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EDITORIAL.

A MONUMENT OF GRATITUDE.

We print in our correspondence columns a letter from the Right Hon. John Hodge, M.P., Minister of Pensions and Chairman of the Trustees for the King's Fund for the Disabled, which must go straight home to every one in these Realms, who lives securely, because others have barred the way to invasion by fire and sword with their flesh and blood, and have in consequence been disabled.

Surely the first instinct of gratitude is to see that the men who have thus suffered on our behalf shall have all the assistance possible to start business in civil life once again. So urgent is the need for this that the Minister of Pensions began last year to receive contributions to a Voluntary Fund which he administered himself, the primary object of which was to help discharged disabled men to start business in a small way—and roughly 2,000 men and a number of women have been so helped. It is however desirable to give more in certain specified cases than the £25 hitherto regarded as a maximum.

The £115,000, which Mr. Hodge collected without any special appeal, included £50,000 from Sir John Leigh. The Willis James' bequest for widows and dependants brought £15,000, the Chapman Fund £10,000 for men who had trained under the schemes of the Ministry, and donations from Mr. Bosanquet and others made up the balance. Alongside these separate Funds the donations were received by the Minister, until the whole of the Funds amounted to about £115,000 (a large part of this money has, of course, already been spent).

The King then took an active interest in the matter, and decided to hand over £53,000 (the City of London Silver Wedding

Gift) and £25,000 from his own purse. The Duke of Connaught made this announcement at the Mansion House Meeting on the 31st July. It was decided that the Voluntary Funds, hitherto under the control of the Minister, should be known in future as The King's Fund for Disabled Officers and Men, to be administered by a Committee of Trustees appointed by the King, and with the patronage of His Majesty, through the Ministry of Pensions and its local War Pensions Committees.

The immediate object is to raise £3,000,000 to continue the work hitherto done by the Minister's Voluntary Funds, but on a more generous and wider scale. The existing funds are all but exhausted.

The weekly number of applications for grants is rapidly growing, and has already risen to close upon 600. Applications for grants must be made to the Local War Pensions Committees which are in every district throughout the country. (Officers apply direct to the Ministry.) The Local Committee sends a recommendation if the case is a suitable one, and the Trustees deal with it. A large staff at the Ministry is engaged on the work, and the applications are expeditiously dealt with without "officialism" or "red tape." Elasticity is the great feature of the Voluntary Scheme.

The need for the Fund is urgent, and already the most beneficent results have been obtained in resettling men. If the taxpayers' money were to be used there would require to be rigid regulations of universal application bound by hard and fast rules which would destroy the whole idea of this scheme.

We hope that every possible support will be given to this Fund, to help our disabled men to help themselves—a Fund which is not intended to be a substitute for a State Pension, but to supplement it.

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