitants,—335 of whom are sufficiently rich to be under the usual circumstances of life, independent of any assistance but what may be derived from their own resources without manual labour, —as before observed, 145 as applying to their parishes for maintenance, rent, or clothing, may properly be called paupers.

If these two classes, the rich and the poor, are subtracted from the whole population, 681 are consequently the number of persons, who may be considered as eating their bread in the sweat of the brow,—and whom it behoves the public to save from the evils above pointed out, to one or other of which they are liable, if sickness should deprive them of the means of continuing in that station of life in which they are placed; and who, whilst struggling to live in respect and comfort, should have every possible aid, countenance, and protection,—far more than those who without an effort to prevent it, throw themselves upon the parish on all occasions.

Of these 681—170 are members of the Dispensary, above one half of them must otherwise go to the parish in sickness; but who would not now do so, as they would be unwilling to forego the step towards independence they may be considered to have gained.

If the same calculations are applied to the villages that surround Southam, and which are not particularly numerous or populous, it will be found that there are 10,000 persons within five miles, it is probable that there are upwards of 6,000 proper to become subscribers—and which would give an income of £.750 per annum; to which may be added £.300, the sum the parishes should pay, at the rate of £.3 for every hundred of their population, (which is not more than they now pay). Observe, this sum should vary according to the distance of each village from the Dispensary, as parishes would have no journies or other extras to pay—and it would give the sum of £.1050 for the use of the Dispensary,—£.250 of which would be sufficient for the supply of drugs, rent, wine, &c. &c. and the remaining £.800 divided amongst the medical men for their services. It is not to be expected that above one half or one third can be made sufficiently provident thus to insure themselves the advantages of the Dispensary,—but it is probable that nothing like one third of the above sum is at present paid to the regular medical men for attendance on this (in this particular,) oppressed class of society:—as unless they come in

forma pauperis with a ticket from an overseer, regular medical attendance is beyond their means,—and the objections to this mode will be seen by reference to the Petition.

These calculations are submitted to the consideration of magistrates and land owners, in the hope that they may elucidate the benevolence and policy of stimulating their labourers and servants to provide their own funds for this purpose, as an aggregate fund alone can defend the earnings of their youth, from becoming a sacrifice to an accident, or fit of sickness, against which no prudence can guard,—and which scheme, in conjunction with a Savings Bank, or Friendly Society on *improved principles*, may teach every family, where the *bread winners* can earn 12s. a week, to part with their ancient inheritance,—*parish pay* and *the workhouse*.

It may be acceptable to the profession, and to those gentlemen who are friendly to the principles of the Dispensary, but have felt delicate in interfering with the present mode of remunerating attendance, (though an acknowledged bad one,) as it may convince them the sum to be divided will be more considerable than what is now obtained from these classes of people.

The importance of these calculations, as one of many excellent means of elevating the character of our working population, may be estimated by recollecting that in this county alone it is probably 200,000, and that in those cities and towns which are densely inhabited, the funds would amount to a sum fully equal to pay medical men for attendance, in as great degree as they now receive from the more affluent. The outfit for forty Dispensaries would not exceed the annual tax on the benevolent for one County Hospital.

About 30 of the members are *casual poor*, or those who belong to a different parish from that in which they reside; they have therefore no legal claim to local medical relief,—“and to procure an order for it from their own parish requires

a negotiation of no small difficulty between the pauper and overseer; the latter of whom generally cuts it short by requiring him to be brought home for assistance. But as this would either endanger his life, or deprive himself and family of that employ which kept him, and them, from the poor house,—he is constrained to give up all thoughts of parochial aid, and to rely on the mercy of Heaven to send him the good Samaritan,” and “the Ladies Bountiful.” The Dispensary to the *casual poor* will be a great blessing.

4. It is desirable to continue the annual subscriptions to the Northampton General Infirmary, and to the Charitable Baths at Leamington; and when the funds are sufficient, to become subscribers to the Hospitals at Oxford and Birmingham, and the Sea Bathing Infirmary at Margate. Thus, in the worst cases that can arise, ensuring the best care and advice in the kingdom for each individual belonging to it, without the sacrifice of independence included in begging an Hospital ticket.

The governors of these excellent charities, but especially the medical officers, will value these occasional tributes paid to their superior advantages by the Dispensary surgeons; and their wards (if this sort of Dispensary should become general,) would be occupied with more suitable cases, than those frequently sent by philanthropic individuals, not of the profession. Liver diseases, aneurisms, stone, scrofula, &c. &c. would promptly come under the care of those surgeons, at these respective establishments, who were known by the profession to have distinguished themselves by their successful treatment, or by the superior manner in which they may have written on these disorders. But the relief afforded by our excellent Hospitals can only be extended to a few; and indeed from the regulations of those charities,—from the distance they are from each other,—from their difficulty of access to inexperienced persons,—and the distaste of country people, (who associate the idea of these public buildings with others less benevolent,)—several days must elapse before the necessary assistance can

be obtained, even by those who have friends to procure them the proper recommendation.

Centripetal Dispensaries, on the other hand, will have the advantage of giving immediate medical relief, and of thus frequently arresting the progress or diminishing the violence of a serious complaint. They will render less frequent the necessity of parochial aid, and in this way at once prevent an increase of expense to the parish,—and do away with the necessity of *dealing wholesale in the bowels of the sick poor*, as well as keep up in the mind of the poor man that honest, useful, and laudable spirit of independence, which must generally be broken before he can submit to be attended by the parish surgeon, and which is usually followed by an apathy and indolence unfavourable to industry, and from which, reliance on parish pay is guaranteed for his family—and the workhouse for himself in his old age.

