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EDITORIAL.

THE SOUL OF THE HOSPITAL.

Mr. E. W. Morris, House Governor of the London Hospital, writing in the *Times* on the evil days upon which the voluntary hospitals have fallen, considers that out of the turmoil and stress may emerge a better thing—a voluntary system with its high code of honour, its elasticity, its adaptability all preserved, but with its power of usefulness enlarged, its influence extended, and its stability assured.

After referring to the religious foundations of the hospitals, he writes—

“The hospitals have changed in many respects, but not at all in the spirit that inspires them and rules in them. They still stand for a principle. They are still monuments of helpfulness. The religious atmosphere in which they were born and reared is still with them and shows itself in its finest form. There is something spiritual about them. Every rollicking student bends to that influence; it makes a man of him, a gentleman. Later he qualifies and becomes house surgeon or house physician. The soul of the hospital holds him and moulds him. Later yet, he becomes a country doctor and stands at your child’s bedside. The soul of his hospital holds him still, and you may thank God for the hospital, for the man, without a second’s hesitation, will if necessary, give his life to save your child. He is blessed, and you and your child, by the presence in him of something that neither he nor you nor I can define. I call it the soul of the hospital. You may call it by some other name. It is the growth of centuries. There is a soul in the Army and in the Navy and in the Air Force; there is a soul in a ship and in a coal-

mine. It stands by the side of the man who is disciplined and trained to see that ‘duty’ comes first and middle and last in life, and that ‘rights’ are as nothing to it.

“When a house physician left his cards this evening with a growl and went to deal with a diphtheritic child who coughed in his face, the soul of the hospital went with him . . . When a frail woman awaits the end of it all with a courage that fills you with envy, and not with pity at all, the soul of the hospital is by her side. During the war I saw a surgeon, himself wounded and in great pain, carried to the theatre on a stretcher to operate on a child, also carried to the theatre on a stretcher. Propped up as best we could arrange it he saved the child’s life by an operation he alone could do, and we carried them back to their wards again. The soul of the hospital had need of him.”

“The hospitals,” says Mr. Morris, “are researching and going into causes of things, and then preaching the gospel of prevention. Trained brains as well as brave hearts are at work with microscope and incubator; biochemists are studying and watching and reporting; workers in the house of the dead are telling us our mistakes in order that the living may be saved; wizards tame the dangerous Röntgen rays to their will and make them the servants of the injured and sick.

“And so the great fight goes on, and the soul of the hospital smiles,” but the cost has all but ruined the hospitals. He looks for the solution, and there are many who will agree with him, in some form of insurance, by which all the resources of a hospital shall be available for persons with an income up to, say, £500 a year on the recommendation of their doctor. It is about to be tried, and it is worth trying.

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