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EDITORIAL.

REFORM CANNOT BE MUCH LONGER DELAYED.

We are glad to see that the *British Medical Journal* is calling attention to the lack of economy due to the multiplication of small Voluntary Aid hospitals, and says it seems not unlikely that in the near future the whole system of auxiliary military hospitals will come in for adverse public criticism, and appeals to the Director-General of the Army Medical Service to investigate the position impartially, and to accept the co-operation of his civilian colleagues, especially that of the committees which are so closely concerned in a matter affecting the distribution of doctors both for military and civil needs.

The National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland in December, 1914, furnished the Director-General of the Army Medical Service, by request, with a Statement in which the organisation of the nursing of sick and wounded soldiers in military auxiliary hospitals was discussed, and which concluded with the practical suggestion that a committee should be appointed representative of the various departments which are now engaged in organising the nursing of sick and wounded soldiers, and including also independent experts on military nursing (1) To enquire into the present conditions of the Nursing in Military Auxiliary Hospitals in the United Kingdom, and to report fully thereon, in order that they may be efficiently organised; (2) To consider and report on a comprehensive scheme for the Preventive and Active Nursing of the Soldier, and for the co-ordination and extension of Military Nursing at home and abroad.

The Statement was received not only unsympathetically but with hostility, and

since that time we have watched the results of the present unsatisfactory system, and awaited some such pronouncement as that which it has called forth in the *British Medical Journal*.

Our contemporary points out that the multiplicity of small hospitals is uneconomical, and asks "Is the best being done for the country in all the auxiliary hospitals in the way of rendering possible the rapid return of the soldier to the combatant ranks? Is the best being done in the way of treatment and training for the man who has been injured in his country's service and must be discharged from the army to civil life? And lastly is the medical man power available being used in the most effective and least wasteful way possible?"

It goes on to assert that "All the evidence available seems to show that the answer to each of these questions is unsatisfactory." Further that "the initial sorting of wounded who arrive in this country has hitherto been defective, so that suitable cases do not invariably reach suitable centres," and that "it seems certain that quite a number of small hospitals throughout the country become possessed of patients who require some form of special treatment unobtainable locally. How is the future of those patients controlled?"

Our contemporary shows that in 300 small hospitals scattered over sparsely populated country districts it is not conceivable that "the control can be other than of the mildest description, or the inspection other than rare. . . Yet without such inspection numbers of cases must be held up without the special treatment required.

"The machinery for picking out such cases seems to be inadequate, and it is no uncommon complaint at special hospitals that patients have been allowed to remain at small hospitals until cure has become diffi-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)