

## THE ORGANISATION OF CHARITY IN HOSPITALS.

v.

SIR,—The “benevolent British public”, when once it has become well accustomed to supporting an abuse by its money and patronage, is certainly not wont to withdraw such support very promptly, however overwhelming may be the facts and figures whereby the mischievousness of the abuse has been demonstrated. Not merely are the administrators and the supporters of our great medical charities so staunchly loyal to a vast system of entirely gratuitous, and almost entirely indiscriminate, relief that the largest, the richest, and the oldest of such charities have failed to modify it in any degree, but also they appear resolved to believe that it is only very lately, and by a handful of quite unimportant and eccentric malcontents that any objection to their mode of action has been raised. It has occurred to me, therefore, that, as you again allow me to call the attention of your readers to the abuse of medical charity in the case of hospital and dispensary out-patients, it may be not uninteresting or unprofitable to pass briefly in review the various important expressions of professional and public opinion which of late years have taken place with regard to this question both in London and in the country at large.

Some may remember that, as long ago as 1854, a paper on the subject was read by Dr. Guy to the Statistical Society of London; also, that during the sixteen years immediately following, there were not wanting occasional complaints and attempts in the direction of reform. The space at my disposal, however, will probably be sufficiently occupied, if I begin my *résumé* of this interesting and prolonged agitation with the year 1870, when, in consequence of an influentially attended private meeting at the rooms of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, invitations to a conference on the present state of out-patient administration were sent to three hundred London physicians and surgeons, including those holding appointments at the various hospitals and dispensaries. These invitations were responded to by one hundred and fifty-six members of the profession, the chair being taken by the late Sir William Fergusson. Strong resolutions were passed respecting the abuse of out-patient medical relief and the necessity for provident dispensaries, and were supported by a mass of arguments, facts, and statistics; a large committee was appointed, including Dr. Protheroe Smith, Mr. Spencer Wells, Dr. Anstie, and Dr. Dickinson; four sub-committees were created for the special consideration of general hospitals, special hospitals, dispensaries, and Poor-law medical relief respectively; and exhaustive reports prepared by these four sub-committees were afterwards adopted and published by the general committee. Within a year from this date, in March 1871, a medical committee was appointed by the Council of the Charity Organisation Society to consider the same subject, with especial reference to medical institutions of a provident character; and, in the following October, after holding fifteen meetings, this committee issued a careful and detailed report, together with a body of “suggested rules” for the establishment and management of provident dispensaries. In pursuance of one of the recommendations embodied in this report, an important conference on medical out-patient relief was summoned in the month of December following by the Council of the Charity Organisation Society, the meeting taking place in the house of the Society of Arts, under the presidency of Mr. W. H. Smith, M.P., and being attended, amongst others, by Mr. Stansfeld (then President of the Local Government Board), Lord Joscelyn Percy, Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Rev. Harry Jones, Colonel Fremantle, Mr. Gurney Hoare, and Dr. Guy. Interesting speeches were made by Sir Charles Trevelyan, Mr. Stansfeld, Mr. W. H. Smith, Dr. Acland, Dr. Meadows, Mr. Fairlie Clarke, and others, and the following resolution was unanimously carried:

“That this conference is of opinion that there exists a great and increasing abuse of out-door relief at the various hospitals and dispensaries of the metropolis, which urgently requires a remedy.”

Soon after this, special meetings of the St. George's and the St. Giles's committees of the Charity Organisation Society were convened to consider the best means of giving effect to the principles sanctioned at the conference, and at St. George's a special committee was appointed to carry out such practical measures as were resolved on in the course of the meeting, the result being that two circulars were drawn up, one addressed to the various free dispensaries of the district, inviting their co-operation, and urging on them the adoption of the provident system; the other addressed to the governing bodies of the Westminster, St. George's, Victoria, and Belgrave Hospitals, informing them of the circular to the dispensaries (a copy of which was enclosed), asking their sanction to the principles expressed in it, and placing the investigating machinery of the Committee at their disposal.

