

Nova et Vetera.

AN OLD STORY AND A NEW HOSPITAL.

FEW of the many Londoners who within the past few years have seen the fine new building of Charing Cross Hospital rise in King William Street, off the Strand, know that it is connected by a kind of historical continuity, if not by organic development, with a famous old monastery in the North of Spain. It is a "far cry" from Charing Cross—where, even in Samuel Johnson's day, the "full tide of human existence" rolled in London—to the Pass in the Pyrenees, which was a death-trap for Charlemagne's paladins and for the rearguard of the army with which he had victoriously invaded Spain in 778. Cultured persons nowadays profess to admire only verse in which the meaning—when there is any—has to be laboriously sought for in words as cryptic as the symbols of the cabala. But there are doubtless still educated people who have read Scott, and some of these will remember the lines in *Marmion*:

O, for a blast of that dread horn
On Fontarabian echoes borne
That to King Charles did come,
When Roland brave, and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer
On Roncesvalles died.

The fate of these heroes was commemorated in the *Chansons de Geste*, and has formed the subject of song and legend for more than a thousand years. We know they found a grave in the Pass of Roncesvalles, but of the story of that fatal day we know little else. One can only say of Roland:

The knight's bones are dust,
And his good sword rust;
His soul is with the saints, I trust.

But what, it may fairly be asked, has the death of the famous paladin to do either with Charing Cross or with the hospital which takes its name from that centre of the busy life of to-day? The answer to this question is supplied by an accomplished physician now on the working staff of the hospital, Dr. James Galloway, in the form of a narrative interesting, not only to all in any way connected with Charing Cross Hospital, but to all students of the history of London and to all lovers of the records of antiquity. Probably many of us have hitherto thought of Charing Cross Hospital only as a modern foundation which was the Alma Mater of Thomas Henry Huxley, Sir Joseph Fayrer, and other men who have won fame in the realm of science. To any Charing Cross men who may have been tempted to envy the historic fame of Saint Bartholomew's, Dr. Galloway's booklet¹ will be as the discovery of an ancient pedigree to one who had believed himself a *terrae filius*, or what the Scots call a "kinless loon." To him it has clearly been a labour of love to trace out the history of the old convent at Charing Cross, which was the offspring of the mother house—in technical language, a "cell" of the Priory—established by Charlemagne at Roncesvalles as a memorial of Roland, who was his nephew, and his ill-fated companions in arms. Like many of the mediæval monasteries, it was a hospital as well as a religious house. A sketch of its history as told by Dr. Galloway will, therefore, not be out of place here. Much antiquarian literature shows no sense of perspective; one cannot see the forest for the trees. But Dr. Galloway does not handle his material like Dryasdust. He has evidently taken great pains in gathering up the scattered and often slender threads of fact from records in this country and in Spain, and has woven them into a narrative which, like

¹ *The Story of Saint Mary Roncevall*. (Privately printed.)

the Thames, according to the poet, is, "without o'erflowing full." A particularly praiseworthy feature of his work is that he has gone to living sources for some of his information; hence it is not disfigured by the absurd blunders which one finds in writers about mediæval ecclesiastical matters who have disregarded Hood's advice:

Never go to France
Unless you know the lingo.

The Pass of Roncesvalles has played a part in our own history, as well as in that of France. It was traversed by the Black Prince when he invaded Spain, and it was the scene of a fierce struggle between the British and the French towards the close of the Peninsular war. But the connexion of Saint Mary Ronceval with Charing Cross dates from the time of Charlemagne. Before the Reformation the name was very familiar to Londoners. Among Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims was "a gentil Pardoner of Rouncival."

The name "Roncevall" came into use as a family name in England, with the usual variants, one of which, we may point out, is familiar to readers of Dickens as that of Mrs. Rouncewell, the house-keeper of Chesney Wold in *Bleak House*.

