assumed against any movement supposed to be inimical to our interests. This attitude is greatly to be deplored, because it is quite unnecessary. There is no movement which may appear likely to injure us that will not injure the public far more; and although the public are proverbially dull concerning technical matters, especially medical technical matters, I believe that with due patience it would be always possible to show them that what might seem on the surface only intended in our defence was essentially in their defence. By so doing our profession, instead of appearing in the guise of mere trade-unionism, would assume its true character as the guardian of the public welfare.

I have based the plea for the highest motives in our work on the grounds of our personal and professional dignity; but it stands on a wider basis. As citizens of a great empire, as citizens of the world, our interests pass far beyond ourselves.

Thoughtful, educated men, with exceptional admission behind the scenes of life, we are well aware of how much there is that is utterly wrong going on around us. The general diffusion of the spirit of evil trade has already been mentioned. Most well-to-do people might be classed either as idlers, devoid of any sense of duty to be done, leading useless or mischievous lives, preying on others; or as workers whose whole energies are directed to self-aggrandizement. All thoughtful writers have denounced the state of things. The one profession, whose immediate business it is to directly oppose it, has almost altogether missed the mark; but two professions make an indirect silent protest against it. We have not forgotten the remarkable degree to which the nation was taken out of itself, and awakened to a sense of nobler and better things by the heroism of our soldiers during the earlier episodes of the late war. If the soldier with his, happily rare, opportunities in war, could do so much, we, by an everyday fidelity to high principles, could do more. We stand so much apart from, and opposed to, what is condemnable outside us. We have no trade secrets, we do not patent our inventions; each one of us contributes his discoveries and experiences for the common good, and the spirit of our work is service and kindness. Being so favourably placed, ought we not to pride ourselves on so ordering our lives that they may be a tacit reproach to the cynical selfishness around us, and may we not rightly regard it as the greatest glory of our profession, that in a time of so much prevalent evil, it holds on its way, quietly and steadfastly, a power making for righteousness?

EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH.

THE WORK OF A LOCAL MEDICAL SOCIETY.

By WILLIAM E. WYLLYS, L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S. EDIN.,
President of the Branch.

[In some brief introductory remarks Mr. Wyllys acknowledged the honour conferred on him by his election as President of the Branch, and explained why he had thought the occasion a suitable one for the subject of his address, and proceeded as follows.]

The immediate cause of the formation of the Yarmouth Practitioners' Association was the necessity of dealing with that terrible bugbear of the profession—contract medical practice. It was becoming abundantly clear that without organized combination we as a profession were perfectly helpless in the hands of large and powerful bodies of the public, who had made combination subservient to their ends, and against which individual effort had proved altogether ineffectual.

The larger Friendly Societies, here as elsewhere, had gradually assumed a dictatorial and aggressive attitude towards those practitioners holding their appointments, and, having already from time to time added to the work and worry already inadequately remunerated under the old régime, now sought to make matters still worse by insisting on including in the duties of the club doctor the attendance, at altogether inadequate rates of payment, on the wives and families of the members. Failing the acceptance of this scheme by the club surgeons, they were threatened with dismissal from their posts, in several instances after twenty or twenty-five years' service; and a medical institute was to be

formed, officered by medical men imported by and restricted to the service of the Amalgamated Friendly Societies.

Recognizing the feebleness of the individual, and the advantages of combination in dealing with such a crisis as this, early in 1896 a meeting of the profession was called by several representative practitioners, which was so well responded to that almost every doctor practising in the borough attended. Just at this time the Incorporated Medical Practitioners' Association had issued to the profession at large a circular letter, calling attention to the advantages of such a union as we were already contemplating, though in some difficulty how best to achieve, and the movement thus originated resulted in the establishment of the Great Yarmouth District Committee, the name which our local society was now to bear, and which commenced by enrolling, with one exception, every practitioner in Great Yarmouth. Our first president was the late Mr. T. H. Moxon, a man of high standing and great personal influence and popularity with his *confrères*, who, entering into the movement *con amore*, and bringing to bear his experience, tact, and judgement, and a large capacity for work, contributed very largely to the successful establishment of the Society.