Besides these circumstances, the attendance of the medical officers at the habitations of the independent labourers and mechanics on these liberal terms, will preserve that desirable connection between the different orders of society which is so well calculated to make known the distresses of some, so as to excite and direct the benevolence of others—who at present, with the means and disposition, neither know *how*, or *when*, to be *useful*.

Mr. SMITH, in offering these remarks to the committee, hopes to insure a continuance of their patronage towards an experiment, which should it succeed, will probably become an example that will be generally followed throughout the kingdom, and permanently secure to every class of society all the various advantages to be derived from the present state of medical and surgical knowledge,—and which are not at this time brought to bear on the public so effectually as they might be.

To the Honorable the Commons of the United Kingdom
of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of HENRY LILLEY SMITH, Surgeon, of
Southam, in the County of Warwick,

SHEWETH,

THAT it is the practice of overseers of the poor in many parishes, to contract by the year for attendance on their poor, when sick or hurt, and that this practice is productive of the following evils :—

IT induces many to apply to a parish for their surgeon, who otherwise would not seek gratuitous relief; and who are thus taught more readily to make application for food and clothing.

IT causes those, who are paupers, to be inadequately attended, as the surgeon finds an assiduous discharge of duty is followed by an increase of trouble, without any increase of remuneration.

IT causes many to continue chargeable to a parish during convalescence, in consequence of not coming under the notice of the surgeon.

IT may produce a disposition, (or the suspicion of such a disposition) to use medicine of an inferior quality, often causing the poor to sell their necessaries for supplies of quack medicine, by which relief appears so cheaply offered, and is so temptingly recommended.*

* The resorting to water doctors, and to the delusive promises of quack medicine, is to be excused in every man who lives by labour; and who has no choice between getting in debt to the privileged regular surgeons, or going to his parish for one; and if by chance either of these uncertain modes of getting relief are successful, they have a claim on the gratitude of the individual and his friends, to enhance their virtues and increase their reputation. The great consumption of quack medicine, and employ of water doctors, is by persons in this class of life. Remove the necessity of applying to them, and that unhappy trade will cease.

WHERE midwifery is included in the contract, it is subversive of proper feeling, by obliging the poor women to change, with each change of parochial arrangement, their accoucher.

IT is a great impediment to the extension of vaccination, for as vaccination is not usually included in the contract, the cases accumulate till the parish is alarmed by the introduction of the small pox,—when, if † vaccination is resorted to, it is hurried and partial, and has given rise to many of the doubtful and mixed cases, that have so much divided and perplexed the public mind.

IT is unkind to the poor who are by this practice confined to a particular practitioner, who experience has convinced them, is unacquainted with their disorder; who may not have seen its commencement or progress; which must necessarily be the case so long as they are turned over at Easter, or perhaps quarterly, in the midst of their afflictions, to a new contractor, chosen by individuals whose object it is to get the work done at the lowest price, and who cannot make any estimate of the skill or education of the candidates.

† During the formation of the Institution, a fatal case of small pox occurred at Marton, and the mortality was daily very great at Coventry; so much so, that on the authority of one of the directors of the poor of that city, I am informed the deaths for some time averaged 16 per week. The few members that belonged at that time to the Southam Dispensary, were requested to invite their neighbours to be vaccinated, and in less than three months nearly the entire population within 5 miles that were susceptible of the small pox, came to be vaccinated. The number who went satisfactorily through the process was 1027; and it is gratifying to reflect, that this was done without persuasion, threat, or any other inducement than the common sense of the poor, when the means were placed, I hope, judiciously within their reach; *i.e.* without sending them to a vestry or poor house, but being allowed to feel that it was altogether an affair of their own choice. We have not from that time had a case of small pox in this neighbourhood that has extended out of the house into which it has been brought; whilst it is and has been more or less disturbing the repose of the greater part of the country.

It is a continual source of dissention amongst the worthiest men of the profession. Their confidence in their art is weakened by it, as they receive no support in difficult cases from each other, and their estimation and character is thus lowered in the eyes of all the district in which they reside.

IN conclusion, your petitioner further declares, that it is consistent with his belief, as well as in some degree with his actual knowledge, that if the sums paid by parishes according to their contracts; with such sums as they pay on account of unforeseen cases, not included in them; together with the various sums collected from the poor for that medical assistance which to themselves appears the most cheap and efficacious, were judiciously employed in the formation of District Dispensaries, they might be provided without distressing their best feelings in regard to independence, at their own homes, or at the Dispensary; which would assure the most speedy and effectual re-establishment of health, combining likewise, when it might be necessary, the skill of all the practitioners within the district, and promoting unanimity amongst the profession, whilst in all probability it would ultimately remove one third of the pauper population from the parochial funds.

THEREFORE your petitioner prays this Honorable House, that the subject in all its various bearings, may be forthwith referred to the consideration of a committee of the House.

H. L. SMITH.

(Copy.)

Votes and Proceedings of the House of }
Commons, Mercurii, 14 die Aprilis, 1824. }

POOR.—PETITION of HENRY LILLEY SMITH, Surgeon, of Southam, in the County of Warwick, relative to providing Medical Attendance for the Poor: referred to select Committee on Labourers' Wages.



