

**THE MEDICAL PROFESSION OF CROYDON, THE POOR LAW BOARD, AND THE GENERAL BOARD OF HEALTH.**

LETTER FROM ALFRED CARPENTER, ESQ.

SIR,—I beg to forward a letter which appeared in the *Croydon Standard* on Saturday last, Oct. 28th, and to offer a few words in explanation. The united medical profession of this town made a stand upon the Vaccination Question against the Board of Guardians, but were defeated by the appointment of a stranger, who, in six weeks, sent in his resignation. They then thought themselves secure; but no! an ally of the guardians appeared in the camp, who now seeing a favourable opportunity of regaining a standing amongst those who had formerly treated him with ignominy and insult, thrusts forward his assistant, and gets him elected as vaccinator. It now became the province of the board to reward their ally. The guardians, therefore, raked up cases of neglect against one of their medical officers, turned him off, and appointed the vaccinator in his stead. It next became requisite to appoint a cholera staff. Now, in 1849, all the surgeons in Croydon attended any cases they were called to, at 10s. 6d. per case. They agreed to do so this year; but the board rejected the terms—offering 3s. 6d. for diarrhoea, and 7s. for cholera. We rejected this sum, as inadequate; and preferring no pay to half a fee, offered our services to the poor gratuitously. The only exception to our agreement was the former ally of the board, who offered his services to the board at their own terms. He was again rewarded by being appointed (a so called) medical superintendent, at five guineas a week. Upon this, all the surgeons of Croydon informed the board that they declined to hold any communication with their so-called medical superintendent. Thus, Mr. Editor, stands the contest. We accuse one of our ranks of helping those who insult us by their language, as well as by their pecuniary offers. It is quite evident from the vindictiveness shewn by Boards of Guardians, that their officials are not the persons to stir up opposition. It remains, therefore, a duty of those who do not fear such tribunals, to make a stand against tyranny and insult. It is the intention of some of us to petition the Legislature in the ensuing session of Parliament, against Boards of Guardians having the power of election of parochial medical officers; and to propose, that they be elected for life, and removable only by the Poor Law Board.

Those who will co-operate with us, will help to raise the profession, by removing the cause of many unseemly squabbles. The poor will get better attention, and medical men will be better paid for their services.

I shall be happy to act as secretary to any who will forward their petitions and communications to me; and will affix to our memorial the names of any who will give me authority to do so. The substance shall be published shortly. We are determined not to let the matter rest until we have brought it to some successful issue.

ALFRED CARPENTER, *Hon. Secretary.*

Croydon, November 1st, 1854.

*Mr. Carpenter's letter contained the following among other enclosures.*

- I. Resolutions transmitted by the Medical Men of Croydon to the Poor Law Board and General Board of Health, August 31st, 1851.
  - II. Notice to the Inhabitants by the Medical Men of Croydon, dated August 31st, 1854.
  - III. Address to the Rate Payers by the Croydon Guardians, with the Reply of the Medical Men.
- I. *Resolutions transmitted by the Medical Men of Croydon to the Poor Law Board and General Board of Health, August 31st, 1854.*

"The medical men of Croydon feel it incumbent upon them to make known to the Poor Law Board and General Board of Health their objections to the appointment of Mr. Bottomley, as Medical Superintendent of the Croydon Union.

"First: Because the course of conduct pursued by Mr. Bottomley towards them in their endeavours to form an efficient medical staff, in anticipation of an outbreak of cholera, has been such, that they cannot consistently co-operate with him.

"Second: Because the Guardians have appointed Mr. Bottomley with such a knowledge, and with an unrescinded vote of want of confidence still standing on their minute-book against him, and passed by them upon the occasion of what was at that time considered a compulsory resignation on the part of Mr. Bottomley.

"Third: Because, as rate-payers, they deem such an appointment an unnecessary expense to the parish, the duties during the year 1849 having been most efficiently performed without a superintendent; and they fear that, from an unwise appointment having been made, it will tend to destroy an unity of action so essential among the medical profession upon such an occasion as an epidemic of cholera."

II. *Notice to the Inhabitants by the Medical Men of Croydon, dated August 31st, 1854.*

"The Board of Guardians of the Croydon Union having rejected the services of the medical men of Croydon, and it being of the highest importance, in the event of diarrhoea and cholera becoming prevalent, that the poor should have efficient and readily-procurable medical assistance, they may, in case of an attack of cholera or diarrhoea, apply to any of the under-named medical men, who will afford them gratuitous medical aid; and the poor are earnestly entreated to lose no time in making application on the first symptom of sickness or derangement of the bowels.

EDWARD BERNEY, 73, High Street, Croydon.

JOSEPH BIRD, 80, High Street, Croydon.

ALFRED CARPENTER, 2, Dingwall Road, Croydon.

H. A. CLEAVER, 40, North End, Croydon.

THOMAS L. HENLEY, 38, Church Street, Croydon.

