

Disease and Suffering Unrelieved, The Bath Board of Guardians



Henry Harding, a lad of sixteen years of age, had been for upwards of two years an inmate of the Bath Union, suffering from diseased foot, and having come home to Codford St. Peter, in the Warminster Union, to stay with his mother and try the effect of change of air, he became so much worse that he was sent as a patient to the Salisbury Infirmary, where his leg was amputated by Mr Coates. As soon as he was well enough to be removed, he was sent home, it being considered that the fresh air of the country would be much better for him than the confinement of an hospital. At the same time, however, Mr Coates wrote a letter to Mr Ravenhill, the chairman of the Warminster Board of Guardians, requesting that gentleman to obtain for the suffering lad a "generous diet – i.e., meat daily with milk morning and evening, and porter at dinner." "It would, perhaps," said he, "save him from a further manifestation of his disease (acrofula)." An application relative to the boy was accordingly made by the Warminster Board to the Bath Board, who in reply admitted that the pauper was chargeable to them, and expressed their willingness to receive him as their pauper without the expense of an order. As this did not meet the real necessity of the case an application was again made by the Warminster Board, with what success will be seen from the following correspondence: -

RE HENRY HARDING

Warminster, Dec. 23.

This pauper has had his leg taken off whilst an inmate of the Salisbury Infirmary, and at his most earnest entreaty he has for the present been made an out-patient thereof, and is living with his mother at Codford St. Peter, in this Union. The Surgeon reports that the pauper should be provided with generous diet – i.e., meat daily with milk morning and evening, and porter at dinner, which would, perhaps, save him from a further manifestation of his disease. I am therefore requested to bring the case *again* under the notice of the Guardians of the Bath Union, in the hope that they may be induced to consent to repay the relief which the Guardians of this Union may grant to the pauper whilst under their care. The Guardians feel that if they are compelled to take the pauper (during his precarious and severe illness) away from his mother's care and attention, and to remove him to the Bath Workhouse, it is dealing with the case in too harsh and strong a manner and opposed to the principles which should actuate Boards of Guardians in the administration of such law, and they trust to hear favourably from your Board in this matter.

Signed JAMES MERRICK

Clerk to the Board of Guardians

Of the Warminster Union.

H. P. Hulbert, esq.,
Clerk to the Board of Guardians
Of the Bath Union.

Bath Union
Poor Law Union Office, Abbey-street,
January 1st, 1857

Dear Sir,- The Guardians have had under consideration your letter of the 23rd ult. relative to the case of Henry Harding, and they decline to make it an exception to our established rule of confining out-relief to paupers resident within the Union

Yours faithfully,

H. P. HULBERT

James Merrick, esq., Clerk to the Warminster Union.

THEY DECLINE TO MAKE IT AN EXCEPTION! Just so.-

Henry Harding had no business to find the Wiltshire air agree better with him than that to be found within the jurisdiction of the Bath Union. Perhaps the poor boy ought not to have been a scrofulous subject; but there – he is, and is foolish enough to thrive better under a mother's nursing and attention than even with the gentle and tender nurture and more than maternal vigilance of the Bath Guardians. A "generous diet" on the Wiltshire hills is no dare for a pauper – sick and weak though he be. He "cannot be made an exception;" as if, poor boy, a pauper in need of generous diet was not altogether an exceptional case.- Ah! if he would only enter the Bath Union Workhouse perhaps he would be allowed an opportunity of lightening his sorrows and enlightening his mind by a sight of a gorgeous spectacle of the Oxy-hydrogen Microscope and the Magic Lantern, which are to be substitute for the dangerous seductions of a Christmas Pantomime.

To close my story. The boy has not been returned to the Bath Union, but remains still with his mother subsisting on what the Warminster Board allows him, and on that kindly and extra-parochial aid which his sad story has drawn for him, and comforted with that mother's sympathy and solicitude of which even the jealous and loving guardianship of the Bath Union Board has not made him forgetful.

A GUARDIAN OF THE WARMINSTER UNION.

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