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The shortage of medical practitioners in one area of rural Norfolk did produce instances of medical neglect by a poor law doctor. Negligence occurred because he held appointments in more than one poor law union, and did not make arrangements for a deputy to act in his absence. Dr R.J. Tunaley began his poor law career in the Depwade Union and complaints of his neglect of pauper patients in 1839 occurred shortly after his appointment. Probably as a result of these allegations he switched to the Henstead Union, where he held an appointment as a poor law medical officer until his resignation in 1855. His career there was marked by continuous complaints. For example, in May 1843 he received an order for immediate attendance on a sick woman. He did not visit her and the woman died. Henstead guardians said that they had every confidence in Tunaley, and so the Poor Law Commission did not dismiss him, as they wished to do. While holding the Henstead appointment, Tunaley also obtained a medical district in the Forehoe Incorporation. In 1846, a Wymondham citizen wrote to the Poor Law Commission alleging that Tunaley did not visit pauper patients in spite of their possession of medical orders from the relieving officer. As a result, three people had died and one had gone blind. The Forehoe guardians cleared Tunaley but the Poor Law Commission maintained that the evidence suggested that he had been guilty of gross neglect. The Poor Law Commission deferred to the wishes of the local guardians and did not dismiss Tunaley, although it required him to appoint a substitute to act in his absence. Further cases of negligence occurred in 1848-9, in which a child died and needless suffering was caused to other outdoor paupers. This time it was the Forehoe guardians who demanded that he appoint an assistant (the previous arrangements for a substitute having apparently lapsed), and they also objected to Tunaley's practice of making his pauper patients visit him in his surgery. Tunaley managed to get away with his medical negligence because, on the one hand, he was one of the few surgeons in the Wymondham area whom the Forehoe and Henstead guardians could have employed, and on the other hand he was an influential man who was also the surgeon to the local Bridewell, and registrar for the Wymondham District. Tunaley did not confine his neglect only to pauper patients; he had an action brought against him at Norfolk Assizes in 1844 in which it was alleged that gross neglect of one of his ordinary patients had led to a boy's foot having to be amputated. The case went against Tunaley but the judge's favourable summing up led to damages of only a farthing against the doctor.