

The Birmingham Hospitals.

THE GENERAL HOSPITAL.

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

THIS is the oldest, the largest, and the most popular of our Hospitals, and for a century and a quarter it has grown with the growth and strengthened with the strength of our prosperous and progressive city. This great Institution, so honoured by us all, so endeared to the hearts of the immense population that surrounds it, is in a state transitional, for the old order of things, for good or for ill, is about to pass away, and a glorious vista of increased usefulness and splendour opens in the near future before it. To attempt any detailed description of the present structure would, if a pleasing, be a somewhat superfluous task; I will therefore confine my pen to a brief historic sketch of the Hospital, and point out certain circumstances connected with it that we may fairly consider to be unique, and I feel sure they cannot fail to be of interest to my readers at home or abroad. My heart will go forth to my pen as I write, for in the homes of thousands of my neighbours and patients the "General" and its honoured medical and Nursing Staff are "household words."

In the autumn of the year 1765 an advertisement appeared in the *Birmingham Gazette*, as follows:—

"A *General Hospital* for the Sick and Lame, situated near the town of Birmingham, is presumed would be greatly beneficial to the populous county about it, as well as that place. A meeting, therefore, of the nobility and gentry of the neighbouring county and inhabitants of

this town is requested on Thursday, the 21st inst., at the Swan Inn, at eleven in the forenoon, to consider of proper steps to render effectual so useful an undertaking."

This advertisement was drawn up by Dr. John Ash, the founder of the General Hospital, and an eminent Physician of the town, who practised during a considerable part of the last century, and to this day his name is perpetuated in a portion of the city called Ashted, near to where the worthy philanthropist dwelt.

The usual wet blanket was, of course, not long in forthcoming to damp this benevolent scheme, the objectors not failing to point out to the worthy Doctor that there existed a *Workhouse*, to which was also attached an *Infirmiry*, and what more could the sick poor need?

Dr. Ash replied to this attack in the following advertisement, which appeared in the *Gazette*, Nov. 18th, 1765:—

"It having been objected to the usefulness of the above-mentioned design that the present Infirmiry established at the *Workhouse* will answer all the purposes of it, it may be necessary here to observe that more than half the manufacturers of the town of Birmingham are not parishioners of it, and cannot be entitled to any relief from the present Infirmiry. Many of them are foreigners, but the greatest part belong to the parishes of the neighbouring county."

At this meeting, called by Dr. Ash, which was held on the date announced and well attended, it was resolved: "That a building for the reception of proper objects be erected within a measured mile of the town of Birmingham with all convenient speed, and that the society for the conduct and support of this Hospital be known and distinguished by the name of the Trustees of the General Hospital, at Birmingham, in the county of Warwick, for the relief of the Sick and Lame"; and a subscription was commenced which in a few days amounted

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