





THE GRIEVANCES  
 OF THE  
 POOR LAW MEDICAL OFFICERS,  
 ELUCIDATED IN A LETTER,  
 TO THE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE,  
 AND A COMMENTARY,  
 ON THE  
 PROPOSED ACT OF PARLIAMENT  
 FOR REDRESS,  
 &c., &c., &c.

BY  
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## POOR LAW MEDICAL REFORM ASSOCIATION.

*12, Royal Terrace, Weymouth, March 20, 1858.*

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

Sixteen months since I had the honour to submit to your notice a "Statement of the Grievances of the Poor Law Medical Officers, with remarks on Sanitary Measures and Vaccination," accompanied by a letter addressed to the Right Hon. Viscount Palmerston, K.G., G.C.B., earnestly hoping that the statements therein contained would induce the Right Hon. Gentleman, as the head of Her Majesty's Government, or you, as Members of the Legislature, to devise some means to lessen, if not entirely to remove, the hardships endured by a large proportion of the 3,000 Professional Men who compose the Medical Staff of the Poor Law Board; but I regret to say no general improvement has taken place in our position. I therefore, in the name of the Poor Law Medical Officers of England and Wales, crave of you, my Lords and Gentlemen, to bring forward our case in your respective Houses of Parliament, and to pass such laws as will entitle us to a fair remuneration for our valuable services to the 4,000,000 of Her Majesty's subjects, composing the labouring population of this Kingdom, who, in the hour of sickness, are intrusted to our care. The miserable pittance doled out to us by the Poor Law Board and the Boards of Guardians, conjointly, is utterly inadequate to supply the costly medicines and appliances so frequently required in diseases and accidents, without making, in many instances, serious inroads upon our private resources. In most cases there is no remuneration for the time and talents devoted to a service which is public, and supported by the funds of the country, and, therefore, ought to be paid for on a uniform scale, and in a spirit of equity, rather than with the caprice at present exercised.

The rebellion of our troops in India justly excites the ire of the nation, and Her Majesty's Government unhesitatingly sends forth her armies, at the cost of millions, to punish the offenders and restore order, and endeavours, by a legislative enactment, to prevent a recurrence of these disasters in future; but, by a strange anomaly, the sufferings and death of thousands annually at home from preventable diseases excites not the ire of the nation, neither does Her Majesty's Government send forth her *employés* sufficiently armed, though it would cost but a few additional thousands, but contents itself with imperfect sanitary arrangements, and petty, but false, economical views in regard to the treatment of the poor, because, forsooth, certain narrow-minded Guardians and petty local politicians desire things to remain as they are, regardless of the good of the community at large.

The Registrar-General, in the concluding paragraph of his last quarterly return, says:—"England is a great country, and has done great deeds. It has encountered in succession, and at times in combination, all the great powers of Europe; has founded vast colonies in America, and has conquered an empire in Asia. Yet greater victories have to be achieved at home. Within the shores of these islands 28,000,000 of people dwell, who have not only supplied her armies and set her fleets in motion, but have manufactured innumerable products, and are employed in the investigation of scientific truths and the creation of works of inestimable value to the human race. These people do not live out half their days; 140,000 of them die every year unnatural deaths; 280,000 are constantly suffering actual diseases, which do not prevail in healthy places; their strength is impaired in a thousand ways; their affections and intellects are disturbed, deranged, and diminished by the same agencies. Who will deliver the nation from these terrible enemies? Who will confer on the inhabitants of the United Kingdom the blessings of health and long life? Who will give scope to the improvement of the English race, so that all its fine qualities may be developed to their full extent under favourable circumstances? His conquests would be wrought neither by wrong nor human slaughter, but by the application of the powers of nature to the improvement of mankind."

The Hon. Mr. Cowper stated in the House of Commons last December, "that the number of deaths from preventable causes was estimated at 80,000 a year, a large proportion of which arose from diseases altogether to be prevented if towns were properly cleansed."

The origin of the complaints which causes so frightful a destruction of human life no one will attempt to dispute, but a question may be asked, how

many of the lives of these poor sufferers might be saved would Guardians give their Medical Officers a salary sufficient to purchase quinine, cod-liver oil, leeches, and other expensive medicines and appliances? Surely, my Lords and Gentlemen, a Government which boasts of its liberality, and is justly esteemed amongst all nations the most enlightened, ought not to let a few thousands annually weigh in the balance with human life.

