

The British Hospitals Association.

The British Hospitals Association, which was in session at Glasgow last week, discussed many interesting and important subjects under the presidency of Mr. J. D. Hedderwick, Chairman of the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow, and senior member of the Council of the Association, in the absence of the President, Mr. H. Cosmo Bonsor. An official welcome was extended to the members by Lord Provost M'Innes Shaw.

THE SOCIAL POLICY OF VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS.

Mr. C. S. Loch, Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society, first discussed "The Social Policy of Voluntary Hospitals" and said that no people were more grateful than members of the Charity Organisation Society to hospitals and their staffs for their constant help and advice in cases of illness and distress. The questions he submitted were whether consistently with present indications some more definite social policy should not now be developed, and accepted by hospitals generally, a policy consistent with the principles of charity and our social and economic knowledge. Mr. Loch, defined a hospital broadly as a place for the free, or part pay medical and surgical treatment of poor people, and discussed it (1) in relation to the medical profession and education, (2) in relation to the Poor Law and medical charities, and (3) in relation to the individual case and its proper assistance. He advocated the abolition of the letter system, payments by hospital patients according to their ability, payment of medical practitioners for contract work in accordance with standards accepted locally by the profession; that patients, and more especially out-patients, should be sent as a rule to the hospitals through provident dispensaries or general practitioners; and that medical practitioners taking part in the work of a hospital should be remunerated for that work. The contrasting policy, that free medical aid should be provided by the State, Mr. Loch believed would tend, if put into practice, to a deterioration in the social virtue of foresight, and would be socially wrong. Discussing the hospital in relation to Poor Law and medical charities, the speaker thought there was but one way of proceeding—viz., to follow the recommendation of the Royal Commission "that representative Medical Assistance Committees should be established to co-ordinate, and when necessary supplement, the medical institutions of the county or county borough, and to support methods of co-operation with the sanitary authorities and the authorities in charge of voluntary hospitals, to organise an outdoor and provident medical service." In relation to the assistance of individual cases he emphasised the value of the work of hospital almoners.

In the discussion which followed, Mr. James Cunningham, of the Glasgow Parish Council, expressed the opinion that the tendency to make State provision of everything for everybody was encouraging thriftlessness and sapping the whole independence of the Scottish people.

Professor Henry Jones, Glasgow University, said

that hospitals or infirmaries were to a considerable extent the centres for the greatest medical skill a great city could command. If that were so, they should be open to rich as well as to poor.

Mr. C. W. Thies, London, said that the only people who were tackling the hospital question in a scientific manner were the Germans and the Swiss, and described the German method by which the municipality and the State maintain the hospital to which all members of the community have entry and pay according to their means.

THE ABUSE OF HOSPITALS AND ITS CURE.

Mr. A. Scott Finnie contributed a paper on the above subject, and said that on the whole it was believed that such abuse resulted from sheer lack of any alternative place of treatment rather than from intentional misuse of charity. A first step in any real reform seemed to be conference between representatives of all the interests involved. It should then be possible to devise a system under which all legitimate interests would be conserved.

Dr. Dewar, Mr. W. B. Blaikie (Edinburgh), and Mr. J. A. Roxburgh (Glasgow), also took part in the discussion, and Mr. Kershaw, Secretary of the Central Throat Hospital, London, maintained that the whole hospital system was drifting not only in the direction of State control of the hospitals, but in the nationalisation of the whole medical service.

A UNIFIED COUNTY MEDICAL SERVICE.

The first paper on Friday, September 30th, the second day of the Conference, was contributed by Mrs. Sidney Webb, and read by Dr. D. J. Mackintosh, M.V.O., on "The Coming of a Unified County Medical Service, and how it will affect the Voluntary Hospital." The writer pointed out that (1) the United Kingdom was this year spending out of rates and taxes close on £20,000,000, of which at least one-third was dealing with the destitution of people stricken with preventable sickness which was not prevented; (2) that in our public arrangements for dealing with sickness we were in a greater muddle than was realised of duplicated service and confusion of principles. On the one hand, Poor Law doctors were forbidden to treat sickness unless and until it was complicated with destitution, and an equally rate-supported Public Health Service was dealing largely with the same diseases as the Poor Law medical service from the standpoint not of relief but prevention. She did not think it needed much gift of prophesy to see that the policy which would finally prevail was that of breaking up the Poor Law into its constituent services, but whatever was done by the Poor Law there would be scope for the voluntary hospitals.

Mr. James R. Motion hoped that the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws would never be adopted in Scotland.

TREATMENT OF TUBERCULOSIS.

Dr. Nathan Raw, of Liverpool, read an interesting paper on the above subject.

OFFICE BEARERS.

Office-bearers were re-elected as follows:—*President*, Mr. H. Cosmo Bonsor, President, Guy's Hospital, London; *Hon. Treasurer*, Mr. Conrad W. Thies, Royal Free Hospital, London; *Hon. Secretaries*, Mr. A. William West, London, and Dr. D. J. Mackintosh, Western Infirmary, Glasgow.

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