In the same year, Mr. Phillips Joddrell, one of the governors of St. George's Hospital, having brought before the Board of Management certain suggestions for reform in the administration of the out-patient department, and having, at an unusually large meeting, found no one willing to support them, addressed to each of the subscribers a letter, in which he called attention to the existing abuses, and deprecated the absence of any response on the part of the hospital authorities either to his own resolutions or to the circular sent to them by the St. George's Committee of the Charity Organisation Society. In March of the same year (1872), there was held at the Society of Arts a meeting of the Metropolitan Counties Branch of the British Medical Association, in which similar opinions were expressed, and papers were read by Mr. Donald Dalrymple, M.P., “On the Provident System of Medical Relief from a National Point of View”, and, by Dr. Ford Anderson, on the same system, “from a Medical Point of View”. Again, in the year 1873, Dr. Ford Anderson prepared and published a statement, comparing the incomes of one hundred provident dispensary patients with the incomes of one hundred free dispensary patients, the result being that the former were found to exceed the latter only by the sum of one shilling and fourpence farthing per patient per week, while the actual income of the free dispensary patients was shown to amount, on an average, to £1 2s. 8d. per week, a sum out of which it appears sufficiently evident that the ordinary subscription to a provident dispensary—namely, one penny per week for each adult, and a halfpenny per week or less for each child—could in most cases be paid both with ease and with advantage.

In the month of March in the same year, a permanent society of London physicians, surgeons, and general practitioners was, under the name of the “Hospital Out-patient Reform Association”, constituted for the express purpose of making known the abuses of out-patient departments, and of furthering measures for their reform. After an interesting inaugural meeting, a committee was appointed to bring the proposals of the Society before the governors of the various hospitals, and, by the advice of this committee, a paper upon the Society's work was, in the following August, read by Dr. Alfred Meadows in the Public Medicine Section of the British Medical Association, on the occasion of the annual meeting. In March 1874, the first annual meeting of the Hospital Out-patient Reform Association was held in rooms of the Medical Society of London, the report adopted sufficing to show that a large amount of interesting work had been done, and that recommendations for reform had been transmitted to fifteen of the general and thirty-three of the special hospitals. In the same year (1874), a memorial was presented to the Board of Management of the St. George's Hospital, condemning the abuses of the out-patient system, and urging the co-operation of the hospital authorities with certain provident dispensaries recently established in the vicinity; and the sixty-one signatures which were appended to this document included those of the Duke of Westminster, the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Hon. and Rev. Robert Liddell, Sir William Fergusson, Sir William Gull, Sir James Paget, Mr. Thomas Hughes, and Mr. Gathorne Hardy. In the autumn of the same year, a special inquiry was conducted by the Charity Organisation Society into the circumstances of six hundred and forty-one out-patients at the Royal Free Hospital. The investigation was undertaken at the request, and with the assistance, of the authorities of that institution; and, when the results were afterwards classified (though the most liberal allowances were made for doubtful cases), only one hundred and sixty-nine of the applicants were considered as suitable objects for this particular kind of relief.

We are thus brought down to the year 1875, when, as it will be scarcely necessary to remind your readers, there was presented to the British Medical Association the celebrated memorial which formed the subject of my first letter, and respecting which so much correspondence has recently taken place in your columns. It is noticeable, too, that, for some time after this, the conviction which was entertained by the profession and by the public that a remonstrance so striking and so influential could not be permanently ineffective appears to have prevented the inauguration of any important measures of reform, a circumstance which may also in part be due to the fact that, as soon as the memorial was prepared, the Hospital Out-patient Reform Association decided, for a time, to suspend operations lest there should be any appearance of rivalry between its proceedings and those of the memorialists.