The Poor Law Medical Officers, conversant with the difficulties which beset the Legislature in drawing up a Bill on a purely professional subject, have felt it incumbent on themselves to frame one for your consideration. This Bill, which contains a few clauses other than of a medical character, but most desirable for the welfare of the poor, has undergone careful revision, having been twice submitted to every Poor Law Officer for his opinion, and finally to a Committee composed of upwards of thirty medical men. It may, therefore, fairly be said to be the Bill of the Poor Law Medical Officers.

Many of the sections of the Bill are modifications of the present articles of the Poor Law Board, and require explanation to prove the necessity of the proposed change. I have, therefore, ventured, in the name of my brethren, to write a commentary, which is annexed. In it is adduced evidence of an unimpeachable character, and the general subject is discussed in detail. It may possibly appear to you, my Lords and Gentlemen, that our application should first be made to the Poor Law Board. This has been done both by private letters and public memorials, and also by a recommendation of the Committee on Medical Relief of the House of Commons, which sat in 1854, by their fourth resolution, which "recommends that the Poor Law Board should direct their attention to the salaries of the Medical Officers, which, in some cases, appear to be inadequate to the duties they are required to perform."

That the Poor Law Board have full power to redress our principal grievance, is proved by the following minute of their own, dated December 31, 1840:—"By section 46 of the Poor Law Amendment Act, the Poor Law Commissioners are empowered, when they may see occasion, to regulate the amount of salaries payable to such officers respectively, and the time and mode of payment thereof. It follows from the provisions just quoted that the Commissioners can authorize the Guardians to appoint paid officers, but that the appointment of the officers is made by the Guardians; and that the power of determining the amount of the salaries of such officers is vested in the Commissioners, and they cannot forbear from calling the attention of the Guardians to the obvious advantages of the arrangement, that the same authority should not fix the salary and make the appointment."

Notwithstanding this minute, which is most definite, the President of the Poor Law Board made the following replies to Members of the House of Commons.

The Right Hon. Mr. Bouverie, on February 26, 1856, in reply to Mr. Pigott, said, "That in regard to the salaries of the Medical Officers, these were matters not immediately under the control of the Poor Law Board, they being settled in the first instance by the Guardians; but the recommendation of the Committee had been attended to by the Poor Law Board, who had directed the Guardians to take into consideration the carrying out of those objects, and considerable increase was going on in the amount of the allowances to the Medical Officers."

Sir John Trollope, on June 16, 1856, asked the Right Hon. Gentleman, Mr. Bouverie, at the head of the Poor Law Board, if he was prepared to carry out the recommendations of the Committee as regards Medical Officers, who, in reply, said, "The recommendations were three; the first was as to the appointment of the Medical Officers; the second, as to an increase of their remuneration; and the third, as to the diminution of the area in which they had to attend. The first recommendation had been complied with by his predecessor. The two others could not be acted upon universally at one time. The payments to Medical Officers were made partly out of the rates and partly by a vote of that House. The salaries were fixed by the Poor Law Guardians, and he was sorry to say that, with respect to many of them, *the salaries were extremely low*, and the Poor Law Board had great difficulty in inducing the Boards of Guardians to raise them."

The Right Hon. Mr. Bouverie, on June 25, 1857, in reply to Sir John Trollope, said, "In those cases in which the remuneration of the Medical Officers was extremely low, the Poor Law Board endeavoured to procure an addition to it, but he was sorry to say that, generally speaking, the Poor Law Guardians were

not disposed to agree with the Poor Law Board as to the propriety of such addition. Unless the Poor Law Board entered into a violent contest with the Boards of Guardians on that subject—which he was not at all disposed to do—it would be difficult, indeed, to obtain an increase of the salaries. He could not hold out any hopes to the Medical Officers that their salaries would be increased, because the House was reluctant to grant even the usual vote under the head of Poor Law Medical Relief."