PHILIP HUBBERT, 10, South End, Croydon.

DOCTOR LASHMAR, 83, North End, Croydon.

ALFRED MARKWICK, 32, Church Street, Croydon.

WILLIAM SUTHERLAND, 77, North End, Croydon.

EDWARD WESTALL, 53, High Street, Croydon.

"The medical men of Croydon have felt it to be their duty to offer this assistance to the poor of the parish, from the conviction that the staff appointed by the Board of Guardians is quite insufficient—two practitioners only having been appointed for the town of Croydon, who, in addition, have to perform the ordinary duties of parochial medical officers to the union house, to the home district, and the distant localities of Coulsdon, Addington, Sanderstead, Selsdon, Shirley, and Woodside."

III. *Address to the Rate-payers by the Croydon Guardians, with the Reply of the Medical Men.*

"1. It has come to the knowledge of the Board of Guardians, that assertions have been made by some of the medical men resident in Croydon, condemning the arrangements made by the Board for the treatment of the poor, when attacked with cholera or diarrhoea.

"2. These assertions have been made in the strongest terms, in language calculated to do more injury than good; while the gentlemen who make them leave wholly untouched, and neglect to propose, any remedy for the amelioration of the fearful disease.

"3. The Board of Guardians feel confident that they have adopted prompt and efficient measures to assist the poor who may be seized with an attack either of cholera or diarrhoea. But in order that the ratepayers may judge for themselves, the Board will now lay before them an outline of their proceedings.

"4. When the disease made its appearance in and about London, and before it had reached Croydon, the Guardians directed a note to be sent to all the medical gentlemen of the union, requesting their co-operation in case the disease should reach this district. This note contained also the remuneration which the Guardians proposed to pay in cases of diarrhoea or cholera—an amount *fifty per cent.* more than the remuneration recommended by the Poor-law Board on a former occasion, and over what is paid to the medical officers of the union.

"5. To this note an answer was received from the medical men resident in the town, to the effect that they would not attend the poor on any such terms. Others, who lived out of the town, much to their honour and reputation, at once acceded to the offer of the Board. The Guardians then fell back on the order of the General Board of Health, and at once appointed a medical superintendent, a very old and highly respectable professional gentleman, viz., Mr. Bottomley. The terms of his appointment, and the powers given to him, will be best understood by an extract from the minutes of the Board:

"6. 'That Mr. Bottomley be appointed medical superintendent of the whole union, the salary to be £5 5s. per week: for this sum Mr. Bottomley will attend, when called upon, any case in any parish or hamlet of the union, and adopt, to the best of his judgment, either by calling in *extra medical assistance or otherwise*, the very best means in his power to counteract both cholera and diarrhoea, and also to exercise a general medical superintendence of the district.'

"7. In addition to which, the Guardians instructed their relieving officers to give extra attention in all cases coming under their knowledge.

"8. The whole of these proceedings were laid before the Poor-law Board, and the General Board of Health, in London, who considered the provision made by the Guardians for meeting the calamity ample and sufficient.

"9. Thus the ratepayers will perceive that the Guardians have done all in their power, while the medical men of the town made the treatment of the poor one of pounds, shillings, and pence. True, indeed, as if ashamed of their conduct, and perhaps upon reflection, they issued a hand-bill, stating that they would attend the poor gratuitously.

"10. Instead of these gentlemen suggesting a remedy, advising the Board in what way to deal with the matter, they have continued to attack the Board of Guardians with the greatest vituperation, and in a manner unbecoming the dignity and honour usually attributed to the members of their profession.

"11. The Board of Guardians assure the ratepayers that their duties are those of a character requiring great sacrifice of time, and calling forth all their energies: they likewise feel conscious that they have done their duty to the ratepayers, without receiving the least assistance, other than that from their own officers, from the medical men of the town of Croydon."

*Reply to the Address of the Guardians by the Medical Men of the Town of Croydon.*

"1 The medical men of Croydon decidedly condemn the Board of Guardians for not having provided efficient medical attendance for the poor when attacked with *diarrhœa* and *cholera*.

"2. The assertions referred to have only been made in the language of simple truth; and the medical men have provided gratuitously the only remedy, viz., prompt medical assistance, which duty, by the law of the land, devolved upon the Guardians of the poor.

"3. The medical men positively deny that the Guardians have provided prompt and efficient measures.

"4. The medical men considered the terms offered by the Guardians unworthy of their acceptance; but would have felt themselves bound to attend the cases on the same terms as in 1849, when the disease, which prevailed to an alarming extent, was met in the most efficient way. They deny that the amount offered can be called a remuneration for the services required, or that it can fairly be compared with any gratuity paid to their own medical officers. In fact, it could only be a proportionate payment in the event of a speedy death.

"5. The medical men can scarcely understand in what way the Guardians assert that the practitioners living out of the town (two in number) have added to 'their honour and reputation' by acceding to the terms offered by the Board, which the Guardians considered 'as a fair and proper remuneration.'

