

**Some observations and facts respecting the establishment of an infirmary at Maidstone: addressed to the inhabitants of Kent and Sussex / [G.D. Yeats].**

**Contributors**

Yeats, G. D. 1773-1836.

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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
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SOME

OBSERVATIONS AND FACTS

RESPECTING

THE ESTABLISHMENT

OF AN

I N F I R M A R Y,

AT

M A I D S T O N E :

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS OF KENT AND SUSSEX.

BY

G. D. YEATS, M.D., F.R.S.,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, &c., &c.;  
AND PHYSICIAN AT TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

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TUNBRIDGE WELLS :

PRINTED BY J. CLIFFORD.

1833.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

By far the greater part of this address was written in the end of 1829, with a view of calling the attention of the Public to the establishment of an Institution near this place, to be called the MIDLAND KENT AND SUSSEX HOSPITAL; but a domestic calamity and some other circumstances set it aside. In the mean time the Dispensary was commenced at Maidstone, which has ended, by the laudable exertions of some charitable persons, in an Infirmary for West Kent, where I sincerely hope it may flourish, to the credit of those who projected it, and to the benefit of the poor. It would have been better as a central Hospital had it been situated, as I had intended, nearer to Sussex, but

it was my intention at the same time not to have had any professional connection with it. I have already been attached, during the earlier part of my life, to three public Institutions, besides giving my professional assistance to a fourth.

Meadow Hill, Tunbridge Wells,

October 23, 1833.

# OBSERVATIONS,

&c. &c.

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THE humane and Christian feeling, which so laudably induced several gentlemen to commence the Infirmary at Maidstone, will, I trust, amply plead for me in intruding upon you some observations, on extending its advantages, and on rendering its sphere of action more beneficial; and I should hope, if I make it appear that a very large portion of the population of the counties of Kent and Sussex is greatly in want of a charitable Medical Institution, that means will not be wanting from the wealthy to make so desirable an acquisition.

The population of the county of Kent, according to the last census, 1831, amounts to 478,400; that of the county of Sussex to 272,300. In this dense population of 750,700, there is one hospital for Sussex, at the extremity of the county, at Brighton, the sick poor of which place and adjoining districts, with those of the populous places of Lewes, Worthing, &c., are fully sufficient to occupy it; be it recollected too, that being on the coast, many patients also are admitted from distant parts for the benefit of the air or water of the sea, or both. This Hospital when

full, contains 92 patients; and the population of Brighton alone is 40,634, that of Lewes 8592. The Chichester hospital is very distant from this extremity of the counties of Kent and Sussex, as to be not at all available to this neighbourhood, any more than the Canterbury hospital. In Kent there is a hospital at Canterbury and a sea-bathing Infirmary at Margate.

The Canterbury Hospital holds, when full, 65 patients; the population of that city is 14,463: this number, with the thick population of the surrounding districts, fully occupy the wards of the hospital. I am informed that at one time, applications for admission were considerably beyond the means of accommodation, although not many were made from beyond the circuit of twenty miles\*. A new wing ~~is~~ in consequence ~~now~~ building, which will afford accommodation for ten or twelve more patients. This wing is, I believe, now finished. The same observations will apply to the Margate Infirmary, with this additional fact, that it is open to all England for the benefit of the sea, and therefore more likely to be constantly filled, and moreover its own population amounts to 10,339; and the distances of these institutions from this part of the two counties is so great, as to render the advantages derivable from them, not available to this neighbourhood. The London hospitals we know are always crowded, besides the difficulty and expense of getting patients to the metropolis.

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\* Letter from Dr. Carter, of Canterbury, Sept. 4, 1829.

Now, if we turn our eyes to the country in this neighbourhood, we shall find a very large population, with numerous poor, and no charitable institution existing for the reception of the indigent sick within its walls, nearer than London, Canterbury, Margate, and Brighton, and these it has been shewn, in addition to the obstacles of the distance, are much occupied by the poor in their more immediate vicinity. Now, within a distance of fifteen miles round Tunbridge Wells, there is a population of full 140,000 persons at least, as can be shown from the population returns to Parliament in 1831. I am sure I take it at a very low calculation when I say, that one-twentieth of this number, viz. 7000, are persons who, when weighed down by continued sickness, that is with illness which for some time confines them to bed, have not the power without great pecuniary embarrassment of remunerating medical aid; and if we calculate those from the pauper returns, it will be found that a very large proportion indeed are obliged to send for the parish surgeon, as the following facts, respecting Tunbridge Wells district and the parish of Speldhurst, fully prove. The population of the former is 6307; its poor, or persons receiving parish relief, (August, 1833) 1085, about one-sixth. The population of Speldhurst parish, 2640; its poor, 497, (persons at a distance omitted,) about one-sixth; so that if I take one-sixth as the paupers also, of the 140,000 I get 23,333, which added to the 7000, as above, being one-twentieth of the other class not actually paupers, but helpless under protracted disease, I find above 30,000 who are under

circumstances when ill, either to be totally unable, or not able without great embarrassment and perhaps reduction to poverty, to procure medical aid : hence, the great pecuniary distress which prevails among the poorer, as well indigent class, when many are ill at the same time, as under an epidemic, such as typhus fever.