From the foregoing statements of the President of the Poor Law Board, it is manifest there is no hope of obtaining redress from that quarter; though I cannot assent to his views relative to the opinions of the House of Commons, as I have received communications from all parts of the country that Members of Parliament have not only admitted that we are inadequately paid, but also that they are perfectly willing to vote for a redress of our grievances; the only drawback to their bringing the subject before the House being their unwillingness to originate a measure which ought to emanate from Government, but this feeling will, I trust, be overcome, if Her Majesty's Ministers refuse to undertake the task.

The following speeches of Hon. Members are proof of the above. Mr. Drummond stated, in the House of Commons, on June 13, 1857, that "he trusted the Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Bouverie) would not be intimidated by the cry raised against him throughout the country by these Boards of Guardians. If the law required amendment at all, it was in order to put more power into the hands of the Poor Law Board. \* \* \* It was the duty of the *ex-officio* Guardians to see that something else besides the interest of the ratepayers was thought of. (Hear.) That interest alone was too generally considered. \* \* \* It was what would save most money to the ratepayers, and what was most economical, that guided the Guardians, not what was most beneficial to the poor. (Hear, hear.) *The same principle regulated the allowances made to the Doctors, which were reduced to so low a sum, that it was utterly impossible for those gentlemen to attend properly to the duties of their position upon such terms.*"

The Right Hon. Sir John Trollope, on July —, 1856, in the House of Commons, said:—"I beg to call the attention of the Right Hon. Gentleman, the President of the Poor Law Board, to the numerous petitions that have been presented on the subject of Medical Relief; nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the mode in which Medical Relief is now administered throughout the country. In many Unions I know that the mere medicines required would absorb the whole of the salaries given to Medical Officers, leaving them no remuneration or any allowance for their necessary expenses. The amount asked by these petitions is not exorbitant, being only 5s. a case, and 1s. a mile for a single journey. Perhaps the medical gentlemen themselves are somewhat to blame for this state of things. Under the operation of excessive competition they have been induced to take contracts at a lower scale than they can afford to do. It is notorious that in the case of illness of paupers, private charity is compelled to supply the medical comforts which the Poor Law Unions do not provide. I wish this Bill had dealt with the question; and hope that in any future general Bill on the Poor Law, the subject of Medical Relief will be included. As to any additional cost which a more liberal allowance would cause, I might refer the House to what is proposed to be done for the preservation of the health of the inhabitants of this metropolis alone, for whom it is asked that they should vote £3,000,000 for the purpose of draining and purifying. The whole amount expended for the Medical Relief of the poor throughout England and Wales, is £250,000 a year; if that sum were doubled, it would only make £500,000 to preserve the lives of the poor. Surely the people could not object to such an expenditure for such a purpose; on the contrary, I am quite sure the ratepayers would most cheerfully assent to it, as, when spread over the entire kingdom, its increase would scarcely be felt."

Many of the Poor Law Medical Officers have, at various times, individually addressed the Poor Law Board on the subject of their inadequate remuneration. A public memorial, numerous signed and agreed to at a meeting over which the Right Hon. the Earl of Shaftesbury presided, and other memorials from numerous Unions have been presented to the Poor Law Board, and many hundred petitions to the House of Commons; notwithstanding all these appeals, no redress has been obtained.

The Medical Officers have, therefore, no alternative but to apply to you, my Lords and Gentlemen, to pass an Act in their favour, making it compulsory

on the Poor Law Board and Boards of Guardians to give their Medical Officers a remuneration in proportion to the services they are called upon to perform.

During the last three years I have, personally, written very many letters to the Poor Law Board, complaining that they and the Guardians of the Weymouth Union have capriciously fixed the salaries of their several Medical Officers, that they pay to one an annual stipend which, on an average of two years, gives 16s. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per order for attendance on a patient, whilst another has 4s. 11d., a third 2s. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and a fourth (myself) but 1s. 3d., the patients being equi-distant from the respective residences of the Medical Officers.

The replies of the Poor Law Board to these letters were as follows:—

October 2, 1855.—“To inform you that the statements which it contains will meet with their consideration.”

November 22, 1855.—“The Guardians will, at the end of twelve months from the date of your appointment, give the subject of your salary their further consideration. Under these circumstances, and looking to the short period for which you have been Medical Officer of the Weymouth Union, the Board must decline to interfere further in the matter.”