The important meeting assembled by the Council of the Charity Organisation Society at the house of the Society of Arts in the April of the present year, the able paper read at that meeting by Sir Charles Trevelyan, and the distinguished support which it received, are matters of too recent a date, and have been too fully reported in your pages, to need more than this passing mention; but I may add that the proceedings on that occasion gave rise very shortly afterwards to a

meeting of the Medical Society of London, under the chairmanship of Dr. Buchanan, at which the need for provident dispensaries was once more urged upon the profession, especially from the medical and sanitary point of view; also it will be remembered that, at the recent debate on Home Hospitals at the Mansion House, it was especially urged that the proposed association should "co-operate with the managers of the present hospitals supported by private charity, with the object of preventing the abuse of hospitals by those who can afford to pay for their treatment".

The number and magnitude of the proceedings which have taken place in London alone have left me no space to mention the many considerable agitations and reforms which have been effected contemporaneously in the provinces; and it will also be seen that I have enumerated only those remonstrances which have been directed against the system from without, reserving for another letter all account of the consequent reforms which have in a few instances taken place in hospitals and dispensaries, both in London and in our large country towns. I may, however, mention that, during the present year, important action has been taken, both in Liverpool (where the subject has been under the consideration of the Northern Medical Society) and in Warrington (where a telling paper on the abuse of medical relief was read by Dr. Gornall at the annual meeting of the infirmary and dispensary), also that a provident system far more extensive in proportion to the population than any established in London has been successfully created in Manchester, Salford, Derby, Northampton, and Coventry; and that serious attention has for some time past been given to the subject in Glasgow, Southampton, Lancaster, and Birmingham. It may be remembered, too, that, in the last named city, at the recent annual meeting of the Birmingham and Midland Counties Branch of the British Medical Association, an interesting paper (afterwards made the subject of a leading article in the *Standard* of June 27th) was read by the President for the year, Mr. Gamgee, Surgeon to the Queen's Hospital.

With regard to the articles, leaders, letters, and pamphlets which have appeared on this subject during the last seven years, they are too abundant to be remembered or enumerated, even though we exclude the numerous reports issued by committees of inquiry; but, among those which have come under my personal notice, I may mention an able article in the *Quarterly Review* for April 1874, two in *Fraser's Magazine* for August and November 1874, two in *Macmillan* in 1872, two of special force and detail which were published in Nos. 89 and 90 of the *Westminster Review*, and were afterwards reprinted in the form of a book: one on "The Limits of Unpaid Service", in the *British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review*; several letters to the *Times* and the *Lancet* by Sir Charles Trevelyan; a pamphlet entitled *Facts and Figures*, by Mr. Nelson Hardy; a sermon by the Rev. Llewelyn Davies; an able and most detailed paper read by Mr. O'Hanlon, in 1873, to the Statistical Society of Manchester; a social science paper by Dr. Shrimpton, in which the unhealthiness of out-patient waiting rooms is especially insisted on; a number of letters and articles in various medical and in a few provincial papers, and in especial the well known leader in the *Pull Mall Gazette*, in consequence of writing which Dr. Chapman was deprived of his position at the Metropolitan Free Hospital; also the letters in that paper and in the *Daily News* which were written in remonstrance by Mr. Phillips Jodrell. I have already alluded to a popular and successful work of fiction entitled *Great St. Benedict's*, which has been founded on the tragedies of the out-patient system; and I would also call attention to the section which treats of hospital abuses in the well known work *Contrasts, Dedicated to the Ratepayers of London*.

Another strong condemnation of the present system is embodied in the fifth annual report of the Local Government Board; and the recent agitation at Birmingham has called forth, so recently as the 16th July, a striking leader in the *Daily Telegraph*, in which it is pointed out that, in 1867, one in five of the inhabitants received gratuitous medical assistance; while, in 1876, this proportion had risen to one in three; the increase of recipients of medical charity being *fifty-six per cent.*, while the increase of population was only *thirteen per cent.* The article then contrasts with this state of affairs the fact that, in Manchester, during the three years for which the provident system has been in operation, the ten provident dispensaries in that town have acquired two thousand nine hundred members. Probably, however, the most exhaustive compilation which has yet appeared on this subject is a pamphlet of upwards of one hundred and fifty pages which has recently been republished by Sir Charles Trevelyan, and which, in addition to the paper read by him on April 17th at the Society of Arts, contains the whole of the subsequent discussion, a number of letters upon the question of medical relief from workmen in the employ of Messrs. Spottiswoode and Co. and Messrs.

