

ON THE MEDICAL SERVICE OF INDIA.

To the Editor of the Oriental Herald.

SIR,—In the hope that the information contained in the accompanying letter, if published in your widely-circulating 'Herald' may be useful to many of my late fellow-students, and others similarly situated, and may excite a more general interest in a not unimportant part of our Indian policy, it is respectfully offered for a place in its pages, by your most obedient servant,

A YOUNG PHYSICIAN.

To A. D., Esq., M. D., &c. &c. &c.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am now to give you, in compliance with your request, what information I can on the medical service of India, drawn chiefly from the experience of twenty-five years' duty in that quarter of the world; and you will not think this information the less to be relied on, from your knowledge that retirement from the service has, some time since, placed me beyond the reach of fears and wishes.

You acquaint me, that, having, at much expense, finished your education on the Continent, and having taken a degree of M. D. in this country, you are desirous to know what prospects the East India Company's service holds out to a medical man, now entering it, with the intention of devoting the useful part of his life to the service, and with the hope, should he survive, of returning, in from twenty to twenty-two years, to his native country, then in his forty-fifth year. The proportion of medical men who retire, to the numbers who enter the service, in the above-stated period, is reckoned about one to thirty-two.* From the suppositions which follow in your letter to me, I observe that you have provided yourself with an 'East India Register,' and that you draw the conclusion from the Company's 'Regulations on the Pay granted to Officers on Retirement,' of a fact that never yet has occurred; namely, that there is a possibility of a medical officer's being able, after seventeen years' actual service in India, to retire on the pay of superintending surgeon, 300*l.* a year, or even that of a member of the Medical Board, 500*l.* a year; and the words of the Regulations certainly warrant such an inference, being as follow:

1. 'A member of the Medical Board, who has been in that situation not less than two years, and not less than twenty years in India, including three years for one furlough, is permitted to retire from the service, and allowed 500*l.* per annum.'

2. 'A surgeon of a General Hospital,' (there has been no such appointment in India for a great many years,) 'or superintending

* Badenach on the Indian Army.

surgeon, who has been in that situation not less than two years, and whose period of service has not been less than twenty years, including three years for one furlough, as above, is permitted to retire from the service, and allowed 300*l.* a year.

On the contrary, you may safely take my word for it, that these grades of retiring pensions, namely, 500*l.* and 300*l.* a year, are not attainable in a shorter period than forty-two and thirty-two years, respectively.

The preference, you inform me, you are advised to give to Bombay, is founded on good grounds, as far as I am informed, this being the least objectionable Presidency for a medical man, because promotion is not quite so tardy there as in the others; the proportion of the highest situation there, namely, that of member of the Medical Board, being as one to forty-one of the total medical establishment; at Madras, as one to seventy; and, in Bengal, as one to one hundred and seventy-five; otherwise, as to badness, they are all, I believe, pretty much upon a level. You may depend upon it, that all the advantages the medical service in India now holds out to those who shall be unfortunate enough to enter it, after from seventeen to thirty years' actual service in that most destructive climate, are described and included in the following Regulation, from the above quoted Register:

'All other surgeons and assistant surgeons, attached to the military, (I never heard of any other,) are permitted to retire from the service on the pay of their rank, after having served in India not less than twenty years, including three years for one furlough; that is, surgeons on the pay of captain, 191*l.* 12*s.*, and assistant surgeons on the pay of lieutenant, 118*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* per annum.

It is here proper, I should tell you, that the period of service of a medical man, in India, before his promotion, in routine to a surgeoncy, is about fourteen years,—during which time he has the pay of lieutenant; from his promotion to a surgeoncy, and for about sixteen years after it, in all, thirty years' service, or, until he shall have attained, what is now considered, the staff-situation of superintending surgeon, he has the pay of captain. I need not trouble you with the amount of this pay, in rupees, or reduce it into English money; let it suffice to assure you, that if ever, as a medical man, you make the experiment, you will find it just sufficient to meet your current expenses in India, and no more.