As I have said, the threatened rupture with the Friendly Societies was the proximate cause of our local organization, and the consideration of this subject became the first important business which the newly-formed Union was called upon to transact. In pursuance of this a circular letter was addressed by the District Committee to all the benefit societies operating in the borough, courteously pointing out the many grievances under which club surgeons were labouring, such as the introduction of juvenile members, of medical aid societies for wives and girls, and the growing practice of the admission to medical benefit of men and women in good social and financial positions, many of whom avowedly joined for the sole purpose of obtaining the services of the medical officer at the low rate of payment which he accepts from the working classes. Our Committee then drew up a code of terms at which it was agreed to attend club members in the future, and which thus dealt with the vexed question of a "wage limit."

The surgeon to be free to use his discretion as to the admission to medical benefit of any candidate or member whose means are obviously ample enough to enable him to pay with ease ordinary medical charges.

These proposed terms were accompanied by a courteous letter requesting a conference of delegates, chosen by the members of the Friendly Societies, with the medical men of the borough, and expressing the hope that the whole question might be discussed in a friendly and business-like manner. In reply to these polite overtures on the part of the doctors the clubs assumed an aggressive and dictatorial tone—refused to entertain the proposals made, and entirely ignored the invitation to meet the medical men in conference to endeavour amicably to adjust differences. The business was finally settled on the reception by the doctors of a copy of a resolution by the clubs, dated October 24th, 1896, which ran as follows:

Resolved, that this representative meeting of delegates from all the Friendly Societies in the Borough of Gt. Yarmouth request the doctors to withdraw their proposed alterations as set forth in the circular, and retain their position as medical officers on the old terms (for both adult and juvenile members) with a pledge that no alteration takes place in the future, and that the female societies be taken on the same terms as male societies!

I quote this resolution verbatim as an interesting example of the bombastic bumptiousness of the amalgamated delegates, and as affording a side-light on the attitude of the Friendly Societies towards the medical profession at that time, and the impracticability of arriving at any satisfactory conclusion with them.

The Yarmouth clubs now dismissed their medical officers and devoted themselves to the formation of the medical institute. Had our profession been united this institute would never have been established, for no qualified men would have been found willing to lend themselves to such a scheme, and to assist in defeating their medical brethren in a matter involving the vital interests of the profession; but in its inorganized and feeble condition, men were without much apparent difficulty procured for the posts of institute medical officers.

In accepting these appointments they were knowingly

cutting themselves off from all intercourse with their professional neighbours, and it is not surprising that in January, 1897, a resolution was agreed to by the District Committee:

That this District Committee of the I. M. P. A. holds that those medical men who accept the posts of surgeons to the Gt. Yarmouth Friendly Societies' Institute (considering the circumstances under which it was established) are acting in contravention of the rules and ethics of the profession, and therefore no member can meet such surgeons in consultation, or hold any professional intercourse with them.....

This resolution has been strictly adhered to with the one exception of urgency. In cases of real urgency the members of our Society meet the institute surgeons in consultation, but no fee is accepted, and the circumstance is at once reported to our Secretary in writing, and the facts brought before the next ordinary meeting, and entered in the minutes.

Judging from the number of medical officers who have come and gone since its commencement, the institute service has not proved an unmixed delight to those gentlemen who sacrificed their professional prestige to accept the proffered posts! The senior surgeon, however, retained office till the beginning of the present year, when owing, I believe, to an innovation of management involving a decrease of salary, this veteran at length tendered his resignation, and, taking with him one of the institute clubs, commenced practice in the borough. One other club has also since seceded, and returned to its old medical adviser; and one not infrequently hears rumours of others desirous of adopting the same course.