Charlemagne's original foundation was situated in the village of Ibañeta, at the neck of the Pass, near the scene of the great battle; a raid by the Moors in 921 led to its removal to the village of Roncesvalles, a mile or two further south. At first the community consisted of Knights and Companions, as well as of Religious of both sexes. The Knights of Roncesvalles fought the Moors, while the Brethren and Sisterhood, besides discharging the ordinary duties of the religious life, according to the Augustinian rule, served in a hospital established for pilgrims and travellers in distress. The community as it won fame throughout Europe for its good deeds was enriched by gifts from the great as well as the common folk, and in time came to own property not only in Spain but in France, Portugal, Italy, England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland. At the height of its prosperity the community is said to have distributed yearly from 25,000 to 30,000 rations, each consisting of a loaf weighing 16 oz., half a pint of wine, with sufficient portions of soup and meat, or fish on days of abstinence. The hospitals were served by a staff of physicians, under whom were surgeons and an apothecary; one of the distinguishing features of the hospital was that it included Sisters.

It is a pity that there seems to be little in the records about the hospital as an institution of medical charity. We know that through the Dark Ages the manuscripts of ancient medical writers and such traditional and practical knowledge of healing herbs were preserved. We know, too, that the monks, finding the practice of physick a profitable business, invaded the domain of surgery, till they were warned off it by the Church. It was at the practice of surgery by the monks that the well-known and much-misunderstood pronouncement *Ecclesia abhorret a sanguine* was aimed. Of the medical practice in the Hospital of Saint Mary Roncevall we must be content to know nothing.

The House of Roncesvalles appears to have owed most of its property in England to the munificence of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, the eldest son of the great William Marshall, *Rector regis et regni*, Protector of the King after the death of John, from whom Richard Coeur de Lion, when disarmed by him in fair fight, was once fain to beg his life. The elder Marshall, who was a great benefactor of the Knights Templars in London, died in 1219 and was succeeded by the younger, who was



Fig. 1.—Effigy in the Temple Church of William Marshall, Senior, Earl of Pembroke (obit 1219).

an Associate of the same Order. During the lifetime of both father and son the Pass of Roncesvalles was the main line of communication by land on the western frontier between France and Spain. Warriors were constantly passing through it to fight the Moors in Spain or on their way to the Holy Land, and pilgrims to the Shrine of Santiago de Compostella were frequent wayfarers through the defile. To them the Hospital of Saint Mary in the Pass of Roncesvalles often gave shelter, and it may be that the two Marshalls had themselves experienced its benefits in their travels and expeditions.

The Roncesvalles community appears to have made its first appearance in England in 1229. They seem to have been under the patronage of the younger William Marshall, who as soon as they arrived gave them an establishment in the country. He died in 1231, but in the following year Henry III confirmed at Wenlock "the grant to Saint Mary and the Hospital of Roncevaux (Rosolda Vallis) of the gift which William Marshall, sometime Earl of Pembroke, made to them of all his houses at Cherring and the

Hospital of Roncesvalles appointed Henry, son of William de Smalebrok, his attorney. This shows that the management of the English estates of the Roncesvalles community had to be entrusted to agents in this country, with the result pointed out by Dr. Galloway, that maladministration was not infrequent, and thus opportunities were frequently given for the interference of national authorities in the affairs of these foreign houses.

The year 1290 was a notable date in the records of the community. In that year Eleanor of Castille, wife of Edward I, died at Harby, near Lincoln, and the King in pious memory built a sculptured cross at every place where the body of his consort rested during the journey to Westminster. The last station in this progress was at the village of Charing. The hospitality of the Brethren must have been taxed to the utmost to provide accommodation for the funeral retinue accompanying the King, even if supplemented by the exertions of the clergy of the Hermitage of St. Catherine, on the northern side of the way. The cross at Charing was completed in the