In the population of the district of Tunbridge Wells, is enumerated every *resident* person, whether parishioner or not ; the number of paupers 1085 are parishioners only. From the population return, therefore, of 6307, ought to be deducted the number of paupers who are receiving relief from the respective parishes to which they belong. This would increase the number of paupers of the Tunbridge Wells district to a fourth instead of one-sixth. Mr. Robinson, our excellent overseer of the poor, is my authority. This will, more or less, be the case with the other parishes ; and therefore the ratio of calculation, by an increased average, must apply to them also. I may incidentally mention, that the population of this district is increased by about 1500 since the last census in 1831, was taken. It is moreover this portion of 7000—it is this class of the community, not in indigence, but in poverty, who are scarcely able, not as day labourers, but from a very small farm, or in a little way of business, as shop-keepers, to maintain themselves and their families with some decency, and who cannot spare enough from their little gains to remunerate medical attendance in continued illness, without great privations, occasioned by the loss of their time and their work

during sickness, in addition to incurred debt, neither of which is or can be considered at the time when an affectionate wife or husband upon whom their all depends, or a darling child, lies painfully stretched on the dangerous bed of sickness; and when relieved from this, what is the view to which they open their eyes? they awaken to pecuniary distress and embarrassment, with additional difficulties to encounter, and to the prospect of a workhouse or a gaol, especially if it be the husband who has been ill. These, indeed, are people, honest and industrious, who are fit objects for charitable medical aid, assisted by which they may be prevented, in many cases, from coming upon the parish, and certainly in all from falling into, perhaps irremediable, difficulties. But let us not only reflect upon their corporal sufferings, but also upon the mental anguish of such helpless people, worn down by disease, and embarrassed in circumstances, with unprovided families calling for support. I have, therefore, great reason for hoping that the wealthy of the counties of Kent and Sussex will consider of the necessity of a Midland County Hospital for Kent and Sussex, by extending the benefits of the Maidstone Infirmary with more enlarged subscriptions.

It would be a curious and useful calculation to ascertain that when such persons as those above pauperism, are thrown out of their daily employment, by protracted illness, what is the productive labour lost to the community with a given number in any given district; of course what would be the saving to

the public by productive industry, in shortening the duration of disease. One great object with all good governments is to keep the people from indigence ; but it is necessary there should be poverty, otherwise there would be no wealth, for poverty, relative or positive, produces labour which creates productive property. "In several districts, from the absence of competition, the small tradesmen have been enabled to keep up their prices, although, perhaps, bad debts and diminished custom have not added to their profits ; but the means of the yeoman have diminished more rapidly than the fixed demands on his income, and on him have fallen all the evils of an income progressively decreasing, without a corresponding reduction of charges\*." Protracted disease with such people reduces them often from poverty to indigence, and consequently to the parish rate.

Such institutions, therefore, arise from justice, policy, and humanity, in addition to the higher grade of sublime feeling towards the Holy Founder of our Religion—"In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It has been shewn that in a circuit of fifteen miles, in this neighbourhood, there is at least a population of 140,000 persons, out of which 7000, at the lowest calculation, are of that description and grade in life,

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\* Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, on agriculture.

who, under duration of disease, have not the means of remunerating medical attendants.

The Maidstone Infirmary, good fall upon those who projected and have since assisted it, is constructed, as it at present exists, to hold twenty-four beds for patients. This number, according to the average computation in other hospitals, allowing six weeks for each patient remaining in the house, would receive annually 192 patients. It has been calculated that each bed, (that is eight patients, for a fresh patient every six weeks produces eight patients and a fraction in the year,) costs annually about £20, which is, I think, too low a calculation, it being only £2 10s. per annum for each patient. The London Fever Hospital holds sixty beds, and the average annual expenditure for each bed is less than £30, making £1800 per annum; but this includes every thing, salaries for servants, &c. &c. A charge of nine shillings per week is made at the Lunatic Asylum for this county for each lunatic, which is at the rate of £23 8s. for each individual, and this includes every thing, even clothing, as far as the asylum dress goes. So that when I make an estimate of £30 annually for each bed, which is equivalent to one in-patient constantly in the house, quite enough is allowed for such a purpose, with an overplus for out-patients in a country hospital; be it recollected, however, this must depend upon the number of out-patients, which is unlimited. Let the calculation therefore be taken upon this basis, which is much above what it really is for a country

hospital. Thus the twenty-four beds, supposing them to be always full, would cost annually £720, a small sum for the wealth of East Sussex and West Kent, for which this infirmary is chiefly intended, as both these counties have hospitals in other points better suited to them. There are, at present, but six beds opened for the reception of patients; eighteen beds therefore are still wanting to complete the number the hospital is capable of holding. There can be little, if any, doubt that the eighteen beds will speedily be procured, were it only for the small sum which these eighteen beds will cost. I add the estimate of the expense attending the purchase of them.

