
The London Meeting

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BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION:
SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1873.

SUBSCRIPTIONS to the Association for 1873 became due on January 1st. Members of Branches are requested to pay the same to their respective Secretaries. Members of the Association not belonging to Branches are requested to forward their remittances to Mr. FRANCIS FOWKE, General Secretary, 37, Great Queen Street, London, W.C.

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9TH, 1873.

THE LONDON MEETING.

A LARGE proportion of our readers are as well or perhaps better able to form a judgment and pronounce a verdict on the London meeting as ourselves. Some of its features are indisputable. It is the largest meeting of the members of this Association that has yet been held; nay, it is the largest meeting that, so far as we know, has ever been held of the members of our profession. It has included also a larger and more cosmopolitan representation of all that is eminent in the various branches of Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics, Physiology, and Psychology than has ever been found at any congress, national or international. It has produced, too, a more profound, and, let us hope, a more favourable impression on the public mind of the collective energies, the united character, and the philanthropic objects of the medical profession than any event which has yet occurred in the history of medical associations. During this week, the whole objects of the Association have been very prominently and very earnestly brought under the public eye by men whose personal character and reputation guaranteed the sincerity and the value of their opinions. The leaders of medicine have daily, publicly, and constantly identified themselves in the public eye with the main objects which we seek. This does not, of course, commit them, and is not by any means intended in any way to commit them, to participation in the particular acts or declarations of opinion of majorities of the Association.

In respect to minor matters, it has been made perfectly apparent that the Association is one of great elasticity and breadth, one which affords a common ground for the expression of a great variety of opinions and for the evolution of a great diversity of modes of action. Moreover, in all great associations an unanimity of opinion is neither possible nor entirely desirable, but the course of action is decided by the preponderance of clearly expressed opinion, the well understood condition being that the majority shall not abuse their advantage. What is everywhere understood, then, as the meaning of this great gathering, as the interpretation of this affluence of foreign celebrities, of the cordial public action of men such as Fergusson and Paget, Jenner, Burrows, Curling, Humphry, Denham and Porter of Dublin, Hughes Bennett of Edinburgh, Struthers of Aberdeen, Gairdner and Macleod of Glasgow, Rumsey of Cheltenham, George Hastings, Sibson, Stewart, Quain, Savory, Wilks, Callender, Baker of Birmingham, Southam of Manchester, Waters of Chester, Falconer of Bath? The meaning surely is, that all are prepared to approve the objects of the Association, to unite in furthering those general objects, and to endorse the spirit and the general scope, if not always the minute directions, of the efforts which have been made by all concerned

in the conduct of the Association to carry out the objects of its founders.

The very success of the meeting has been in some sense the cause of observable defects in its conduct. "*Mole ruit sua*" was the criticism of a not unfriendly observer on the first day of the meeting; and indeed, at one moment, this fate seemed almost to threaten. Seven hundred gentlemen only had responded to the urgent and repeated request that everyone who desired to attend the meeting, would fill in and return a printed form of notice supplied through the JOURNAL. On the day prior to the meeting, between the hours of twelve and three, six hundred names had already been entered. Before one o'clock on the first day of the meeting, fifteen hundred members made their appearance, and by six o'clock in the evening, 2,200 names had been registered. It was excessively difficult, and in some instances practically impossible, to expand the arrangements with sufficient rapidity to meet so unprecedented and extraordinary an accession of members. For instance, the Lord Mayor was prepared to receive 1000 visitors, with a proportion of ladies; the total number of visitors who actually attended at the Mansion House was 3,400, of whom 3,000 were members of the Association, and their ladies. The Hall of Lincoln's Inn, which was selected as the most desirable place for the public dinner, will hold 350. There has commonly been a considerable difficulty in making up the members who attend the public dinner to 200, as this is considered as among the most costly, and not always the most attractive of the privileges of the meeting. The announcement, however, that the Premier intended to honour the Association by attending at all costs, and notwithstanding his known physical suffering, attracted upwards of 900 applications for seats. The capabilities of the excursion parties were of course limited. The tent erected at Cliefden will not hold more than 150 persons at dinner; but 500 were anxious to take part in this most attractive excursion. Under these circumstances, it became necessary to adopt some principle of selection; excursions were multiplied in number, sufficient to afford accommodation to all comers; and for the more favoured parties, for which an excess of applications had been received, the principle was laid down of confining the excursions entirely to foreign guests and provincial members, and, after providing for a limited number of those whose long services to the Association, great labours, and personal efforts on the occasion of the various annual visits of the Association required special recognition, a ballot was made for the rest. It is not probable that any arrangements which did not meet the impossible condition of including all applicants should be agreeable to all applicants. The plan, which was actually adopted, was carried out with great care at the cost of immense labour lasting through all night on each of the days of the meeting; and every possible effort was made to mitigate any discomfort and to compensate any disappointments which were inevitable. So much of explanation is due to those who had devoted many weeks of labour to the organisation of this most onerous and laborious meeting, and who have desired to do their utmost in the matter to serve the interests of the whole Association. The liberality of the metropolitan members had provided a fund of £800 to defray the expenses of the meeting; they will, of course, largely exceed this sum, but on this score we feel certain that there will be no difficulty. Private hospitalities have been universal and profuse; nevertheless, it is to be feared that, from the difficulty of marshalling lists so unexpectedly large in their

extent and so rapidly poured in, many have been overlooked whom it would have been a pride and pleasure to entertain.

Of the character of the addresses we need say nothing; for we present all the four orations to-day, and several of the addresses of presidents of sections. Our readers can compare them, and will form their own judgment. Those who attended the meetings have been loud in their expressions of interest and admiration.