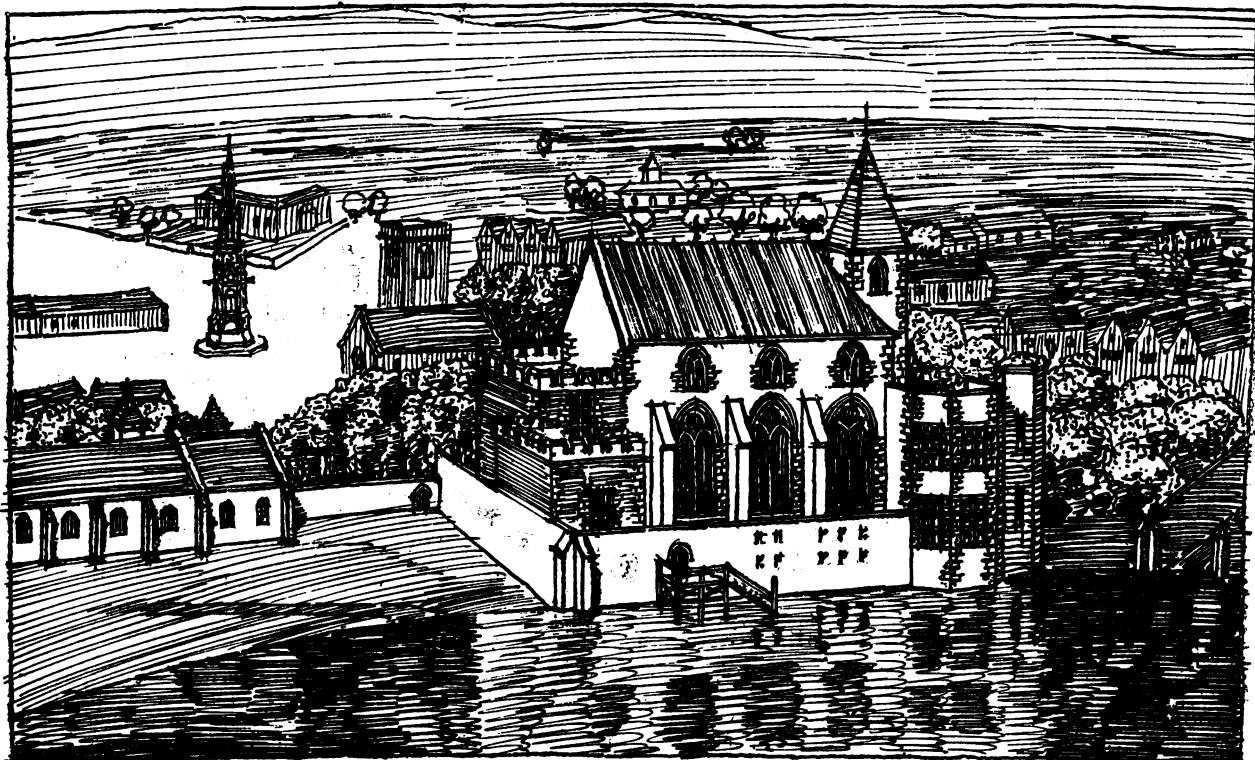


Fig. 2.—The Chapel of St. Mary Roncevall on the bank of the Thames previous to 1544. The chapel is of the middle of the thirteenth century, in two stories with Tudor additions at the south-west end and at the south-west angle; it is roofed with a steep-pitched leaden roof. The tower and belfry are at the north-east end. The upper story may have been used by the canons as cells or as a school or hospital, and access would have been gained by a newel stair in the north-east tower. The chapel is built on an embankment flanked by a high wall pierced by a door giving access by steps to the river. The sketch gives indications of the portions of the conventual buildings remaining at this date. The Cross at Charing, St. Martin's Church of that period, and other features in the village of Charing can be distinguished. (After van den Wyngaerde's sketch of London.)

houses and curtilages adjoining them formerly belonging to William Briwere, and of 100s. at Suthanton payable from the houses of the said Earl there, of 13l. of land in Netherwent in the moor of Magor, and of a carucate of land in Assandon which he bought from Robert de Rochford."

Thus did the brethren obtain possession of the land on the banks of the Thames in the village of Charing where they afterwards built their convent, their chapel, and their hospital for the sick, which were to continue for more than three centuries.

