

SLOT-MACHINE CURES.

PRINCIPLE OF MEDICINE BY CONTRACT.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital and College (Old Students) dinner took place last evening in the great hall, under the presidency of Dr. H. Lewis Jones.

The Chairman, in proposing "The Hospital and Medical School," remarked that a matter which concerned them very much was the Insurance Act in its effects both upon the working and upon the finances of the hospital, and also in its effect upon them as medical practitioners. The Act sought to alter the relation between the doctor and his patients by introducing the principle of medication by contract. If the treatment of the sick was simply a matter of supplying bottles of medicine, the situation might be met by a wholesale system of contracting, or even by a system of coupons, or by means of a slot machine, with stock medicines to fit the different ailments. The medical profession, however, felt that the contract principle, by destroying the doctor's independent position, was certain to spoil the proper relation between doctor and patient, and to lead to difficulties and to friction which could hardly be estimated beforehand. It was this difficulty, and not the exact amount of the capitation fee, which made the provisions of the Insurance Act distasteful. So far as the hospital would be concerned in providing for the needs of the Insurance Act, the subject was under the consideration of a joint committee of the hospital and of the school, and the recommendations of that committee would shortly be made public.

Sir G. Acton Davis (acting treasurer of the hospital) responded.

Sir William Osler (Regius Professor of Medicine, University of Oxford), responding to the toast of "The Visitors," remarked that Kruger had found England a kingdom and had made her a great Imperial Empire. In the same way they had to thank Mr. Lloyd George (laughter and cheers). They had never had such a benefactor. He had come down into the pool—he did not say on which side (laughter)—but as an angel he had troubled the pool and troubled them, but out of it great healing would come. Whatever else came out of the Insurance Act, this was sure to come, that never again would the men who had to work for the poor of the country be sweated as their professional brethren had been sweated in the past. Another thing was that the Act had brought the medical profession into a solidarity they had never before possessed. He had, however, no doubt that they could steer clear of the rocks of trade unionism.

The question of the Insurance Act and the hospitals was a thorny one. The hospitals could no longer be entirely voluntary; they had got to accept the principle of taking money from patients. That principle was not new, and there was no reason why it should not be adopted. He would like to see the practice extended not only to the lower classes, but to anybody who could pay. The Duchess of Connaught had gone into a hospital when taken ill at Montreal, and it would do the poor rich of this country a great deal of good to be treated in the private wards of our hospitals instead of in nursing homes. While it would do Lady Vere de Vere good to come down into the hospital, it would also benefit the young doctors to attend the paying patients there instead of in nursing homes. The idea was not an Anglican one, and would not perhaps be accepted readily, but the jingling of the guineas might help to heal the hurt that might be felt on the part of the governors and staffs of the hospitals. Dr. Straub (Professor of Ophthalmology, University of Amsterdam) also replied.

Those present included Sir William Church, Bart. (president of the Royal Society of Medicine), Sir Lauder Brunton, Bart., Sir F. Champneys, Bart. (chairman, Midwives Board), Sir Dyce Duckworth, Bart., Dr. Wilmot Herringham (vice-chancellor, University of London), Professor Howard Marsh (Master of Downing College, Cambridge), Sir Ronald Ross, K.C.B., Sir Anthony Bowlby, C.M.G., Sir Frederick Bradshaw, K.C.B., Dr. Shipley (Master of Christ's College, Cambridge), Sir James Porter (Director-General of the Navy), Mr. F. Swinford Edwards, Dr. Beckman and Dr. Braasth (U.S.A.), Dr. Norman Moore, Mr. Jessop, Mr. C. B. Lockwood, Mr. James Berry, and Mr. E. J. Layton, Mr. H. L. Florence, Mr. P. L. Blythe and Mr. H. Bird (almoners), and Mr. H. J. Waring (secretary).

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