

PENSIONS FOR HOSPITAL OFFICERS AND NURSES.

We have received from King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, 7, Walbrook, London, E.C.4, a Draft Scheme of Pensions for Hospital Officers and Nurses with the subjoined Summary of the Memorandum.

SUMMARY OF MEMORANDUM.

i. The Memorandum (K.F. 18-25) has been prepared by a Conference composed of representatives of:

- King Edward's Hospital Fund for London;
- The British Hospitals Association;
- The Incorporated Association of Hospital Officers; and
- The College of Nursing, Limited.

Lord Stuart of Wortley, Chairman of the Management Committee of King Edward's Hospital Fund, presided over the Conference, which included representatives from the provinces as well as from London.

ii. The draft scheme follows, generally speaking, the lines recommended in the Report of a Committee of the King's Fund, of which Mr. W. J. H. Whittall, F.I.A., was Chairman. This Committee reported that the provisions of pensions for the staffs of voluntary hospitals, including nurses, was inadequate; that this led to the age of retirement being unduly postponed; and that the loss of all pension rights on migrating from one hospital to another was contrary to the interests both of the officers and of the hospitals. After commenting on the risks that would inevitably attach to any form of mutual pension fund, the Committee recommended a scheme on the lines of the Federated Superannuation System for Universities, where policies are taken out with selected Insurance Companies.

iii. The present draft scheme is on the same basis, adapted to the circumstances of hospital and nursing service. The hospitals adopting the scheme would contribute 10% of salary and emoluments and the officers and nurses 5%. The normal pension age would be 60 for officers and 55 for nurses. There would be a choice between three main types of policy:—Endowment Assurance, giving a fixed rate of annuity at the retiring age or a certain sum at previous death; Deferred Annuities with return of premiums on premature withdrawal or death; and Deferred Annuities without return of premiums.

iv. The scheme if adopted, would include the salaried staff, administrative, clerical and dispensing, and also the whole nursing staff except probationers during their first year. Members migrating from one hospital to another, or from one branch of nursing service to another, would take their policies with them. There would thus be that freedom of movement within the profession, a junior officer being able to apply for a higher post elsewhere without any question of his losing his past pension rights, or his new hospital undertaking increased pension liabilities.

v. To nurses this freedom to migrate without loss of pension rights is specially important, since most of them begin their career in hospitals and then move into other branches of the profession. The scheme would cover the nurse's whole working life, and it would remove a hardship that now deters many suitable woman from taking up nursing, namely, the impossibility of making adequate provision for old age. The promoters of the scheme urge the advantages of beginning at an early stage of training, provided that the hospital's contribution do not become the property of the nurse unless she remains in the profession at least five years. Special arrangements are suggested for enabling the policies to be maintained by nurses engaged in private nursing, though the details of this part of the scheme do not concern hospitals.

vi. The scheme would be administered by a central Council

representing the hospitals and the members; and this Council, through a special nurses' committee, would deal with matters relating to nurses not in hospital service.

vii. The Memorandum discusses the arguments for and against each of the above provisions, and is issued for the consideration of each individual hospital. The Conference itself did not express any opinion other than general sympathy with the principle of a pension scheme, merely adding that, if the draft scheme proved acceptable to the hospitals, the advantages anticipated from it, both to the hospitals and to the officers and nurses, would be more fully realised the larger the number of hospitals that joined.

viii. The Memorandum (K.F. 18-25) is published for the King's Fund by Geo. Barber, 23, Furnival Street, Holborn, E.C.4, price 1s. net, post free. Copies of this Brief Summary (K.F. 19-25) may be obtained from Geo. Barber, free.

We shall refer to the scheme again in our next issue. In the meantime we should be glad of expressions of opinion from our readers.

THE HOSPITAL WORLD.

Never have the hospitals received more gifts for the patients than during the recent Christmastide, and the Queen and other Royal Ladies rejoiced the hearts of hundreds of little children by lovely gifts of toys. Matrons, Sisters, and Nurses of course devoted all their energies to making the wards seasonable, and, in spite of ailments, a real old-fashioned Christmas was greatly enjoyed throughout the Hospital World.

It was announced at a Court of Governors of the London Hospital that the Queen had consented to become the new President in place of Queen Alexandra.

Lord Knutsford, the Chairman, spoke with much feeling of the late Queen's association with the Hospital. She had honoured him with her sympathy and confidence for nearly 30 years, and he valued that confidence as the most sacred trust in all his life. Queen Alexandra had been not merely president of the hospital in name; she had really loved it. He had there in front of him the last letter she had ever written to him, referring to a magnificent donation of £80,000 which the hospital had received. She wrote: "I am most grateful for what has been done for our dear and precious hospital, and I hope to see it once more," and then came those pathetic words—"Think of me as I used to be. I am breaking up now." Lord Knutsford went on to say that that was how they would think about her—kind, bright, and sympathetic, though sometimes with a spice of mischief and always intensely interested in the hospital.

They thought of Queen Alexandra as she used to be. They were thankful for a life whose dominant note was that of kindness and sympathy, and they were proud to think that one of their own nurses was with her in her last illness, which she bore so bravely. He had been asked why not a memorial to Queen Alexandra? His answer was, "I simply can't: her memory is too sacred to us to make it the grounds of an appeal. All the hospital, from top to bottom, is a memorial to her, and I don't think her name will ever be forgotten."

In accepting the Presidency, Queen Mary's private secretary had written:—"The King and Queen take the keenest interest in the London Hospital, and it gave Her Majesty great pleasure to become President of the hospital."

Those present at the Court rose to do honour to the new President, and to accept her unanimously.

An anonymous gift of £50,000 for research work was also announced.

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