PAROCHIAL MEDICAL RELIEF.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—In March, 1842, I addressed a letter to the surgeons of the London unions, who had called on me as the then President, and on the Vice-presidents of the Royal College of Surgeons, stating my views respecting the medical order of the poor-law commissioners of the 12th of that month, regulating the payments to be made to the medical officers of unions for *extraordinary* services, which letter you were pleased to publish. You also thought it right to make known a second letter I addressed to the same gentlemen on the subject of an arrangement I hoped I had made with the Secretary of State and the poor-law commissioners, with respect to certain fixed payments for the ordinary services of the medical officers of unions, and which I was led to apprehend would have formed a part of the amended bill about to be laid before Parliament.

The difficulties and alarm under which the country, and particularly the agricultural part of it, have been for some time laboring, will, I fear, prevent the accomplishment of this object, which is so much desired by the members of the medical profession, unless the sense of the House of Commons should be strongly expressed upon it. In order to obtain this it is necessary that a clear and accurate statement of the sufferings of the sick poor should be laid before it, and of the grievances which medical men sustain under the authority (but I am firmly convinced against the wishes) of the poor-law commissioners, which prevent their being able to give these unhappy persons that assistance which their state demands and deserves at the hands of their more fortunate neighbours.

Colonel Wood (Middlesex) has moved for such returns (and will move for more if necessary) as will enable him to bring this matter under the consideration of the House of Commons as soon as the amended bill shall be presented. To enable him to do this effectually, a statement must be furnished to him of all the sufferings and grievances above alluded to, and if the members of the medical profession who have suffered, and are suffering, or are aggrieved, shall be pleased to address their statements to me, I will prepare such digest of them as will enable him and the House of Commons to understand this subject.

I shall be careful, in attending to the different facts confided to me, not to mention either names or places, and those who may think fit to send them may rely on my discretion.

I shall be obliged by your giving insertion to this letter, and have the honor to be, Gentlemen,

Your very obedient Servant,

G. J. GUTHRIE.

4, Berkeley-street, Berkeley-square,

April 11, 1843.

APPOINTMENT OF CERTIFYING SURGEONS UNDER THE NEW FACTORY BILL.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—I beg, through the medium of your Journal, to call the attention of those interested in the regulation of factories, and more especially of my professional brethren, to the clauses in the new bill

relating to the appointment of *certifying surgeons*, as those clauses give great additional powers to the inspectors, as well as a large amount of patronage. And as this authority and patronage may be exercised in a manner alike prejudicial to the legitimate rights of the millowners and the just claims of the medical profession in all manufacturing towns and districts, I hope they will agree with me that it is desirable and necessary to protest against such clauses becoming the law of the land, and be determined, whilst the opportunity is now afforded by the delay in the progress of the bill through Parliament, to use their influence and exert themselves to the utmost to oppose this scheme of the interested and already too powerful inspectors, who would fain not only receive good pay for their services, but unreasonably endeavour to deprive medical men of their just rights and privileges. The introduction of these clauses is said to be founded on a report of the committee of the House of Commons, alleging, on the strength of certain one-sided evidence, given principally by inspectors and sub-inspectors themselves, that the great difficulty with regard to factory legislation "is," to quote the words of the report, "that presented by the intricacies in the way of ascertaining correctly the ages of children;" and which difficulty is increased, "first, from the ignorance of some who set up for surgical practitioners; and, secondly, the dishonesty or negligence of others (a very nice character to be given to us); and, thirdly, from the defective state of science itself in this particular. Therefore, your committee recommend that larger powers in this respect by statute be confided to those officers whose duty it is to watch over the operation of the law to regulate mills and factories. And they recommend that medical certificates should be granted only by surgeons especially appointed for that purpose by the inspector of the district."

On this report, then, I take it for granted the new bill is founded; indeed, Sir James Graham states such to be the case, and though it is said in that report "that only one witness objected to such a proposition," it by no means follows that the proper parties to be called as witnesses in such a matter would not have done so had the opportunity been afforded them; but it did not serve the object of the inspectors to allow medical men the opportunity of stating their own case, but all was done through the medium of the interested few, under the control of the inspectors, who were anxious, as much as possible, to keep the power in their own immaculate hands. And thus, from the stated ignorance or carelessness of a few, the whole profession is to be made to suffer.

It may be asked, what other method or system have you to propose? My answer is a simple one. To continue the power of *nominating* the certifying surgeons to the millowners as at present, as they have generally the expense to bear, and that those nominations should be laid before the magistrates in quarter sessions for confirmation, at the same time giving the inspector due notice of the nomination, so that if he had any valid objection to the individual named by the millowners, he could have the opportunity of stating them to the magistrates. It surely cannot be denied that the magistrates are more likely to act judiciously and much more impartially in making such appointments than the inspector, a comparative