

## King Edward's Hospital Fund.

A meeting of the General Council of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London for the purpose of awarding grants to the hospitals and convalescent homes for the present year was held on Monday at Marlborough House, the Prince of Wales being in the chair. £80,000 was available for distribution this year, and Sir William Church presented a report of the awards of the Distribution Committee.

### THE PRINCE OF WALES' SPEECH.

#### ECONOMICAL ADMINISTRATION.

The Prince deplored that £80,000, instead of £100,000, could only be distributed this year, and that their hopes for wider support had not been realised. The Prince touched a right note when he mentioned economy in hospital management—of late years "splash" has often taken the place of this time-honoured virtue. He said:—"It must be remembered that if the expenditure of the hospitals can be decreased, without impairing the extent of efficiency of the work they do, the result would be even more satisfactory than an increase in the money subscribed to support the hospitals. Waste of all kinds is a bad thing, and, as I have before pointed out, some of the hospitals certainly fail in the point of economy. This is a matter of the utmost importance, and one with which this fund most properly concerns itself. Our object, however, is to help, not to hinder—to encourage, not to chill—the work of charity, and to do this by offering friendly assistance to those hospitals which as we think might save money by a few slight alterations in their arrangements. I feel sure those who are generously giving their time to the administrative work of our hospitals would accept the advice we offer in the spirit in which it is meant, even though on examination it might not be found to apply to their particular case. This year a beginning has been made in the direction I have indicated. A statistical report has been prepared on the expenditure of the sixteen largest general hospitals, which alone received more than half our grants last year. And in doing so we have supplied ourselves with information which no one hospital could be expected to provide on its own account. That report shows some remarkable results. It gives the average expenditure of these sixteen hospitals on those branches of expenditure over which control exists. And the aggregate value of the sums paid in excess of these averages works out to no less than £39,400 for the year 1903. We do not say that that sum can all be saved at once. But, no doubt, every hospital will realise that a large saving could be effected by making sure that no other institution is, in similar circumstances, doing the same work as its own equally well and at a lower cost. We have done all in our power to provide the necessary information by giving the comparative prices of the principal goods used in the different hospitals. Some of the discrepancies are certainly worth serious consideration. By way of example I would mention that there is a difference of no less than 3½d. per lb. between the highest and the lowest prices paid for the same description of beef, of 3½d. per lb. for legs of mutton, of 1s. 1d. in the price of fowls, of 2½d. per gallon in the price of milk, of 7d. per lb. in the price of tea. In drugs and household articles there are similar discrepancies. There may be reasons to

account for some of these differences, and all we ask for is careful inquiry on the part of each hospital."

#### CONTRIBUTIONS TO MEDICAL EDUCATION.

The Prince then alluded to the appointment of a Committee of three to inquire into the burning question of money subscribed to the relief of the sick poor being used for the purposes of medical education, whose report, it was hoped, would soon be available. He said the question was one which could not be settled off-hand.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF THE FUND.

The Chairman of the Distribution Committee reported that an application was received from St. Bartholomew's Hospital for a grant towards the rebuilding fund, accompanied by an intimation to the effect that when the necessary money to reconstruct the hospital had been collected, no further appeal would be made for public assistance. The Committee, having no precedent to guide them, and being in doubt as to their powers to make a grant in these circumstances, referred the matter to the Executive Committee. That Committee resolved as follows:—"That in the opinion of the Executive Committee, the King's Fund cannot properly be devoted to capital expenditure on behalf of hospitals possessed of endowments substantially adequate to their maintenance, as such a departure would preclude the regular practice of the fund in associating annual inspection with contribution." The Distribution Committee, therefore, regret that in accordance with this instruction, they have no power to consider the application for a grant made by this ancient foundation, the work of which has for so long a period been of the greatest value to the sick poor in London. They desire to add that the hospital was inspected by the fund and that the report received from the visitors was favourable.

Sir Joseph Dimsdale said he understood from the report read by Sir William Church that it did not come within the province of the fund to give to any hospital which was substantially endowed. On that ground St. Bartholomew's Hospital was entirely eliminated, but he found many hospitals with endowments were assisted. He ventured to think he might be permitted to ask his Royal Highness where the inconsistency was in recognising the claims of a hospital which for 150 years had not appealed to the public for a single farthing, and was now only appealing to put the fabric of the building into a state that would bring it up to modern requirements.

Mr. H. C. Smith, as chairman of the Executive Committee, in answer to Sir Joseph Dimsdale, said he would like to say that the matter was referred by the Distribution Committee to the Executive Committee, and they gave patient consideration to it. They thought that a hospital possessed of such very large property as St. Bartholomew's was not one coming within the scope of the fund. He believed that St. Bartholomew's possessed property valued at over two million sterling. They knew that for many years no appeal for funds had been made to the public, and they conceived that if St. Bartholomew's was again fully endowed it would not require assistance from the fund or the public. Therefore, supposing that a substantial grant were made at the present time it would not carry with it the right of future inspection and recommendation, the indispensable condition on which the moneys were distributed.

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