After this the history of Saint Mary Roncevall is a blank for many years; even Dr. Galloway's industry has failed to unearth much information about the community. That they flourished and won golden opinions—and gifts—from all sorts of people is shown by the fact that they acquired property in Norwich, in Canterbury, in Oxford, and also in Ireland and Scotland. The few records which can be discovered are confirmations of bounteous gifts of Henry III and Edward I to the mother house in the Pyrenees. In 1278 and again in 1280 the Prior of the

year 1294, and the Brethren, no doubt, had many opportunities of conversing with the architects and sculptors who built this, the most ornate of the Eleanor memorial crosses.

The Brethren of St. Mary Roncevall at Charing did their best to defend their rights when attempts were made to cheat them out of their property. But during the long period England was waging war on the Continent communication with the mother house must have been difficult. Another thing which increasingly troubled the peace of the Community was the constant acute need of money on the part of the King. "If" (says Dr. Galloway) "it could be represented that the property of the alien religious houses was used for the support of the King's enemies, or if it could be urged in extenuation that funds sent abroad by alien communities, whose mother houses were not actually in a hostile country, might be captured in transit by the enemy, it is evident that the King would have little scruple in levying heavy contributions on the property of the alien clergy, or even of confiscating it entirely."

It was in the second quarter of the fourteenth century that the community of St. Mary of Roncevall in this country appears to have been most prosperous. The Convent at Charing Cross was the head quarters of the Brethren in our islands. The procurator for the prior had his residence there; he managed his estate and collected the revenues. The property in London was the most valuable, and consisted of plots of land in various parts of the suburbs as well as at Charing Cross; but the convent also possessed a considerable amount of property in Canterbury and at Oxford. There is evidence that they derived revenue from property in Norwich, and that lands elsewhere in England, in Wales, in Ireland, and in Scotland, yielded income more than was requisite for the upkeep of the settlements in these various places. At Charing Cross itself the Priory possessed a wedge-shaped piece of land, fronting on the river, and extending back to the roadway between London and Westminster. The frontage to the open space where Charing Cross then stood—that is to say, on the site now occupied by the

in the distance Whitehall and Westminster. Dr. Galloway gives a description of the chapel, which occupied a position corresponding approximately to the middle section of Charing Cross railway station, in alignment with York Gate, and extending towards the land now occupied by Craven Street and Northumberland Avenue. Immediately to the west of the chapel were the convent gardens, which extended in the direction of the roadway to Westminster, and were partly terraced to the river bank. Lying back from the chapel were the convent and other buildings belonging to it, which seem to have been arranged on both sides of a street which opened on the high road, close to the Cross. Over the doorway of each of these houses was sculptured a cross after the use of Roncesvalles; that is to say, one combining in itself the Cross, the Crozier, and the Sword. Fig. 4 is taken from a stamp now used in the Real Casa at Roncesvalles. The exact position of the hospital is not known.

In the fourteenth century the fortunes of Saint Mary Roncevall began to decline. The Black Death, which first

