

believe the same effect can really be traced in the protected stations at large.

Dr. Nevins is ready to change his opinions when the evidence is in his eyes sufficient to warrant his doing so. I would now ask him to look at all the Army statistics, and to say what more is wanted to prove to him that these Acts have conferred a most signal benefit both on the Army and on the country which employs and pays that Army.

I am, sir, yours, etc.,

E. A. PARKES.

Netley, January 14th, 1875.

#### DR. CROMBIE AND HIS PAMPHLET.

SIR,—You will not, I trust, deny me the justice of a few words in your JOURNAL, in reply to an article in the number for Jan. 9th, under the remarkably witty heading of "What Next?" There the reviewer of the pamphlet, *A Plea for the Poor suffering from Painful Incurable Disease*, in his haste to prejudice a most humane proposal, endeavours to cover it up from the sight of your readers under a small cloud of confusion, and runs on contradicting himself from beginning to end in the most pitifully silly manner. Thus: "The only part of the pamphlet in which we concur is the comment upon the inutility of the Cancer Hospital." And then: "Dr. Crombie implies that there are in London only two institutions capable of dealing with cases of malignant disease—the Cancer Hospital and the Middlesex Hospital." Think of the incongruous nonsense of concurring with me as to the inutility of an institution of which he says I imply that it is one of two alone capable of dealing with malignant disease! Again: "Dr. Crombie's proposal rests entirely on an absurd fallacy, because there are innumerable hospitals scattered over the country which already do all or more than he proposes." And next: "In dealing with the class of cases Dr. Crombie seems to have in view, the proper course is to call forth the kindly sympathy and assistance of neighbours and friends, and to allow the local medical man to direct their benevolence as he thinks best." This is "the wise proposal" which the reviewer, with the complacency of superior wisdom, recommends in place of my "unwise one"; for the moment forgetting "the absurd fallacy" and "the innumerable hospitals", which, according to his own account, do all or more than he would now have the local medical man to attempt.

Now, the truth is, the class of cases I have in view cannot, to any intelligent reader of the pamphlet, be a matter of "seeming" at all; for, besides being indicated by the title, it is over and over again distinctly stated that it is persons suffering from painful incurable disease, such as cancer, for whom the medicines are sought; and it is well-known, perhaps to everybody except the reviewer, that not only do the general hospitals not admit such cases, but that they discharge those who become incurable in their own wards.

Enough: those who misrepresent, in order to find fault with their own misrepresentation, and contradict themselves with the utmost indifference, are doubtlessly best left to themselves; and the misrepresentations of this writer are as numerous as his contradictions; but, before dropping the subject, I would just notice that the reference to the Middlesex Hospital, which he thinks must be so offensive to the staff of that institution, is as follows: "The Middlesex Hospital was the first to deal with cancer specially, and, since the days of Sir Charles Bell, has been a nursery for the study of the disease and the advancement of its treatment." If this be not so, I will withdraw my statement, but with regret. The Poor-law medical officers will find, in like manner, that my offence towards them is speaking of them in terms of the highest respect. The reviewer, in fact, has set himself to show that what is, is not; and what is not, is in the pamphlet. If any of your readers choose to read the pamphlet for themselves (which I shall be happy to send them), I am sure they will find more than one point in which to concur with me, where there is nothing advanced but what I believe to be dictated by common sense and humanity.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN M. CROMBIE, M.B.

60, New Bond Street.

\* \* Dr. Crombie says that he will be happy to forward a copy of his pamphlet on application, and begs that our readers will judge of its merits for themselves. By all means, let them do so. In the meanwhile, we must be allowed to retain the opinion which we expressed last week, that his proposal to send medicines from a central charitable society to cases of painful incurable disease scattered all over the United Kingdom is not a wise one, and that it is not desirable that it should be carried out. It was not, of course, with the words of praise which he incidentally gives to the Middlesex Hospital that we had any fault to find. Far from it. But we demurred to its being classed with the Cancer Hospital, and also to its being said, or implied, that these two