In December, 1896, a subcommittee was appointed to consider the question of the establishment of a provident dispensary. This Committee, having gone thoroughly into the question, ultimately reported that in their opinion it was inexpedient at that time to proceed to the formation of a provident dispensary, and the matter was therefore postponed for future consideration. Later on the Committee drafted a pooling scheme, called the "Friendly Societies Medical Service," which embodies several novel features in respect to contract work, and is designed to meet the requirements of clubs finding it impracticable to remain connected with the institute. The main features in the new scheme are: (1) Instead of individual surgeons holding club appointments, and every member of a club being obliged to be attended by the one club surgeon, each patient shall have the right to choose his doctor from amongst the members of the Association. (2) The entire management of the service would be in the hands of the staff and a paid secretary whom they would appoint. The contributions of members would be 5s. per annum for each adult, and 4s. per annum for each juvenile, to be paid quarterly in advance by the secretaries of clubs to the secretary of the service.

It would be open for any member to change his doctor on giving due notice to that effect, and each surgeon would have a right to decline to take on his list any member whom he preferred not to attend. This scheme in the meantime remains in abeyance, but, so far as our Society is concerned, is ripe for discussion in a conference between the representatives of the Friendly Societies and the medical men if, and as soon as, any overtures in this direction may be received from that section of the public.

In February, 1897, a Committee was appointed to consider the whole question of the Midwives Registration Bill and to report to the Society. In the following month this Committee furnished a report embodying various amendments, which after discussion were approved by the Society, and were forwarded to the members of Parliament representing the district, and both of them expressed their readiness to support these recommendations in the House.

In February, 1898, the Association addressed a memorial to the Town Council, drawing attention to the urgent need of a public mortuary, the want of which had been especially felt by us when called upon to make necropsies in cottages and other places devoid of all suitable accommodation. This memorial was favourably entertained, and a central and convenient public mortuary was in due course erected, where not only can necropsies be carried out with efficiency, decency, and comfort, but where bodies can remain while awaiting identification or coroner's inquests.

Overtures having been received by some of our members to induce them to accept office with the "National Deposit Friendly Society" the matter was brought up for discussion, when it was resolved:

That in the opinion of this Society the rules of the National Deposit Friendly Society as they stand would tend to lower the status and fees of medical practitioners, and therefore it is not desirable that the medical profession should formally recognize this Friendly Society unless rules are added providing some guarantee in the nature of a wage limit, with power to the medical officers in each district to enforce the same, and it was therefore agreed that it would be contrary to the rules of our District Committee for any member to act as medical officer to this Society so long as it had no proper wage limit. As a result the National Deposit Friendly Society has failed to obtain a footing in this borough.

The District Committee next turned its attention to the question of Medical Aid Societies, with special regard to the pernicious system of indiscriminate canvassing inseparable from the methods by which these societies are worked. In furtherance of this object the Yarmouth practitioners addressed a memorial to all the licensing bodies of the United Kingdom setting forth the abuses which had grown up in connexion with the systems of medical aid, especially by certain Industrial Life Assurance Companies and other lay associations. The principal abuses referred to were thus summarized:

(a) The admission of persons not needing such assistance to medical benefits intended primarily for the relief of the poorer classes.

(b) The admission of women and children to these benefits at entirely inadequate rates of payment for the medical officer.

(c) Specially in the case of industrial assurance and similar societies a system of indiscriminate canvassing, whereby the private patients of other medical men are solicited—directly for the company, indirectly for its medical officer.

(d) The conduct of medical practice by lay organizations purely as a commercial speculation, this being most flagrant where, as in some cases, the medical officer receives a fixed salary; and beyond this amount the fees accruing from his work are appropriated as the profits of his non-medical employers.

The memorial proceeded to recite how one of our members who had previously held such an appointment had resigned it; but in the absence of any declaration as to these appointments by the General Medical Council, or by the bodies granting medical qualifications, the Company readily found and appointed a substitute and so defeated the efforts of the memorialists to remedy this abuse. The memorial further submitted that canvassing by lay bodies on behalf of medical men employed by them was contrary to the first principles underlying proper professional relations, and that appointments depending on such canvassing out not to be permitted to be held by registered medical practitioners.

The memorial concluded by submitting the following questions to the consideration of the licensing bodies:

(a) Is the holding of appointments such as are herein described compatible with the conditions under which your degree or diploma is granted and held?