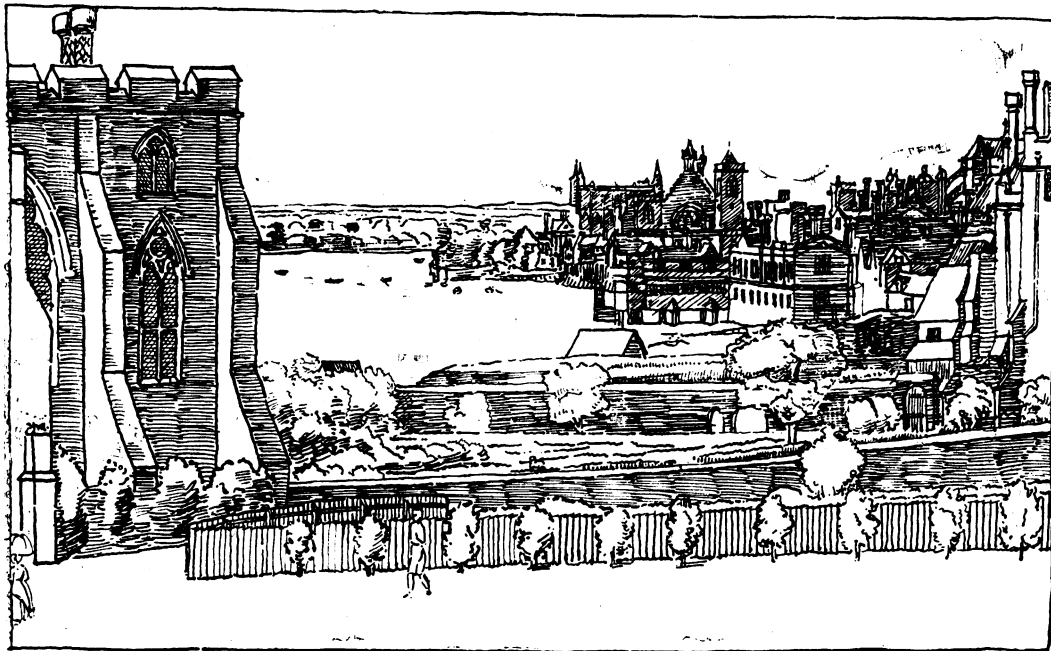


Fig. 3.—A copy of an ancient drawing in the possession of Mr. F. Gardner. This drawing is supposed to be contemporary, and to have been the work of an early Italian artist in England. It was purchased at the Strawberry Hill sale by Dr. Welleley for the Gardner Collection. The Marquis of Salisbury is stated to have several drawings by the same early Italian artist. The sketch seems to show part of an aisle along the north-west face of the Chapel of St. Mary Roncevall, with later Tudor additions. The Tudor battlements shown were probably added to the north aisle when the addition was built. The Tudor chimneys, which show their tops over the battlements, are reminiscent of the contemporary work of Cardinal Wolsey at Hampton Court, and would have been in brick, as were probably the battlements. The building on the extreme left of the sketch is probably the corner of a north porch. The sketch also shows the gardens of the convent at the riverside, and in the distance the buildings of Whitehall and of Westminster.

statue of Charles I—was more extensive than that facing the river. It must, however, be borne in mind that at that time the waters of the river extended much nearer to Charing Cross than they do now. The position of Inigo Jones's well-known Water Gate at the foot of Buckingham Street, the last remaining relic of York House, indicates the line of the river bank at a date over two hundred years later than the time with which we are dealing. Occupying the most easterly part of the river frontage was situated the church of the convent. This was probably built soon after the foundation of the convent, but there is evidence that considerable alterations and additions were made much later—perhaps at the end of the fourteenth century and again during the last phase of the existence of the house in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Some idea of the appearance of the chapel and the neighbouring buildings may be gained by studying two ancient drawings, still in existence, made while the conventual buildings were standing. One of these (Fig. 2) is the well-known sketch of London by Anthony van den Wyngaerde, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century; the other (Fig. 3) is a sketch in the Gardner collection, which shows a portion of the southwestern end of the chapel, the gardens of the convent, and

visited England in 1349, swept away vast numbers of the clergy, as is told by Abbot Gasquet and Canon Jessopp, and thus paved the way for far-reaching changes both in the Church and State. The Charing Cross community suffered very severely, and the affairs of the convent were

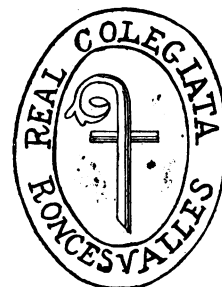


Fig. 4.—Copy of an Official Stamp now used in this Priory, showing the Cross of Roncesvalles.