institutions were the only ones in the metropolis where chronic cases of cancer received adequate attention. Dr. Crombie seems to think that we have overlooked the fact that it is incurable cases that he has in view; and he reminds us that the general hospitals are not very ready to admit such cases. This, no doubt, is true as a general rule; and yet, as a matter of fact, the metropolitan hospitals, and still more the provincial, do receive, and keep to the end, many cases of incurable disease; while the workhouse infirmaries and sick asylums afford a refuge to a still larger number. We must, therefore, maintain, as we did last week, that the best way of dealing with these cases is to call out the kindly sympathy and assistance of neighbours and friends, and to allow the local medical man to direct it as he thinks best. For one case he may deem the workhouse infirmary the most suitable place, for another the county hospital, for another some invalid home; while private friends and local charity would supply the necessities of the rest. In this way, any case of painful incurable disease can be much more advantageously treated—much more advantageously, both in a medical and in a social point of view—than in the manner which Dr. Crombie proposes.

#### THE BRITISH MEDICAL BENEVOLENT FUND.

SIR,—We are requested to acquaint you that, at the annual meeting of the British Medical Benevolent Fund, on the 14th instant, Sir George Burrows, Bart., M.D., in the chair, a vote of special thanks was passed to the medical journals for their kind and valuable advocacy of the cause of the Fund during the past year, and amongst these especially to the editor of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, to whom the good cause is already so deeply indebted.

In fulfilling so agreeable a duty, permit us to take the opportunity of adding our own very best wishes, and to remain,

Dear Sir, very faithfully yours,

For self and GEOFFREY HETT, M.D. (*Hon. Sec.*)

CHARLES S. WEBBER (*Hon. Financial Sec.*)

1, Upper Berkeley Street West, Hyde Park, W., Jan. 20, 1875.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

AND

## POOR-LAW MEDICAL SERVICES.

THE Board of Guardians of the Thurles Union have increased the salary of Dr. Quinlan, medical officer of the Borrisoleigh Dispensary District, from £100 to £120 per annum.

#### DUTIES OF MEDICAL OFFICERS.

DISTRICT MEDICAL OFFICER.—In reply to query No. 1, we feel satisfied that the Board of Guardians can compel compliance with the requirement contained within brackets; and we would advise our correspondent to a cede to the same, however distasteful it may be.

2. Should the guardians direct that a medical officer shall periodically visit all persons on the permanent list, even though such persons do not require medicines, we feel that the medical officer has no alternative but to comply; but we would advise that, in any case where such visit has proved to be uncalled for, a representation that such needless visit had been paid should be made to the Board, and their fair estimate of the point be requested.

3. We would advise that immediate attention should be given to every order, however irregularly or unjustly such has been issued; but, if the medical officer feel aggrieved, we suggest that he should submit the facts to the guardians, and request them to direct such alteration as may be just.

4. As regards this query, we hold that it is competent for a medical officer to prescribe for a patient upon the statement supplied by the person who brings the order, provided such person is in a position to afford reliable information; but we would advise that such course should be adopted with extreme caution, and should not avail to excuse the medical officer from as prompt a subsequent visit as it may be in his power to make.

5. As regards the final query, we would suggest that our correspondent should quietly collect instances where the applicants for relief have been advised by the relieving officer to apply to the medical officer for assistance with the view to getting an order for mutton and wine. Very few such cases would, if established, go far to determine the tenure of office of such relieving officer.

## MEDICAL NEWS.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.—The following members of the College having been elected Fellows at previous meetings of the Council, were admitted as such on January 14th.

Messrs. Charles Derby Waite, M.B. Cantab. and M.R.C.P. Lond., of Old Burlington Street, diploma of membership dated October 2nd, 1829; and Thomas John Starling, L.S.A., of Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire, July 19th, 1841.

At the same meeting of the Council—

Messrs. Benjamin Thomas, L.R.C.P. Edin. and L.S.A., Llanelly, Carmarthen; and Edward Lawford, M.D. Aberd. and L.S.A., of Leighton Buzzard, were elected Fellows of the College, their diplomas of membership bearing date respectively May 26th, 1836, and July 1st, 1842.