	£	s.	d
A three-feet half-tester bedstead, with checked cotton furniture - -	2	10	0
A good flock bed, with bolster and pillow - - - - -	1	10	0
Three 9-qr. blankets and stout cotton coverlet - - - - -	1	5	0
	<hr/>		
	5	5	0
Beds and bedding		18	
	<hr/>		
	94	10	0
Five yards and a half of good strong sheeting, without seam, at 1s. 4d. per yard, for one pair of sheets, 7s. 4d. eighteen pair of sheets - - -	6	12	0
	<hr/>		
Car. forward -	101	2	0

	£	s.	d.
Brought forward	- 101	2	0
Eighteen pillow cases at somewhat more than 3-qrs. of a yard, for one pillow case, 8d. per yard; for eighteen pil- low cases	- - - - -	0	10 6
		<u>101</u>	<u>12 6*</u>
Add for contingencies, such as making, marking, and some extra sheets, &c.		3	7 6
		<u>105</u>	<u>0 0</u>

Thus, for one hundred guineas can be procured eighteen good bedsteads, with furniture and bedding complete. There can be no doubt, it is to be hoped, that for so small a sum these eighteen beds, &c., will be shortly procured. But this full complement of twenty-four beds will not be sufficient to supply the wants of the sick poor for this midland district; for, supposing the twenty-four were all supplied, and that they were occupied by patients, which they would immediately be, the hospital being in full operation, it would only receive 192 in-patients within the year, a very inadequate resource for the very large population requiring gratuitous medical aid in East Sussex and West Kent. It very fortunately happens, there-

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\* I have been supplied with the estimate of the bedsteads and bedding by Mr. Michael Stapley, a respectable Upholsterer of this place.

fore, or rather it has been very wisely arranged by the benevolent planners of the Maidstone Infirmary, that the building should have been so constructed, "that if a greater number of beds should be required, and the funds should be equal to such an extension of the charity, two or more additional wings may, at any time, be built, and also bed rooms, without impairing the uniformity of the building\*."

From the calculation on the population, which has been already made, there is no doubt whatever that the additional wards are indispensably necessary. Seeing then this necessity, and trusting to the benevolence of these wealthy and populous counties, it is to be hoped that the construction of these additional wards will be taken into immediate consideration, that the want of them may be supplied to the indigent sick; and no great sum will be required for this enlargement of the institution. The building as it now stands, cost £1200†, exclusive of the furniture, which it would seem cost about £500, including the whole establishment. I should say then the two additional wards would be built completely for £400; and furnished, including bedsteads and bedding, for £200, making £600, each ward being sufficiently large for

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\* Report of the Committee of the Maidstone Dispensary, February 29, 1832.

† Prospectus for erecting Maidstone Infirmary, dated January 16, 1832. Building, £1200; purchase of ground, £200, third report, p. 6; the furniture and other expenses, such as conveyancing, &c. £600—£2000, p. 2.

eight beds. Thus, with the twenty-four beds of the present establishment, there would be a good hospital, with forty beds, for this midland district, which would relieve 320 in-patients annually, and more after the first year, from the fractional difference between six times eight and fifty-two, the number of weeks in the year; and these 320 patients would cost about £1200 per annum, including every thing, and allowing a proportion also out of that sum for out-patients, as has already been shewn. The sum, therefore, that would be wanted for completing the building with new wards for sixteen beds is - - - - £600

For supplying the eighteen additional beds  
in the wards already built - - - 105

£705

Say £720 to allow for unforeseen contingencies. Thus for £720, no great matter, a place of comfortable refuge would be at hand for the unfortunate sick poor in this neighbourhood, requiring an annual expenditure of £1200, including medicine, salaries, taxes, and other incidental expenses.