March 10, 1856.—“To inform you that the statement which it contains shall meet with their consideration.”

December 18, 1856.—“To inform you that the subject to which it relates will receive their attention.”

April 18, 1857.—“To acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 4th and 15th inst. in reference to the remuneration which you receive for your services as the Medical Officer of the Weymouth district of the Weymouth Union.”

April 29, 1857.—“To acknowledge the receipt of your letter in reference to the amount of your remuneration as the Medical Officer of the Weymouth district of the Weymouth Union.”

October 15, 1857.—“With reference to the alleged inadequacy of the salary which you receive for your services as the Medical Officer, the Board can only refer you to the communications which they have addressed to you on the subject.”

February 11, 1858.—“The Board have considered the statements which you have submitted to them on this subject, but are of opinion that there are not sufficient grounds for their interference.”

These letters, my Lords and Gentlemen, are from a public Board, appointed for a public purpose, and whose oath, on their accession to office, is as follows, “I will faithfully, impartially, and honestly, according to the best of my skill and judgment, execute and fulfill all the powers and duties of a Commissioner.” Is this oath a mere matter of form? if not, why give four different medical men in one Union sums varying from 1s. 3d. to 16s. 3d. per case, their patients being similarly situated, as regards distance, from the residences of their respective Medical Officers? Is this “impartially” carrying out the duties of Commissioners? Ignorance cannot be pleaded, as I have repeatedly remonstrated with both the Board of Guardians and the Poor Law Board on the subject, as the letters of the latter testify, and also that part of the correspondence published in the “Statement” sixteen months since.

Again, I will ask, is 1s. 3d. per case a just payment for an average attendance of 28 days on a patient, and finding medicines, &c.; or is it a remuneration for any one of the following services which I have performed?—Amputation of two limbs above the knee; operation for strangulated hernia, removing the entire elbow joint, and attending the woman twelve months before and after the operation, besides the removal of tumors and midwifery. Notwithstanding my narration of these cases, the Poor Law Board, after a correspondence of two years and a half, with a promise to take my case “into consideration,” finally, when pressed by me for a definite answer, replied, “they are of opinion that these are not sufficient grounds for their interference.”

The only inference to be drawn from this last letter is, that they consider I am well paid at 1s. 3d. for performing such services; but where is the “impartially” carrying out of the law in giving a colleague of mine 16s. 3d. for performing the ordinary duties of his office, as he has not performed one capital operation during the last three years? Does it not appear evident that he must be exorbitantly paid, and that the continuance of such a salary is neither more nor less than a direct robbery upon the ratepayers and the funds of the country, as both contribute equally to his payment; but if the latter is not the case, then

I am most unjustly treated. Where then is the “impartiality and honesty” required by the oath?

My case is but an example of the unequal payments which exist throughout the kingdom, and we are fast verging on the old system, which permitted Boards of Guardians to act as they pleased. If this is to be allowed, then I respectfully submit the services of the Poor Law Board may be dispensed with, and the nation saved several thousands annually. There is one thing, however, I must give the Poor Law Board credit for, and which they never neglect, viz., to punish their Medical Officers with Draconic severity for the slightest neglect of duty, albeit it may be done under the polished courtesy of a recommendation to resign. If the same rule were applied by Her Majesty's Ministers to the members of the Poor Law Board, I think it would not be amiss, and then justice would at least be administered “impartially” to master and man.

The Royal Commissioners in their report of 1832, state:—“After a most searching inquiry, and collecting a mass of evidence from all parts of England and Wales, and having sought for and obtained much information as to the manner in which relief to the poor was administered in various parts of Europe, made their report to His late Majesty, William IV., in which they recommended the establishment of a Central Board of Control for administering the Poor Laws, on the ground that no legislative enactments in this department of administration could be relied upon as self-acting, because they would be inefficiently executed or perverted from the want of appropriate knowledge on the part of the distributors of relief; the short duration and division of their authority; the inadequacy of their motives to support a correct administration; the strength of their interests in abusive administration and intimidation on the part of the ratepayers.” The result of this report was, that the Poor Law Commissioners were appointed and a Central Control established, and yet in the very face of the declared incompetency of the Boards of Guardians the Poor Law Board have delegated to them the power to fix our salaries, they merely exercising a nominal power of confirmation. Is this just? The Poor Law Board ought rather to have laid down a rule for the guidance of the Guardians if the power is to be given to them, and then we should not see the strange anomalies that now exist.