thrown into confusion. Amongst other changes the native clergy seem to have got possession of the Saint Mary Roncevall Church and Hospital, and its property was looked upon by the King as a convenient source of revenue. The chapel and property were, however, restored

to the Prior of Roncesvalle; in 1383. But in 1414 Saint Mary Roncevall finally passed into the hands of English clergy. The hospital continued its useful work throughout the fifteenth century, and Dr. Galloway thinks there can be little doubt that gradually its functions as a place of cure for the sick poor became more developed. The co-operation of nursing sisters, in continuance of the old tradition of the Order, must also, he thinks, have become customary in the hospital. In 1475 a Royal Charter of Edward IV records the "foundation of a fraternity or perpetual gild of a Master, two Wardens, and the Brethren and Sisters who may wish to be of the same in the chapel of St. Mary Roncevall by Charyng Crosse, and of a perpetual chantry of one chaplain to celebrate divine service at the High Altar in the said chapel." In 1478 a grant in mortmain is recorded to the Master, Wardens, Brethren, and Sisters of the fraternity of the said chapel or hospital and of its property, revenues, and privileges, for the sustenance of the Chaplain and two additional clergy, who now seem to have been required for the services in the chapel, and of "the poor people flocking to the hospital."

After various vicissitudes the Convent of Saint Mary Roncevall shared the fate of other similar institutions when Henry VIII, inspired by motives which it is not our business here to inquire into, dissolved the monasteries of England. Its death warrant was signed in 1544. In 1550 the site, with the buildings that still remained, were granted to Sir Thomas Cawarden, from whom they passed into the hands of Sir Richard Brett. The site was purchased early in the seventeenth century by Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, who with the stones of the old convent built himself thereon a "sumptuous palace." Completed in 1605, this was known at first as Northampton House. Additions were afterwards made by Thomas Howard, first Earl of Suffolk, who called it Suffolk House. In 1642 it passed by an heiress to Algernon Percy, Earl of Northumberland. Another heiress brought the property to Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset, and through a third heiress it came into the possession of the Duke of Northumberland. Middle-aged Londoners will remember the great house with the noble gateway surmounted by the Percy Lion, which was a conspicuous object at Charing Cross. It was in regard to that lion that Theodore Hook performed one of the most remarkable feats of "suggestion" on record. By gazing fixedly at the lion he gathered around him a vast crowd, whom he persuaded not merely that he, but they, saw the lion wag his tail! The story throws light on the value that is to be attached to popular belief and testimony.

Last scene of all, that ends the strange eventful history of Saint Mary Roncevall, Northumberland House disappeared before the devastating hand, "improvement," and Northumberland Avenue, with its huge caravanseries, clubs, and offices, stands on the site so long occupied by the old convent and hospital.

The Charing Cross Hospital of to-day owes its existence to Dr. Benjamin Golding. First housed (in 1823) in Villiers Street on the northern boundary of the property previously possessed by the Priory of St. Mary, it soon afterwards was moved to its present site.

In addition to a number of *pièces justificatives* in the form of copies of original deeds, and some interesting notes supplied by Don José Urrutia, the present Abbot Prior of the Convent at Roncesvalles, Dr. Galloway's little book is illustrated with plates showing the chapel of St. Mary Roncevall on the banks of the Thames before 1544, effigies of the tombs of the two Earls of Pembroke in the Temple Church, an ancient drawing which seems to show part of an aisle along the north-west face of the Chapel of St. Mary Roncevall with later Tudor additions, the gardens of the Convent, and in the distance the buildings of Whitehall and Westminster; the official stamp now used by the Priory; and the common seal of the Fraternity and Guild of St. Mary Roncevall, affixed to the deed of surrender. We are enabled by the courtesy of Dr. Galloway to reproduce four of these plates.

In conclusion we heartily congratulate the author on having produced a valuable contribution to the literature relating to the history of London.

DR. HENRY WILLSON, of Weybridge, has been placed upon the Commission of the Peace for the county of Surrey.

BRITISH MEDICAL BENEVOLENT FUND.