"6. The Guardians have not appointed a superintendent as defined by the order of the General Board of Health, here referred to; and everyone must see that without a staff, the office of superintendent must be one without any duty; and perhaps there is not another Board in the kingdom who have not considered it necessary to advise with the medical men of the locality with whom the superintendent was to act.

"7.

"8. The medical men have anxiously looked for the opinions of the Poor-law Board and the General Board of Health, in the usual channels of information, but have been unable to find any.

"9. Thus, the ratepayers must perceive that the Guardians have not done all in their power. It was not with the medical men a question of £ s. d., whether, or how, they should attend the poor, in case of an outbreak of cholera. On the offer made by the Board being brought before them, no reflection was needed: they at once decided on giving their gratuitous attendance, that the poor might not be without efficient medical aid, in the event of the Guardians rejecting their services. Therefore, so far from being ashamed of their conduct, they feel considerable satisfaction that their exertions have been thankfully received by the poor and appreciated by the public.

"10. The medical men were not consulted by the Board as to how they were 'to deal with the matter,' and therefore had no opportunity of suggesting a remedy—the only one being to supply 'efficient medical aid' which the Guardians did not appear inclined to do; but on this, as on all other occasions, they have dictated their views without asking the advice of the medical men.

"11. The medical men think that the duties of the Guardians

require sacrifice of time, and ought to call forth their best energies; but when it is stated that the Board only met once in fourteen days, while the epidemic was committing its devastating effects in the parish, instead of every week, as was usual during the healthy state of the district, it may be fairly questioned whether time has been sacrificed, or whether 'all their energies' have been called into action. The Guardians have certainly not done their duty; but the medical men have, in some measure, relieved the Board of their serious responsibility, by supplying the poor with attendance and medicine gratuitously, which is the most valuable assistance the Board could have desired, and that, independently of the assistance their own district medical officers rendered, which was to the full extent of human powers of endurance.

"The medical men have been charged with vituperation. As public men, it is their duty publicly to express their opinion on the conduct of a Board constituted for the benefit of the poor. In the former instance, 1849, the medical men readily and zealously performed the duties called for from them, and in the present instance, they have similarly acted without appointment by the Board; but it is a terrible, and a lamentable fact, that during the last two months, and in consequence of the inefficient measures adopted by the Board, paupers, whilst suffering from cholera, have been unable to obtain the assistance of the parochial medical officers, and there is too good reason to fear that increased fatality has been the result. There is necessarily a tendency with the poor to apply to the medical officers appointed by the guardians, because they then obtain nourishment as well as medicine. In this way much valuable time has been lost, it being but too evident that every minute is of importance in a case of cholera."

"Croydon, Nov. 2nd, 1851."

FOR SALE, A GENITO-URINARY PRACTICE.

LETTER FROM WM. BUDD, M.D.

SIR,—This advertisement (cut out of yesterday's *Times*) is such a choice morsel that I must ask you to be kind enough to find room for it.

"TO SURGEONS AND MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS. For sale, a special medical practice (genito-urinary), to be continued under original name, in the city of New York, United States. Has been carried on by the same family for more than twenty years. Is well known all over the United States and West Indies, etc., and has a settled practice yielding a present income of 7,000 dollars per annum. Patients are seen at the office only, none being visited, and strictly in office hours, from 9 to 12 A.M. and 6 to 9 P.M., Sundays excepted, thus affording ample time for healthy exercise and recreation. There will be sold with the practice the copyright of a popular medical work, medical certificates from Edinburgh, London, and Paris, a splendidly furnished office, a large library, and collection of instruments, plates, etc., comprising every requisite for conducting the practice in first-rate style. An active business man could greatly increase the above income. Present proprietor leaves on account of ill health. References in New York: Caspar C. Childs, Esq.; Oliver Hull, wholesale druggist, 145, Maiden Lane. For particular information address Mr. George J. W. Mabey, care of box 869, post-office, New York, United States."

Specimens of the same sort of rascality abound, no doubt, in our own country; but such unblushing effrontery is, I fancy, nowhere to be found out of the United States.

I am, etc.

W. BUDD.

Bristol, November 10th, 1854.

NECESSITY OF A MEDICO-ETHICAL COMMITTEE.

SIR,—You would do good service to the profession by organising an Ethical Committee [There is a Committee in existence. EDITOR.] in connexion with our great Association. Such Committee might be called the Ethical Branch of the Association, and should consist of a goodly number of eminent physicians and surgeons in London and in the provinces. It might hold its meetings monthly in London (and, for this reason, it should consist of a sufficient number of metropolitan practitioners to ensure a good attendance), and one annual meeting in the country, at the place of meeting of the Association. This Committee might establish a code of ethics, which should be generally adapted to British practice. It might, moreover, constitute a Court of Appeal in the many cases of unpleasantness which, unhappily, are too frequent in practice. Its existence