Had the Poor Law Board, on receiving the memorials of their Medical Officers, instituted an inquiry, and, on ascertaining the truth of the allegations, issued a general order, founded on our proposed Bill, I have every reason to believe that, beyond a little murmuring from a few, and but a very few, of the Boards of Guardians, the order would be gladly received and cheerfully acted on by all right-thinking men, some of whom exist in most Boards of Guardians, and who acknowledge the Medical Officers are inadequately paid, but dare not put themselves too prominently forward by proposing an increase of the salaries, opposed as they are by the narrow-minded and selfish, who would raise the election cry on the following Easter, that the money of the ratepayers was wasted by Mr. ———, and thereby endanger his re-election to an office which, by some, is as eagerly sought after, as a seat in Parliament by those in a higher station in life.

The Right Hon. Mr. Bouverie, in reply to Mr. Pigott, said, “The Poor Law Board had directed the Guardians to take into consideration the salaries of the Medical Officers, and considerable increase was going on.” But take the corresponding augmentation of the population, and what is it? In 1848 our salaries averaged, on the entire amount of the population, 3d.-2-10; in 1855, when the last return was made, it was still the same. In 1853, the population of the Unions was 17,797,763; salaries of Medical Officers £141,222 16s. 3d. In 1855, the population was 17,831,942; salaries £144,855 10s. 1d., or a trifling increase of £2,072 11s. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., which, if divided amongst the 3,033 officers, what is it to boast of? But even against this there is to be set off an increase of population to the extent of 29,280. We are, therefore, no better off now than we were in 1848 as regards the gross payment in proportion to population; but we are far worse off in another respect, as year by year our toil increases. The labouring man formerly had his club doctor to attend him, and the pauper the parish surgeon, but now the latter has to attend almost all indiscriminately. I begrudge not this boon to the poor man, but I cannot see the justice of that charity which robs the surgeon and leaves untouched the pocket of the ratepayer. Have the Poor Law Board directed the Guardians of the Weymouth Union to take my salary into consideration? Certainly not. What did they do in the case of the Bath Union last year?

When the Board of Guardians recommended an increase of the salary of one of its Medical Officers, why they actually opposed it, and it was not until remonstrated with by the Board of Guardians that they assented. I, therefore, cannot help feeling that it is the Poor Law Board, in reality, who endeavour to keep down the salaries of the Medical Officers, and I envy not the feelings of the Right Hon. President, when he lays before Parliament his annual report, and takes credit for keeping down the rates, but forgets to add that it is at the expense of the Medical Officers and the suffering of the poor.

Parliamentary inquiries have taken place, and Blue Books have been published, all of which prove the necessity of an amelioration of our position, in order that we may be enabled to do our duty to the sick poor, which it is utterly impossible for many of us to do out of the miserable pittance which we are now paid; and where private resources are scanty, there is, in the first instance, danger of the poor suffering, and in the next, the ratepayers.

The Poor Law Board in their instructional letter, dated March 12, 1842, stated:—"It is the earnest wish of the Commissioners to carry into effect the recommendation of the Committee of 1838, 'that the remuneration of Medical Officers shall be such as to insure proper attention and the best medicines, and the Guardians will, doubtless, perceive that, unless the Medical Officer be adequately remunerated, no vigilance on their part will suffice to secure proper attendance and medicines to the poor under their care.'" The Poor Law Board, in their minute, dated October 31, 1840, say, "It is difficult to over-rate the importance to a Union of possessing a body of efficient paid officers. Without efficient paid officers no Union, of whatever size, can conduct its Poor Law business in an economical and satisfactory manner; although the vigilant superintendence of the Guardians is necessary to the well-working of the Union, it is not alone sufficient. Here and there an individual candidate, well-fitted for a Union Officer, may, from peculiar circumstances, be willing to accept it for an inadequate salary; but even he will, probably, after a short time, become dissatisfied and will desire to transfer his services to some other Union, or to seek some other employment."