The sections have been admirably attended, and the business of the sections has been conducted throughout the meeting with an order, regularity, and success which entitles the officers of sections to our warmest thanks. We shall endeavour to present collective reports in our following issues. We may say, however, that the sections of Obstetrics, of Medicine, and of Public Medicine were marked by papers of singular interest, and that the reception accorded to some distinguished foreign and British speakers was such as we know has produced on them a permanent impression of ineffaceable satisfaction.

It is impossible to accord thanks too earnest and sincere to the Excursion Committee, and especially to its Chairman, Mr. Curling, and its Secretaries, Dr. Edis and Dr. John Murray, for their untiring labours and uniform efforts to meet the enormous pressure upon their time and attention.

The Museum Committee, and chiefly their editor and secretary, Mr. Waren Tay and Mr. Fowke, had a task of which those who have received copies of the catalogue can form some idea. It is a volume of 132 octavo pages, with 136 illustrations, and had to be prepared for the press within four days. Some 800 objects had to be arranged, many of them sent in at the last minute, as such things always are; series of demonstrations had to be provided for, and a labour which might well have been spread over three months was condensed within as many days. The catalogue was largely distributed; it is, of course, a very costly as it is a singularly valuable volume. A number of interesting special demonstrations were made at different hours in the museum and in other parts of the building, of which we shall publish further notices.

The meeting is not yet ended; and, writing during its course, we can but say that, spite of those shortcomings to which we have frankly alluded, and which are, we honestly believe, due to the unprecedented magnitude of the gathering and the suddenness with which this great increase of its size was developed, and spite of any difficulties or shortcomings, it may be considered as one of the most interesting and remarkable events yet recorded in the history of this Association, or indeed of the British medical profession. We trust that we shall next week be able to say that the universal verdict has pronounced it to be on the whole a splendid if not an unalloyed success; and in any case its effects must make themselves felt for a long time to come in the increased power and influence which the Association has gathered through its instrumentality.

THE PROVIDENT MOVEMENT AT MANCHESTER.

THE question of providing for the medical treatment of the artisan class upon the principle of mutual assurance continues to occupy the attention of both the public and the profession in Manchester and Salford, and there can be very little doubt that we shall ere long be furnished with a scheme for carrying out this object on a large scale. A letter from Dr. Reed in the *Manchester Guardian* of July 25th gives us some insight into what took place at the meeting of medical men

which was lately held with closed doors. It appears that, far from being unanimous in condemning the provident system, those who supported Dr. Royle form a minority of the medical profession of Manchester and Salford. There seems to have been a brisk discussion; and though, on the whole, the speakers were favourable to the provident principle, they pointed out with great justice some of the defects in the existing provident dispensaries, and indicated the points which ought to be borne in mind in framing a comprehensive system of provident sick societies. There can be no doubt that there is room for improvement in the management of provident institutions. They are, in truth, in their infancy, and we have yet to learn by experience the best modes of harmonising the requirements of the industrial classes with the legitimate interests of the medical profession. This was pointed out in a recent number of our JOURNAL; and we indicated how far Dr. Royle and those who act with him seem to us to have a reasonable ground of complaint. But, if the Manchester Committee, which is now engaged in reviewing the whole subject, give due weight to these considerations, we can hardly doubt that they will propose a scheme which will be satisfactory alike to the public and to the medical profession.

There is one point which Dr. Royle has urged in which we entirely agree with him; and that is, that the medical charities should make a real inquiry into the circumstances of their patients, so as to prevent the admission of those who are able to pay. Whether provident sick societies are established or not on a large scale, a systematic inquiry as to the social condition of the applicants is necessary on the part of all free hospitals and dispensaries. Without this, it is impossible that they can tell whether they are doing good or harm, or that there can be any remedy to the abuses of which so much complaint is now made. This point is urged in the current number of *Macmillan's Magazine*, in a very able paper on the Use and Abuse of Hospitals by Mr. Fairlie Clarke; and it is shown how such a system of inquiry would work, and what advantages it would carry with it for the sick poor, the charitable public, and the medical profession. If due inquiry were made in all cases, those persons who are able to pay the fees of a general practitioner would no longer be allowed to prey upon the liberality of the charitable, and would be equally excluded from the roll of the provident dispensary; and a large class, who now obtain gratuitous relief, would be obliged to seek advice in the ordinary way, and to pay their medical attendant his justly earned fees.

THE library of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society will be closed for one month, from August 11th to September 10th, both days inclusive.

WE regret to see that the intention is announced of discontinuing the *Madras Monthly Medical Journal*. This excellent monthly has apparently succumbed to the competition of more frequently published papers, such as our able contemporary the *Indian Medical Gazette*.

VENTILATION OF THE INNS OF COURT.

THE frequent complaints of judges, jury, reporters, and public, of the quality of the respirable air in the law courts during the summer months, are not surprising; but it is much to be feared that, until much larger and better constructed courts are available for the purposes of justice, and especially for trying cases which attract a concourse of auditors, it is beyond the resources of science to remedy the evil. We have had more than one opportunity of investigating the modes of ventilation practised in the Westminster court; and it would be difficult to suggest anything more ingenious and complete, or to devise a more intelligent and careful surveillance. The problem, of course, is to change the contained air sufficiently to prevent it from becoming loaded with the products of respiration. It is possible to ventilate adequately the smallest space into which a man can be crammed, by producing sufficiently rapid currents of air; and means are at hand, in some of the courts, for blowing the judge and jury out of their seats, and carrying the wigs and papers of the barristers floating over St. James's Park. But the tolera-