The annual value of the real property of Kent and Sussex, as assessed April 15, 1831 is,

For Kent	-	-	£1644,179
Sussex	-	-	915,348
			<u>£2559,527</u>

Be it recollected, however, that this is assessed property, in 1815, which is not near the real and absolute annual value; upon an average the houses are assessed at one half, and the land at two-thirds the annual value; it may be therefore safely doubled, making five millions; and if the value in the annual receipt of personal property be added, we shall have, from a rough calculation, ten millions of annual receipts of money or productive property, in the counties of Kent and Sussex; my hopes, therefore, for the establishment of a Midland County Hospital for Kent and Sussex are based, not only upon the charitable dispositions of the people of Kent and Sussex, but upon the means which are possessed for founding and completing so necessary an institution. I believe it is acknowledged by political economists, that from the agitated state of Europe, and indeed of the world, for these last fifty years, property has found its way into comparatively few hands, and is therefore less generally diffused. Hence, the Leviathan capitalists who command the money market, and the great landed proprietors who, like the Kraken of the ocean, have swallowed up the small fry. This is the natural consequence of the progress of events in the political world; and this individual accumulation of wealth is the legitimate result of the state of things in a commercial and free country, where individual and honest industry must produce acquisition of wealth. They, therefore, who have been so fortunate, either from the possession of better opportunities, of greater talents, or of

more extensive information, or of all these combined, as to be thus blessed, and a blessing it will only be if usefully employed, will be induced to apply some of their superabundant riches and time to the comfort of their less fortunate brethren. “ Yet in proportion to the population of Great Britain and Ireland there will be found a much greater number of individuals possessing wealth than in any other country of Europe : the result is, that there are more labourers possessing the means of acquiring riches, and the power of communicating aid to others who have not acquired it\*.” To the rich I would say,—freely ye have received, freely give—to those less burthened with pecuniary superfluity, a subscription will not diminish a single comfort; and to all, recollect the widow’s mite. But the great good to be derived from the charitable reception of the poor to the comforts of a hospital, does not end in the alleviation of bodily pain or in the eventual restoration to health ; for as the bed of sickness by sobering the mind, and by removing a thoughtless and inordinate attachment to the concerns of the world, happily some might be saved from an inconsiderate, if not from a reprobate life, by the Clergy, always so benevolently ready upon these occasions, extending their spiritual aid, which would not reach them so effectually in their secluded abodes.

I cannot conclude this appeal without taking the

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\* Colquhoun, on the Wealth, &c. of the British Empire.

liberty of earnestly soliciting your early and serious attention to the measures recommended. I am convinced of the necessity of them, and that their adoption will be attended with very beneficial consequences, for I have frequently reflected upon them, knowing from personal enquiry and observation the distresses of the poorer classes in the way already described. I have been in the habit, ever since I commenced the practice of my profession in 1798, in the Town of Bedford, to the Infirmary of which I was sole Physician for ten years, of devoting one morning in each week for gratuitous advice to the poor. I have continued to do so since I came to this place. I see every Saturday morning from twelve to thirty persons; sometimes more. There are many chronic diseases, such as rheumatism, some kinds of cough, hæmorrhage from the lungs, stomach, and bowels, chronic inflammation in them, various diseases of the womb, oppression of the brain, &c., and all acute diseases in the physician's department, and many of both kinds belonging to the surgeon, which become worse and intractable by travelling to and from an institution as out-patients, and which is therefore a waste of the time and of the health of the patients, of the property of the subscriber, and of the credit of the professional gentlemen. And some diseases to which these journeys are not hurtful, require a mode of treatment which renders exposure to the air, in bad weather especially, highly injurious, and sometimes

dangerous. These considerations alone, if any vindication was wanting, show at once the decided superiority of a hospital over a dispensary. I take the liberty, therefore, of suggesting the advantage to be derived in every way, from circumscribing the distance from the infirmary, from beyond which out-patients should not be received : a good plan, perhaps, would be to specify at the bottom of the printed circulars, the names of the diseases, suffering under which patients would not be received except into the house ; this would save time, trouble and expense.

From Maidstone and its immediate vicinity, where there is a population of above 10,000, there would be an abundant supply of out-patients, which, under emergencies, would be visited by the house apothecary.

Time and its usual attendant infirmities, are pressing close upon my heels ; and after thirty-four years of practice, both in private and at several public institutions, the honours and emoluments of the profession have less attractions for me. Thoroughly impressed with the conviction that all of us, of every rank, in our several vocations, with whatever talents of usefulness we may be gifted, whether they be many or few, whether of power, of wealth, of influence, or of character, will, ere long, be called upon to yield up an awful account of the employment of them ; the weight of this responsibility has urged and encouraged me thus to address you, under the hope of engaging your feelings in behalf of those who are surrounded with

complicated difficulties in poverty and sickness. Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required, is a hallowed declaration which the people of England have not neglected effectually to observe, when in a good cause an appeal is made to their judgment and charity for pecuniary aid.

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*Subscriptions are thankfully received by the Treasurers, Messrs. Corrall and Mercer, Maidstone; and Messrs. Masterman & Co., 35, Nicholas Lane, London.*

F I N I S.