That this is true, is abundantly proved by direct evidence—as, during the last three years, no less than 744 medical men have quitted the service of the Poor Law Board, or nearly one-fourth of the whole number—evidence unimpeachable of something desperately bad in the service, and which would not have been the case with the majority of the officers had they been afforded sufficient means to do their duty to the poor, with but a slight remuneration for their services. These continual changes are the more to be deplored, as it is natural to conclude that the services of the Medical Officers become valuable in proportion to the experience they have obtained, and that such constant mutation is prejudicial to the best interests of the poor. Some of these vacancies, it is to be lamented, have arisen from death or diseases brought on in the discharge of their arduous duties; but surely, my Lords and Gentlemen, this is a still more powerful argument in favour of giving the Medical Officers a fair remuneration for their services.

The Poor Law Commissioners, in June, 1848, could not help commenting in the following terms on this sacrifice of life; they say, "It is to be lamented that several medical men have lost their lives in the course of such attendance" (typhus fever).

Many other cases have been related to me; one says, "My son has since sacrificed his life by leaving his bed, on the 6th of November, three times in one night, with the thermometer at six degrees below freezing, to answer the queries of a pauper." Another, "My husband died last month of typhus fever, caught from some Irish poor he was attending." A third, "My husband is quite prostrated with fever, caused by attendance on a midwifery case four miles off, when in the midst of a profuse perspiration after taking a warm bath; on his return he was seized with rigors, and has never left his bed since." During the last three years I have been four times laid up with severe illness, caught in discharge of my Poor Law duties; and my son, whilst attending for me during one of these attacks, caught the small-pox from a pauper, and was laid up for some time with severe constitutional disturbance, though the eruption was but mild, thanks to previous vaccination.

This loss of life and severe bodily suffering is remunerated by an average payment, throughout the kingdom, of 2s. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per patient. No wonder 744 Medical Officers have quitted the service during the last three years.

At page 78 of the Blue Book, on vaccination, issued by the General Board of Health, in 1857, is the following:—"The Board of Guardians in making arrangements for public vaccination (other medical contracts) in their several districts have, perhaps, not sufficiently regarded another peculiarity of the case \* \* \* when they contract for bread and cheese, they can themselves verify the fulfilment of the bargain, and pronounce on the quality of supply; when they contract for public vaccination (medical care of the poor) they can only rely on the honour of their contractor. It is therefore indispensable to the success of public vaccination (other medical contracts) that local authorities should duly estimate the amount of skill and conscientiousness to which they thus unreservedly trust; and that hoping to find zeal and science enlisted in their service, they should not fix the standard of payment below that which the common opinion of the medical profession would consider a reasonable and remunerating price."

A Report on the Beneficent Institutions of the metropolis has lately been issued by the Statistical Society of London. From this work it will be seen that 232,878 patients were attended in the Metropolitan Dispensaries in one year at a cost of 2s. 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per case, and that 434,573 patients were attended at the Hospitals during the same time, at a cost of 12s. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each. At these Institutions, or nearly all of them, it is well known the Medical Officers attended gratuitously; if, therefore, without any salaries to pay, those Establishments cannot find their patients with medicines, &c., at less than 2s. 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per case in the one instance, and 12s. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for general treatment in the other; or supposing 6s. be deducted for each person in Hospitals for board, upon the gross number of in and out-patients, though only applicable to the former, we shall have left 6s. 6d. per case for the medical treatment. How then, my Lords and Gentlemen, with such facts staring us in the face, can it be expected of medical men, with an average payment of only 2s. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per case, to do their duty to the poor, with justice to themselves, especially in country districts where they have to find horses, &c. Still less is it possible for four-fifths of those enumerated in the following table to find the needful medicines and appliances out of those homeopathic mites called salaries.

In order to ascertain the exact amount of the payments made to the Poor Law Medical Officers, questions were issued to them all, and from 500 answers calculated, it will be seen that neither the Poor Law Board nor the Boards of Guardians have acted on any rule in fixing the salaries, as they vary from 3d. to £1 16s. 8d. per case. In the annexed Summary will be seen the great variation of the salaries, those under 1s. being as low as 10d., 9d., 7d., 5d., 4d., and 3d. per case.