Eyre and Spottiswoode, and some very valuable and voluminous appendices, including reprints of the more important reports mentioned in this letter, tables of free and of provident medical institutions, etc.\* I may mention, too, that the recent number of the *Edinburgh Review* contains a paper, which I have not yet had an opportunity of reading, but which, I am informed, is also directed against the abuses of our hospital system.

It is possible that I may have omitted from this list certain measures and writings as important as some that I have specified; but I think I have said enough to show that, if the medical charities err in ignorance, their ignorance has not proceeded either from reticence or from inaction on the part of the advocates of reform.—I am, sir, yours obediently,

A MEMBER OF THE CHARITY ORGANISATION SOCIETY.

#### PROFESSIONAL CATHOLICITY.

SIR,—In the *Standard* of the 14th instant, was an account of the medical practice of an old man aged 86, who unfortunately was not a "qualified medical man", whose specialty of treatment consisted in the administration of "bitters" internally and the external use of some metal rods bearing the names of certain planets.

The appearance in to-day's BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of a letter, accompanied by a homœopathic resolution, from George Wyld, M.D., raises in my mind the question, whether, if this old man had possessed a "qualification", or if a "qualified medical man" were to adopt his principles of treatment, the medical profession might expect to be called upon to support "professional Catholicity" by smiling upon such practice or him who adheres to it.

At present, to my perhaps darkened mind, the old man to whom I have alluded, who is said to have borne the title of the "White Witch", was as deserving of being met in consultation by members of the medical profession at large as some who have obtained more conventional titles.

The impertinence of speaking of "your school" and "the school to which I belong", as of equal or proportionate quantities, is, I think, beyond remark.—I am, sir, yours truly,

August 18th, 1877.

A COUNTRY SURGEON.

#### CONTAGIUM VIVUM.

SIR,—I had not the advantage of hearing Mr. Robert Hamilton's paper (read before the Surgical Section), of which he speaks in his letter in the JOURNAL of August 18th. With reference, however, to his hypothesis that septic organisms in a latent state of vitality exist in healthy tissues, resuming their activity under favourable circumstances, I venture to point out that the observations of Dr. Burdon Sanderson in 1871 are opposed both to this and to the similar theory held by Béchamp. Dr. Sanderson showed that the normal liquids and tissues do not possess zymotic property. One of his experiments also proved that the products of inflammation are not always zymotic; thus, on "March 20th, pus was collected from a deep-seated abscess in the thigh of a child by introducing the capillary end of a collecting tube into the path of the bistoury which had been used for opening it, the bistoury having been itself immersed in boiling water. It was then transferred to a small eprouvette and exposed to the air. On March 30th, there were no bacteria. It was then diluted with boiled and cooled distilled water. It was again examined on April 3rd, when it contained no organic forms whatever."—I remain, your obedient servant,

ARTHUR DOWNES, M.D.

\* *Metropolitan Medical Relief.* Longmans and Co. Price one shilling.

SOUTHAMPTON.—The number of births registered in 1876 was 1,943, and of deaths 1,252; the birth-rate being 34.08 and the death-rate 21.96 per 1,000 population. The death-rate was high, in consequence of an outbreak of scarlatina, which caused 122 deaths, against 25 in 1875, although isolation of the patients and disinfection of the clothing and bedding in the disinfecting-chamber were duly practised. There were also 39 deaths from diphtheria, 25 from whooping-cough, and 15 from measles. There were 284 deaths under one year, 140 between one and five, and 828 above five years of age; also 14.6 deaths in each 100 births. The population is estimated at 57,000. A house-to-house inspection was carried out amongst a certain class of houses with good results, as a large number of nuisances were discovered and speedily abated; two houses unfit for human habitation were closed under a by-law; proceedings were successfully instituted against the proprietor of cement works, the common lodging-houses periodically inspected, and all other necessary sanitary work actively carried out under Dr. Osborn's supervision.