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EDITORIAL.

THE LONDON HOSPITALS APPEAL.

His Majesty the King has sent the following autograph message to the Organising Committee of the Combined London Hospitals Appeal, of which Mr. E. S. Shrapnell Smith is Director-General:—

“ Buckingham Palace.

“ I am following with the closest interest the progress made by King Edward's Hospital Fund in organising this combined appeal on behalf of the voluntary hospitals of London, and I congratulate the Organising Committee on the results already achieved.

“ My family have been intimately associated with the fund from its inception; and I know that my son, the President, would have taken an active personal part in this great effort had circumstances so permitted.

“ His happiness in returning home will be increased by the knowledge that the people of London have generously resolved to save their hospitals. It is impossible to contemplate the closing of any of them, for in character and organisation our hospitals are unique among the charitable institutions of the world.

“ GEORGE, R.I.

“ June 12th, 1922.”

We are sure that the personal interest taken by the King in this united effort in support of the London hospitals has been a great factor in the satisfactory results obtained.

The hospitals have done, and are doing, splendid work for the benefit of the sick poor; but this is not their only function. Their wards are the training ground in which medical practitioners and nurses are educated for their extremely responsible duties in connection with the health of the Nation, both as to the prevention and the treatment of disease.

If it is decided that the hospitals shall continue upon a voluntary basis, this aspect of

their functions should be very carefully considered, for it is of supreme importance that it should be as efficient as possible, and we are of opinion that the educational possibilities of the hospitals, and the best methods of utilising, controlling, and financing them, should be made the subject of special investigation and report.

In regard to nursing education, though we are justly proud of the standard of practical proficiency attained by the nurses in our great training schools, we unhesitatingly say that it could be still more efficient if its development were not hampered by financial considerations. Efficient education is always costly, and hospital committees have no special funds to draw upon for this purpose.

Probationers, during their three years' training are not—like the embryo members of the medical profession—in the hospitals solely as students, with their work and training directed to that one end.

Nor are members of the hospital committees selected with a view to their interest in education, but because they are administrators and financiers; and were it not that the nursing of a hospital can be most efficiently and economically carried on by means of a nurse-training school, the education of nurses would not come under their consideration at all.

The time therefore appears opportune for defining the place of nurse-training in relation to the community, as well as to particular institutions, and for suggestions as to how nursing education can be financed or subsidised. There should be funds available beyond those contributed by the public for the care of the sick, if the education of the nurse is to be as comprehensive as it ought to be.

Nothing would give the Nursing Profession greater satisfaction and pleasure than that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales should associate himself with these reforms.

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