	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
28 Medical Officers receive between	0	3	and	0	1
35 .. .. .	1	0	....	0	1
48 .. .. .	1	6	....	0	2
69 .. .. .	2	0	....	0	2
71 .. .. .	2	6	....	0	3
55 .. .. .	3	0	....	0	3
49 .. .. .	3	6	....	0	4
32 .. .. .	4	0	....	0	4
24 .. .. .	4	6	....	0	5
14 .. .. .	5	0	....	0	5
10 .. .. .	5	6	....	0	6
10 .. .. .	6	0	....	0	6
7 .. .. .	6	6	....	0	7
12 .. .. .	7	0	....	0	8
10 .. .. .	8	0	....	0	9
8 .. .. .	9	0	....	0	10
3 .. .. .	10	0	....	0	11
2 .. .. .	11	0	....	0	12
3 .. .. .	12	0	....	0	13
4 .. .. .	13	0	....	0	14
2 .. .. .	14	0	....	0	15
1 .. .. .	15	0	....	0	16
1 .. .. .	16	0	....	0	17
1 .. .. .	17	0	....	0	18
1 .. .. .	..	..	1	16	8

My Lords and Gentlemen, be not deceived, it is vain to expect men to continue for any length of time to do that for which they are not paid. The Poor Law Board, in 1842, cautioned the Guardians on this subject, "that unless the Medical Officer be adequately remunerated, no vigilance on their part will secure proper attendance and medicines to the poor."

You will probably ask, what is an adequate remuneration? In clubs the payments vary; but supposing the moderate subscription of 1d. per week, or 4s. 4d. per annum, be taken as an average payment, it must still be borne in mind, that the class of persons who are in clubs are generally healthy, that being one of the conditions of their admission; hence it follows, few of them require medical assistance, indeed it is computed that only one in eight or ten annually does so; thus at 4s. 4d. annually, each person would actually pay not less than £1 14s. 8d. for each case of illness; or even take some of the lowest paying clubs at 2s. annually, it follows that each of these pay not less than 16s. per case of illness; whereas we only ask a payment which, if taken on an average of the entire kingdom, probably, with the addition of mileage and extras, would not be more than 7s. per case, which is less than that proposed by the Poor Law Commissioners in their minute of June 6, 1839. "With regard to the amount of the remuneration, the Commissioners are disposed to give much weight to the concurrent testimony of the witnesses examined before the Committee of the House of Commons of last Session, in reference to medical relief; and they deduce from that testimony that the fixed remuneration to be paid in rural districts for the permanent list, should be such as to afford to the Practitioner a payment of 6s. or 6s. 6d. per case, on the average number of *bona-fide* cases, subject to be augmented if the district is extensive. The remuneration per case for those not on the pauper list may reasonably be on a somewhat higher scale, but the Board are inclined to think that it will not be found necessary to exceed 10s. per case. In the arrangements which have been indicated it is presumed that the midwifery cases and surgical operations of a serious character will be paid for by a separate fixed charge for each case. The Commissioners entertain no doubt that if the principle of the payment per case be thus adopted, it may be easily modified to suit the special circumstances of the Union, and the further experience of its operation will enable them to ascertain accurately whether the rates above alluded to, which at first will be of a somewhat experimental character, furnish an adequate and not unreasonable remuneration for the services performed."

My Lords and Gentlemen, the Poor Law Medical Officers ask for nothing more than common justice, they simply require that the recommendations of the Poor Law Commissioners of 1839, may be made the law of the land, and in their proposed Bill they have taken the orders and recommendations of that body as their guide, simply amending those that do not advance the interest of the poor, and the Medical Officers. The Bill is founded on the principle of paying a man for what he does, and not, as in the present mode, for what he is expected to do. The payments proposed will be just sufficient to enable the Guardians to obtain and retain the services of efficient medical men, which will be an advantage not only to the poor, but also to the ratepayers. Greater facilities are also given to the poor, to whom it may be thought advisable to grant gratuitous medical assistance; at the same time an efficient check will be in force to prevent imposition upon the medical men and the ratepayers.