You ask what are the incidental advantages or allowances attached to the medical branch of the service in India; and I answer, NONE WHATEVER. Certain medical contracts, for medical supplies, from which some advantages, in cantonment at least, were derived; and which were always regarded as something given to the surgeon, in the way of compensation for the expensiveness of his medical education, and the lateness of his arrival in India; these contracts have been abolished in Bengal and Bombay, for several years, and

by the latest accounts, they have been done away with at Madras also, without any consideration, or equivalent, being granted to medical men in lieu of them; but, with the *privilege*, I am informed, of purchasing, and keeping up, at their own proper cost, from their lieutenant's, and captain's pay, all their surgical and midwifery instruments, hitherto supplied to them from the Company's stores, free of expense. This expense, as you know, is very considerable in the first instance, and must continue so in a climate like that of India, where articles, of this sort, so very soon rust and spoil. So that the pay of medical officers is not superior to that of their military brethren, with whom they rank: while their retiring pay, beyond that of captain, falls very far short of that of officers of the same number of years standing in the service.

One very great hardship, medical men labour under in India, is, that belonging, as they do, to the whole army, they are marched about from one regiment to another, often at the remotest distances, not only without reason or advantage, but generally to the great detriment of the service; and apparently for the diversion only of the Adjutant-general's office, and to show its superiority over, and contempt for the Medical Board. The utility of medical men, while thus journeying, many hundred of miles, and crossing each others paths, is wholly sacrificed. They are, however, much harassed in this way; and this is one great cause of the greater mortality among them, than even among their military brethren.

If you have interest at the India House, get a writership if you possibly can. In this case, from the high emoluments of civil appointments in India, you would be able to realize a handsome independency in twenty-two years, have 500*l.* on a three years' furlough to England, should you in the course of your service require a furlough, and the pension of 1000*l.* a year on retirement, after the above period of service, to the amount, of one half of which pension you would have contributed yourself, from a small monthly per centage, out of your salary while in India; the other half being made up by the directors out of the funds of the Company. If 1000*l.* a year, to retire upon, after twenty-two years' service in India, is not more than enough for a civilian of the Company's service, what sum ought to be sufficient for a surgeon to retire upon, after an equal length of service? The directors say 191*l.* 12*s.*

One reason, if I am rightly informed, for this attention to their civil servants, as assigned by the Court, was the loss in India, of twenty-five per cent. on exchange with this country, and the depreciation of the rupee from 2*s.* 3*d.* to 1*s.* 8*d.*; this same rupee, being, nevertheless, immediately ordered by them, to be issued to the military branch of the service at 2*s.* 6*d.*, one third more than its intrinsic value. The loss on exchange might not have been considered as applicable to the Military, at least to by far the

greater proportion of this branch, *as where there is no saving, there can be no remittance.* The directorial patronage of a writership, by the way, is worth about 3000*l.*

But if this appointment of a writership be unattainable by you, by all means lose not a moment in taking orders for a chaplaincy. This is an excellent appointment in India. During your cure of souls in India,—an infinitely better thing than that of the bodies of the Company's lieges, and out of sight, less troublesome, or of scarcely any trouble at all,—you would have to change your station not above once, or twice, during the period of your service, and that to your advantage. In regard to the labour of converting the heathen, you would make no more Christians than you happened to beget,—have major's pay, from the moment you entered the service,—a good roof always over your head,—with a due share, of course, of surplice, burial, and other fees; and, to crown the whole, 365*l.* a-year, on retirement, after fifteen years' service in India; being just double the pay allowed to a surgeon who may have served twice the time, as by the before quoted Register:

'A chaplain, after eighteen years' service in India, including three years for one furlough, is allowed to retire on the pay of lieutenant-colonel, 365*l.* per annum; after ten years, if compelled by ill health to quit the service, on the half-pay of lieutenant-colonel, 200*l.* 15*s.* per annum; after seven years, on the half-pay of major, 173*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.*'

I beg of you to contrast this with the provision made for a surgeon, and you will want no other dissuasive against entering this service: 'A surgeon, after twenty years' service in India, [and he is no better provided for after thirty years,] including three years for one furlough, is allowed to retire on the pay of captain, 191*l.* 12*s.* a-year; after ten years, if compelled by ill health to quit the service, on the half-pay of lieutenant, 73*l.* a-year; and, after seven years, on the half-pay of ensign, 54*l.* 15*s.* a-year.'

Waste no more of your time, therefore, or of your money, on medical studies; but, sinking your doctor's degree, throw physic to the dogs, and, in preference to an assistant-surgeoncy, if not past the proper age, take a caletship. This is worth about 500*l.* During your service in India as lieutenant and captain, as to pay, you would be on a par with assistant-surgeon and surgeon. As major, you pass the surgeon; and having served twenty-two years, you may retire the day after your promotion, on 292*l.* a-year; as lieutenant-colonel, in succession, on 365*l.*, (your surgeon contemporaries being still surgeons;) and, finally, as colonel, with off-reckonings, from 1000*l.* to 1200*l.* a-year.