(b) If the holding of such appointments by your graduates or diplomates does not contravene the existing regulations, does not your Council consider that in the interests of the medical profession and of the public by-laws forbidding such practice should be adopted?

(c) Is not your Senate or Council of opinion that for a medical man to hold such appointments should be declared by the General Medical Council to be conduct "infamous in a professional respect," and if so will your Council instruct its representative on the General Medical Council to support such a declaration?

A copy of this memorial was also sent to every local Medical Society in the kingdom that we were able to discover, with a letter expressing the hope that each local Society might see the desirability of co-operation and the adoption of measures calculated to bring the abuses complained of forcibly to the notice of the licensing and governing bodies. A copy was also forwarded to the editors of the leading medical journals for publication.

In November, 1897, a member of our Association attended a meeting of the Society of Members of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and spoke in support of a resolution in re Medical Aid Associations, and later on two other of our members attended before the Committee of the General Medical Council for conference with representatives of the Friendly Societies, and in conjunction with two of our Norwich confrères gave evidence in respect of the working of Medical Aid Associations in Norwich and Great Yarmouth.

In 1899 the one outstanding member of the profession in private practice here resigned all his medical aid appointments, and having given up his private medical club, ultimately joined our Society, and from that time it has included all the private practitioners in Great Yarmouth.

In connexion with the canvassing question the subject of private medical clubs occupied the attention of the Society. These organizations were criticized as being undignified

and undesirable, likely to cause friction in relation to the patients of family attendants and to foster a system of canvassing, without which in some form or another, clubs of this kind cannot exist, and it was agreed that no member of our Association should in future form or carry on a private medical club.

In response to an invitation from the Manchester Conference on Medical Organization a delegate was appointed to represent the Yarmouth Society. This conference sat for three days, and our delegate (Mr. Whitaker) took an active part in the discussions, proposed and carried several important motions and amendments, and was elected a member of the Provisional Committee. Mr. Whitaker's attendance at this conference was followed by his election to the Constitution Committee of the British Medical Association; we all know (especially those of us who attended the extraordinary meeting of the Association at Exeter Hall in June) how well he has done his part as a member of the Constitution Committee.

In February, 1900, the Society turned its attention to the Liverpool Victoria Legal Friendly Society, which in conjunction with the National Medical Aid Company had imported a medical man in the place of their late surgeon, who, as I previously mentioned, had resigned his medical aid appointments and joined our Association. We resolved to take immediate steps to gather such evidence as was possible in the matter of the medical officership of the Liverpool Victoria Society, and if evidence of canvassing could be established, that the conduct of the medical officer should be laid before the General Medical Council, as being the only course open to us to put a stop, once and for all, to the system of touting and advertising by which these and kindred societies maintained their existence.

I will not weary you by dwelling at any length on this case which is fresh in the memory of us all—suffice it to say that, having obtained the valuable assistance of the Medical Defence Union, we went to work, and with infinite pains and trouble were at length able to procure undoubted evidence of canvassing on the part of the touts in the employ of the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society. Statutory declarations were obtained substantiating the charges made, and we anticipated that the case would come before the General Medical Council in May, 1901. However, from some unexplained cause and to our infinite disappointment the hearing was postponed till the following November. In that month the case came on for hearing. Two of our members attended to give evidence in support of their statutory declarations or to submit themselves to cross-examination in the box if called on to do so. The insurance societies had secured the services of eminent counsel, Mr. Lawson Walton, K.C., M.P., and Mr. Charles Mathews, while we were represented by Dr. Bateman, the Secretary of the Medical Defence Union. The case, which was most admirably conducted by Dr. Bateman, occupied the whole of one day and half of the next and, as you know, terminated entirely in our favour.

In delivering the verdict of the Council the President remarked that they had deliberated very carefully on the defendant's case, and had come to the conclusion that the facts alleged against him had been proved to the satisfaction of the Council. The Council felt it their duty to express their sense of the gravity of the facts which had been proved against him; but, in order to give defendant an opportunity of reconsidering his position, the further consideration of the charge was postponed till the following session, when he would have to appear and satisfy the Council of his conduct in the interval.

