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EDITORIAL.

**THE HOSPITAL PROBLEM A VITAL
NATIONAL QUESTION.**

The hospital problem has reached an acute stage—and who can wonder? Everyone connected with preventive and curative medicine is involved in it. Conferences are being held of hospital managers and secretaries, honorary and resident physicians and surgeons, and matrons and nurses are also chipping in. It is quite useless to assume a *non possumus* attitude and vainly hope this great scientific question will settle itself. It will do no such thing. The future standard of national health is widely involved in it. To guide evolution, not only wise counsels, but first class organisation is necessary, and must be enforced. The whole question resolves itself into one of pounds, shillings and pence. Where is the money to come from, and who is to administer it—and to whom are administrators to be responsible?

The wage earners who use the voluntary hospitals must pay as they go. For the destitute the State provides. By good organisation huge sums of money can be contributed weekly in small contributions, and every county can maintain its own hospitals. The industrial class, whose earning capacity is now enormous, through co-operation and insurance need no longer be a charitable charge in sickness. We learn from a Sister of one of the large London hospitals that the patients in her ward were surfeited at Christmas with costly cakes, sweets, fruit and other dainties supplied by their well-off relations, and the latter appear quite willing to pay towards their treatment and hospital care. Without solicitation one

father handed her £5 when removing his little daughter after operation, and, as she states, "money is just pouring in to the hospital in this way—there will be no need to shut up voluntary hospitals if a reasonable scale of charges is invited."

But this brings us to the scientific and medical aspect of the case, and how long the "honorary" staff can continue to treat paying hospital patients and deprive their "general practitioner" colleagues of their source of income will have to be faced. There is still great diversity of opinion in medical circles on this knotty point, as medical education is involved in it, and facilities for medical education are a matter of paramount importance to the whole community—much more so than even the educated classes realise. In our opinion it is the most vital national question we have to tackle at the present time. Sound health spells mental and physical vigour, and generates the energy without which no nation can take first rank. The British are a dominating race, and as soon as they realise the asset of science in preserving such power in world competition, they will pay any money for a clean bill of health.

It is therefore the duty of every statesman to treat the scientific aspect of the national health as a fundamental problem of the highest social and political importance in which the very existence of Britain as a world power is involved. The pursuit of science is costly, but its neglect spells ruin. Our medical and nursing schools are a national asset, and every citizen may justly be called upon to contribute towards their support.

Let the patients, through insurance, keep up the hospitals—and the State support the schools.

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