The fate of a surgeon in India is, fourteen years' service, on lieutenant's pay, and sixteen on that of captain's; thirty-two years' service to enable him to reach superintending surgeon's pension, 300*l.* a year; and forty-two years to bring him to that of the Board,

500*l.* a year; medical officers being compelled to serve two years in these situations, whatever their previous length of service may have been, to entitle them to retire on the pensions attached to these offices; a hardship, and most illiberal piece of injustice, inflicted on no other commissioned officer in the Honourable East India Company's service. But as these appointments are not attainable in less than thirty or forty years, to all of shorter service they might as well not exist.

To conclude, as you are fond of your profession, and may wish to remain in it, it might be most advisable for you, in these times of peace, to remain at home; and now that the Royal College (most absurd and illiberal) monopoly is at an end, you might practice, with good success, as an independent physician in the metropolis, provided you be content with moderate fees. You would be unfortunate indeed, if you did not more than double, in the first year, the Company's ultimate recompense of twenty and thirty years' service, and you would have a still better prospect of success, as a general practitioner, a degree being no more an obstacle to practising as such, in civil life than it is in the navy and army; but, if, after all, you are still unhappily bent on going out to India, in the medical service of the Company, and live in the manner and at the expense you can hardly avoid there, you may return to England, after from seventeen to thirty years service in India, with broken health, both of body and mind, to enjoy the Honourable Company's recompence for your services, of 19*l.* 12*s.* a year; a sum, after the habits you will have acquired, scarcely proper and sufficient to find you a respectable lodging, leaving the trifling *et cetera* of meat, clothes, and fire, wholly unprovided for. Heartily wishing you a better fate, I remain, my dear Sir, your's faithfully,

A RETIRED SURGEON.

PERPUSTAKAAN NASIONAL RI
 To WILLIAM MAXFIELD, Esq., PROPRIETOR OF EAST INDIA
 STOCK, LONDON.

SIR,—Having perused, in the 'Oriental Herald' of April last, the debates that took place at the East India House, in Leadenhall Street, at a Court of Proprietors, on the 16th of March, 1827, respecting the Bombay Marine, I was much gratified to perceive the able, disinterested, and honourable manner, in which you brought to its notice the sufferings of a corps we had toiled in together for several years; and, although you were far my junior in the service at that period, believe me I now rejoice at seeing you elevated to one of the highest seats in the Court of Proprietors, supported by four stars, and endowed with wisdom, and an anxious desire to see justice done to all parties, however remote.

And as the honourable Chairman seemed disinclined to admit the

correctness of the observations you made on the conduct of the Superintendent, who has gone to another world, to render an account of all his deeds, and whom, it appears, the honourable Chairman had been instrumental in getting appointed to preside over the Bombay Marine,—it may not be improper here to mention that the officers of the corps, and myself in particular, were witnesses to unbecoming behaviour, more than you have charged him with in that debate; and I sincerely hope that the wisdom and justice of the Honourable the Court of Directors, will never again permit them to yield assent to such appointments.

Dispersed as our corps is at present, allow me, Sir, to tender you my individual thanks for your generous and friendly exertions on behalf of the Bombay Marine, a service that I trust will never be surpassed in meriting honour and applause, whenever and wheresoever it may have the means to obtain it.

Believe me, Sir, to remain with sincere respect and esteem, your obliged and obedient servant,

A BOMBAY MARINE OFFICER

of Forty-four years standing.

East Indies, Oct. 1, 1827.

P. S. The circumstance you allude to in the debate, (page 153 of the 'Oriental Herald' for April, 1827,) respecting the 'Hastings' frigate, and Eranad timber or store-ship was, I believe, the act of the Marine Board at Calcutta.

SONNET.*

Suggested by the unexpected Death of a beloved Brother.

Ourspring of life! How sweet, how passing sweet,
 Together did we spend that season dear,
 My brother! And since, for many a year,
 How seldom hath it been our chance to meet!
 And now hath Death, insatiable and fleet,
 Thy course arresting in its bright career,
 Placed thee, lamented, on a timeless bier,
 And seal'd our parting in this world complete!
 Yet shall we meet again, I fondly trust,
 Where pain and grief shall know no second birth,
 To hail that greater spring which waits the just,
 Mid friends beloved on this dim speck of earth,
 And where, near streams that vital freshness give,
 The pure in heart shall see their God and live!

* From Dr. Drake's 'Mornings in Spring.'