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Editorial.

An Inevitable Surrender.

SO THE BATTLE of Kingston Hospital has been lost, and the Medical Staff have withdrawn to a new location.

It is with very mixed feelings that we read the Minister's pronouncement.

We are relieved that the Minister of Health has been able to uphold the Regional Board's proposal to close the Royal Victoria Hospital, Kingston, as a General Practitioners' Hospital, and re-open for gynaecological patients, since this shows that all alternatives had been fully considered before such a momentous decision was reached.

It shows that the body of public-spirited and disinterested people who are organising our Health Service are, in fact, when called to question, found to be as public-spirited and disinterested as one would have hoped. They have not been lightheartedly playing draughts with hospitals, but considering each step of their planning with the seriousness of a move in the Chess Tournament.

Those of us whose working lives are in their hands can take heart from this, but one can also be sorry, as always, to see long-established customs changed, for are we not all staunch conservatives at heart, no matter what our political convictions?

We sympathise with the people of Kingston and their Doctors for losing their case, no matter how wise the decision may be. Our small hospitals, staffed by local General Practitioners, are as much a part of England as the village church. As voluntary organisations they held a very important place in the community. They were "our hospital" to the people, supported energetically and regarded with affection and pride. The patients entered willingly and left regretfully, secure in the knowledge that their own Doctor, who understood them so well, would still look after them, and that their friends and relatives were no further away than the next street. To the General Practitioners their value was unbounded.

With the coming of the vast organisation of the Health Service many feared for these little centres, but their value had been recognised and their position secured within the new framework.

However, the country is committed to a nation-wide, ambitious and all-embracing Health Service, and to carry out this stupendous and most expensive scheme it is the greatest good for the greatest number that must inevitably count when weighed in the balance.

It makes us all sad to see amalgamations and mergings, and we are inclined to look with dark forebodings to the future of such a programme.

In just such a way did our forefathers look upon the

coming of the chain stores, but these have been of undoubted benefit to us all; so also did their minds oppose the merging of the railways, and also strenuously opposed their further merging under nationalisation. Yet each step was a logical one along the stairway of progress, and each has justified, in time, the farseeing optimism and moral courage of the instigators.

The logician in us can stand aloof and wonder at our almost constitutional inability to accept each change gladly. But there is a quality about logic that is terrifying in its very rightness.

So let us pray that, as a nation, we never become too logical; it is pleasant and it is human to be a little wasteful and to indulge in a few luxuries and inconsequential preferences. For this reason the humanity in us is grateful to gallant little Kingston Hospital for conducting a one-armed combat against the octopus of a many-branched service.

May such spirit never die out in England. D. W.

British Medical Association. Prizes, 1951.

NURSES' PRIZES

Presentation of Prizes to the following:—

Competition for Student Nurses for an essay on "The handling of a patient on admission to hospital."

First Prize (Certificate and Cheque for 20 guineas).—

Mary Dickinson, Hammersmith, London, W.12.

Second Prize (Certificate and Cheque for 10 guineas).—

Joyce, P. J. Smith, Sheffield.

Competition for State Registered Nurses working in hospital for an essay on "What a nurse can do in preparing a patient for operation—including the handling of the nervous individual in strange surroundings."

First Prize (Certificate and Cheque for 20 guineas).—

Daphne Bonnett, Bedford.

Second Prize (Certificate and Cheque for 10 guineas).—

Hilary Herbert, Taplow, Nr. Maidenhead.

Competition for State Registered Nurses not working in hospital for an essay on "The opportunities of the nurse doing domiciliary work to educate the public in health matters."

First Prize (Certificate and Cheque for 20 guineas).—

Edith Shaddick, Patchway, Glos.

Second Prize (Certificate and Cheque for 10 guineas).—

Anne Barker, West Hampstead, London.

Competition for State-enrolled Nurses for an essay on "The special problems of nursing the long way term cases in hospital."

First Prize (Certificate and Cheque for 20 guineas).—

Noral Antwis, Frodsham, Cheshire.

Second Prize (Certificate and Cheque for 10 guineas).—

Grace Hollands, Worthing.

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