Accordingly, in May last, the defendant again appeared before the General Medical Council, when he informed them that his connexion with the Society had been entirely and completely severed since Lady Day last, and he expressed his regret, and promised that in future he would have no connexion in any way whatever with Medical Aid Societies. Under these circumstances the Council decided to proceed no further with the charge proved against him. The BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of June 7th, commenting on this case, remarks:

The action taken in November has had the desired result, not only in this particular instance, but in many other parts of the country. The Council is to be very much congratulated upon the strong stand which it made in this test case; and it is to be hoped that the full significance of

the course it has taken will be appreciated by the members of the medical profession, and also by the Medical Aid Societies.

The full import of this award becomes the more apparent when it is remembered that the General Medical Council had (and has) no power to issue an edict that those holding medical aid appointments will be held guilty of unprofessional conduct; and it was only by adjudicating upon a case brought up for decision, and so establishing a precedent, that the penalizing powers of the Council could be brought into play.

As a result of the Yarmouth case a precedent has been established, and a fatal blow administered to those Medical Aid Societies which owe their existence to a system of touting and canvassing; for medical men will now know what to expect from the General Medical Council, and will carefully abstain in the future from associating themselves with these organizations, which as a consequence will die out.

On the other hand had the case broken down the precedent would have remained with our adversaries, and years might have passed ere a favourable decision could have been obtained. The action of the District Committee in bringing this case forward has, as might be supposed, been made the subject of much adverse criticism, especially by the lay press. We were not, however, in the least disconcerted by these fulminations, or deterred from steadily pursuing the work we had taken in hand, and it is therefore with considerable satisfaction that we have perused the leading article on the Yarmouth case in the *Lancet* of June 14th, in which the line of action of the Yarmouth District Committee has been described as:

from the outset an example of proper professional conduct..... There has been shown no animus, no malice against one who was acting contrary to the well-declared feelings of his fellows, and at the same time a firm determination has been plainly evinced that respect would be exacted for the rights and dignity of the profession..... If medical men in all districts would but see as clearly as their Yarmouth fellows have done the issues that are really raised in such cases as this, and would combine in the same way against them, many of the hardships which are complained of in private practice would soon melt away.

And why do not medical men combine? There is nothing derogatory, nothing sordid, nothing selfish in a professional combination. That which is good for the medical profession is good for the public also. Then what is the reason that nothing is done? It is because of the lack of interest in the higher walks of the profession, and the apathy and want of energy in the rank and file.

The consultant, secure in his position, thinks that these matters concern him not, forgetting that whatever lowers the status, dignity, and independence of the main body of the profession affects his own position in corresponding degree; while the general practitioner, though face to face with the many evils and abuses which assail him, is too apt to overrate the difficulty of effecting a union with his brother sufferers, and to underrate the power of such combination if achieved; and so he toils and grumbles on and nothing comes of it. Gentlemen, I have demonstrated to you the fact that all the practitioners in a given district can combine and organize a society for mutual assistance and protection. That such a combination can be effective for the purposes for which it has been formed, and can operate both in the interests of the profession and of the public, and that if we will but take the initiative and act and legislate for ourselves, we shall receive the support and assistance of our governing body, the General Medical Council. Gentlemen, the time has arrived when something decisive must be done if the hitherto honourable calling of medicine is to continue to sustain its dignity, influence, and independence, and to attract to its ranks men of culture and position, and I have no hesitation in saying that that something is organized combination and union.

EAST YORKS AND NORTH LINCOLN BRANCH.

THE ETIOLOGY OF CANCER.

By ALEX. THEODORE BRAND, V.D., M.D., C.M.,
President of the Branch; and Medical Officer, Driffield Cottage Hospital.

[ABSTRACT.]

DR. BRAND, after observing that so far the search for the cause of cancer had been unsuccessful, and that no reliable empiric remedy for it had been discovered, said that a mental attitude of the most profound pessimism had been engendered in the