

for the revolutionary step and the very serious consequence to the patient involved.

By taking over our hospitals the Minister is robbing the people of their own property, built with their own money, managed through their own interest and designed to serve their needs.

The admirable leaflet prepared by the British Hospitals Association can be obtained from 52 Green Street, London, W.1.

#### 800 YEARS OF SERVICE: THE STORY OF BRITAIN'S VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS.

The British Hospitals Association has published an inspiring little pamphlet, "800 Years of Service: the Story of Britain's Voluntary Hospitals," which opens with the following words:—

The voluntary hospitals—"our greatest national heritage"—have gained the admiration of the world. They have attained this eminence through centuries of tradition, a tradition founded on an accumulation of experience, knowledge and skill which no other hospital system can reproduce. "As well," said Viscount Dawson of Penn, "try and copy Westminster Abbey without its spirit."

For more than 800 years human kindness has expressed itself throughout our land in help for the sick, freely and willingly given. Britain's voluntary hospitals have been the vehicle of this national kindness. Theirs is a story of courage and initiative. Above all, it is a story of unselfishness, self-sacrifice, and of a service to the community which has no counterpart in any other country.

Through the hospitals great doctors have given their brains and their skill; medical students have acquired unique professional standards. The unstinted devotion of nurses has added its loving care to the efforts of men. Furthermore, the hospitals have given to every man a chance of extending a helping hand to a less fortunate brother.

#### The Growth of a Great Tradition.

In early days the care of the sick was in the hands of the monasteries. Later, the self-imposed duty of organising hospitals and medical care was undertaken by great benefactors, rich merchants or public-spirited men—but always, while the rich have given their pounds, the poor, too, have contributed their pennies. Our hospitals are no longer controlled by religious bodies, but they preserve the truly Christian spirit which, in the Middle Ages, made them places of *hospitality* and of humanitarian care.

Our first great hospital, St. Bartholomew's, was founded by Rahere, a monk who had formerly been a minstrel at the court of Henry I. He begged a gift of land from the King, and the citizens of London themselves built the hospital under his supervision. On that same site, a parish in itself, the hospital has stood throughout the reigns of thirty-nine sovereigns, carrying on the work for which it was dedicated, "the entertainment of poor diseased persons." An equally famous foundation of the same period was St. Thomas's Hospital in Southwark.

Most of the early hospitals were attached to a monastic order. Then came the suppression of the monasteries

by Henry VIII, and the beginning of secular responsibility. Thus, the care of St. Bartholomew's Hospital was placed in the hands of the citizens.

There is no record of the foundation of any new hospitals during the next two hundred years in Britain. Schools rather than hospitals absorbed the patronage of the Elizabethans. What the lack of hospitals meant was demonstrated in the days of the Great Plague. At last, early in the eighteenth century, the public conscience became active, and from small beginnings a great movement led to the establishment of more and more hospitals throughout the land. Of those founded by private citizens two of the most famous are Guy's and the Foundling Hospital.

#### DOCTORS IN CONSULTATION.

The British Medical Association is taking widespread action, and communicating with 50,000 medical practitioners.

The Stationery Office has received what must be one of the biggest individual orders for a White Paper ever made. The British Medical Association has bought, and is distributing at once, 56,000 copies of the National Health Service Bill to its members at a cost of £3,500.

With each 1s. 3d. copy will go the comments of the Council of the B.M.A. and an intimation that area meetings of the Association are to be held to which non-members are also invited.

The recommendations and comments from those meetings will be voiced at a special representative meeting of the profession to be attended in London by 250 delegates on May 1st and 2nd.

#### WHAT ARE THE REGISTERED NURSES DOING?

The Nursing Profession will be vitally affected by the provisions of the proposed National Health Act. What are they doing to help just legislation? Those possessed of a keen professional conscience should do all in their power to rouse the apathetic majority to realise their public duty at this crisis.

The three most important interests which the Bill affects are: (1) The Patient; (2) The Medical Profession; and (3) Hospital Organisations.

#### The Patient.

The patient—that is the community at large—should most carefully consider the provisions of the Bill, and consent to no drastic control by the Government which touches his liberty of action when requiring medical advice.

#### The Medical Profession.

The Medical Profession should accept no lay control by any Government department. It is the duty of the Medical Profession to secure the right to exercise its skilled expert service to the community at large—any interference with this demand is not only unjustifiable but a public danger to humanity.

#### Hospital Organisation.

Hospital organisation should be conducted with the utmost publicity and personal good will.

This has been the principle which has, for upwards of a thousand years, inspired the service of voluntary

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