At the December meeting of the Committee twenty-two applications for assistance were received, and grants amounting to £177 voted in relief, four cases being passed over and one postponed for further inquiries. Appended is an abstract of the cases which were helped:

1. Widow, aged 56, of F.R.C.S. Eng, has been a confirmed invalid for the last two years. Only income a small pension, which is quite insufficient for the bare necessities of life. Voted £5.
2. Daughter, aged 62, of late M.D. Earnings very small and decreasing. Has recently been defrauded of a few pounds she had saved. Voted £5.
3. M.R.C.S., L.S.A., aged 62, who used to practise in London, but whose receipts greatly decreased owing to changes in the neighbourhood and competition. For some years past has endeavoured to support himself as a locum tenent, but finds increasing difficulty in obtaining work. Wife receives boarders. Children unable to help. Voted £10.
4. Widow aged 60, of M.R.C.S., L.S.A., who practised in Lincolnshire, and whose estate yielded barely 5s. in the £. Only certain income £12 10s. a year; children at present unable to help. Voted £6.
5. M.R.C.S., L.S.A., aged 64, who has been quite incapacitated for the last three months. Wife's income £23 a year. Children only able to give occasional and very slight help; Relieved twice, £20 Voted £10.
6. Daughter, aged 60, of late M.D. Edin. No income, and unable to earn for herself because an invalid sister requires constant attention. Relieved twice, £24. Voted £12.
7. M.R.C.S., aged 53, who for more than a year has been totally incapacitated. No income; no children; wife takes naying guests, but at present has none. Relieved once, £15. Voted £15.
8. Widow, aged 59, of L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S.E. No income; earns about 2s. 6d. a week by needlework. Only child barely self-supporting. Relieved nine times, £93. Voted £12.
9. Daughter, aged 57, of late M.R.C.S., L.S.A. Income £16 a year. Health will not permit of continuous work. Relieved once, £8 Voted £6.
10. Daughter, aged 61, of late M.D. Edin. Has just lost a situation through the death of her employer. Is allowed £6 by a charitable society. Eyesight very defective. Relieved three times, £36. Voted, £12.
11. Daughter, aged 63, of late L.S.A. No income; used to be a governess, but has had bad health for years. A small weekly allowance from a sister-in-law but insufficient for board and lodging. Relieved six times, £62 Voted, £8.
12. Widow, aged 69, of M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. Endeavours to support herself by taking boarders or resident patients. Slight, irregular help from children. Relieved fifteen times, £156. Voted £12.
13. Widow, aged 58, of M.R.C.S. Quite unprovided for at husband's death. Receives 2s. a week from relations. Relieved four times, £46 Voted £12.
14. Widow, aged 41, of L.S.A. Acts as lady help, but salary insufficient for maintenance of her boy and her own unavoidable expenses. Relieved twice, £24. Voted £12.
15. M.R.C.S., L.S.A., aged 68, who is quite incapacitated by hemiplegia. Only income a pension from the Kent Medical Benevolent Fund. No children. Relieved twice, £24. Voted £6.
16. Widow, age 62, of L.R.C.P. Edin. Is the owner of a small house, but rent barely covers the necessary repairs, and lease expires in a few years. No children. Relieved eight times, £90. Voted £12.
17. Widow, aged 65, of M.D. Edin. Unprovided for at husband's death, and for several years acted as matron to a large institution. Is now dependent on a married daughter who can ill afford to assist. Relieved six times, £62. Voted £12.

SCIENCE and humanity alike score heavily if a story reported from America by the *Daily Express* be true. It is to the effect that while the *Pannonia*, a Cunard steamer, was on its way recently from the Mediterranean to New York a stoker was found to be in need of an immediate operation for appendicitis. On the fact being reported by the ship surgeon to the captain, the latter at once stopped the ship, and as this did not sufficiently steady it to make the performance of an operation of delicacy possible, further rose to the occasion by causing the ship to be surrounded by a layer of oil, and thus broke the force of the heavy sea which was running. The operation was then duly performed, and with such success that on arrival at New York the patient was convalescent. The whole story is such a pleasant one that we must hope it is true, and although it comes from America it is reported in such fashion as to make this probable. The name of the surgeon is given as J. F. Orr, while it is said that as soon as he had completed his task he practically collapsed. This is quite comprehensible, as the strain upon his nerves during such a procedure in the confines of a rolling ship must have been exceedingly severe.