To this letter is appended a proposed Act of Parliament, with sections on Vaccination and a Superannuation Allowance, a commentary, the articles of the Poor Law Board, and extracts from their official circulars, in order that the Members of the Legislature may judge for themselves of the necessity of an improvement of the present system. Let the principles of the proposed Bill be fairly carried out, and it will be found that the position of the Poor Law Medical Officers will be improved, the health of the poorer classes better cared for, and, as a consequence, the burden on the ratepayers and country at large actually lessened.

I have the honour to be,  
My Lords and Gentlemen,  
Your very obedient Servant,

RICHARD GRIFFIN,

CHAIRMAN.

To the Members of the Legislature.

## COMMENTARY ON THE DRAFT OF AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE BETTER REGULATION OF MEDICAL RELIEF TO THE POORER CLASSES IN ENGLAND & WALES.

"Medical assistance only forms a part of relief to the destitute poor, and the same rules and principles apply to it as those which are applicable to any other kind of relief." (No. 26, p. 34.)\*

SECTION I.—The definition of the class of persons entitled to medical relief is of considerable importance not only to the poorer classes, but also to the rate-payers; cases, however, will doubtless arise, which no definition will meet, and which must be left to the discretion of the local authorities. The pauper is clearly destitute of the means to procure medical assistance, but there are many others, a few shades only in advance of him, in a social position, who are quite as unable to pay a doctor's bill. This class the Legislature had probably in view when they passed the 52 sec. of the 4 and 5 Wm. 4 cap. 76, as by it the Poor Law Commissioners are empowered, "by such rules, orders, or regulations as they may think fit, to declare to what extent, and for what period, the relief to be given to able-bodied persons or to their families in any particular Parish or Union, may be administered out of the Workhouse, &c. &c." Upon the authority of this Act, the Poor Law Board issued their Out-Door Relief General Prohibitory Order, and Out-door Relief Regulation Order (p. 26, 27), which declare, "that every able-bodied person requiring relief shall be relieved wholly in a Workhouse," excepting in certain cases, one of which is, "sickness, accident, or bodily or mental infirmity affecting such person, or any of his or her family." These orders have opened the door wider than was contemplated by the statute of Elizabeth, which provides, in section 1, that the Overseers and Churchwardens shall raise "competent sums of money for and towards the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind and such other among them, being poor and not able to work," and in section 7, "that the father and grandfather, and the mother and grandmother, and the children of every poor, old, blind, lame, and impotent person, or other poor person not able to work, being of sufficient ability, shall, at their own charges, relieve and maintain every such poor person in that manner and according to that rate as by the Justices of the Peace, of that County where such efficient persons dwell, shall be assessed, upon pain that every one of them shall forfeit 20s. for every month which they shall fail them."

The Poor Law Board have left to the Guardians power to grant relief, but it is perfectly notorious that in regard to the granting of medical orders they do not exercise it; that duty being entirely in the hands of the Relieving Officer. He it is who decides whether medical relief shall, or shall not, be granted, hence has arisen continual disputes as to his right to give or withhold medical orders to persons possessed of small properties, or with earnings varying from 9s. to 15s. per week. (Nos. 2, 3, 7, 9, p. 29 & 30.) The replies of the Poor Law Board, when consulted respecting these cases, have been most indefinite, the decision being left to the Boards of Guardians, which decision is rarely exercised where the Medical Officer is paid by a fixed salary; hence has resulted that dwindling down of the stipend which, in 1839, was intended to be from 6s. to 10s. per case (see letter, p. x.), but which is now on an average only 2s. 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. Reverse the system of payment, and give a fixed sum per case; a strange revulsion of feeling will then take place, and the Guardians will do their duty and look after the Relieving Officer and see that he does not give more orders than he is actually obliged. It is, therefore, imperative that a certain amount of income should be fixed, below which all poor persons should be entitled to demand an order, and then it would not be left discretionary with the Relieving Officer, who is a very improper person to decide whether to give or withhold an order.

The Statistical Society of London, in their Report on the Medical Charities of the Metropolis, just published, informs us, "that 647,815 sick persons were relieved in the course of a year at the Hospitals and Dispensaries of the

\* The numbers between parentheses will be found at page 29 to 56.