

but at any rate we shall speak from a somewhat intimate acquaintance with the subject.

In brief, the Prince of Wales' Fund is "an endeavour to secure from £100,000 to £150,000 in annual subscriptions from those who have not hitherto regularly contributed" to the support of the Hospitals, and whatever amount is collected will be distributed at the will of the Committee of the Fund. Now, in the first instance, it must be remembered that there are already two organisations at work—the Hospital Sunday Fund and the Hospital Saturday Fund—both of which exist for precisely the same object as that now initiated by the Prince of Wales, that is to say, to collect each year, from persons who do not otherwise give, annual donations to the medical charities of the Metropolis. Between them, these funds raise on the average about £60,000 a year, and it is impossible not to see that they are practically in a stationary condition, and that year after year the amounts subscribed are approximately the same. From which the deduction is obvious—that probably the same people subscribe to the funds in question, year after year; the loss in their numbers being little more than equalled by the advent of new subscribers. It is beyond question that, on the one hand, the Sunday and Saturday Funds, when commenced, made a perceptible inroad upon the subscriptions previously paid direct to Hospitals, and, on the other hand, that the number of persons in London who have the ability and the wish to assist this particular form of charity is strictly limited. Consequently, it seems certain that the first effect of the Prince of Wales' Fund will be to diminish the subscriptions received by the previously existing funds. Then, the Hospitals would be face to face with this alternative: either that there would be a still greater deficiency in Hospital receipts to be made up, than at present exists; or, after the first enthusiasm and support accorded to the Prince's Fund, it would suffer while the other Funds recover their lost ground. In the future, then, either the older Funds will cease to exist, or the Prince of Wales' Fund will itself tend to diminish and fail. In short, all who understand this question are convinced that the stream of charity which flows in the direction of Hospitals is strictly limited in depth, and that it has been practically plumbed to the

bottom, and utilised already to its full extent. While we gladly believe that the enthusiastic support which will be given to any scheme propounded by His Royal Highness may lead, —during this historical and altogether exceptional year—to a large and generous response from the public, we are convinced that this, to an almost equal extent, will diminish the receipts of the other existing Funds, and of the Hospitals themselves, and we cannot but fear that in future years this result will become even more apparent.

Next, there comes a question which will only occur to those who are intimately acquainted with Hospital matters. The strongest support of any Hospital, the greatest security for its good management and progressive improvement, the very best criterion of its successful work, have hitherto been found in the number of individual subscribers whom the charity has influenced and aroused to support it. The institution of a permanent Central Fund will be the death knell of much of the present individuality of Hospital supporters. Many who desire to help Hospitals in the abstract will subscribe to the Prince of Wales' Fund, instead of sending their donations direct to some particular Hospital, in which they would, thereafter, take a more or less personal interest. So when the inevitable times of stress and difficulty, which always occur in the history of every Hospital, comes in future upon any one of these institutions, its managers will find a restricted number of individual supporters to whom they can make their customary petition for assistance, feeling confident that it will meet with a generous response.

The centralisation of Hospital support, which will be the inevitable outcome of His Royal Highness's proposal, would inevitably tend, first, to minimise, and then to destroy, the individual interest now taken in almost every Hospital, and upon which not only their pecuniary support, but their successful working, so greatly depend. And then we come to a third, and, perhaps, to the most serious, objection to the scheme—the enormous authority which the Committee of the Fund would possess, through the power of the purse, over the Metropolitan Hospitals, which would probably be compelled, if the Fund succeeded, to trust to the Fund for their very existence. This matter is so important that we must defer its consideration until another occasion.

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