

Voluntary Hospitals and Sir William Osler's Criticism.

Sir WILLIAM OSLER, in his presidential address delivered at the annual conference of the British Hospitals Association at Oxford, laid before his hearers in lucid and forcible language four topics connected with hospital organisation and management, which, in his deliberate opinion, required immediate attention. Each of these topics, upon which the Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford has formed his own views in the light of a long and varied experience of our own and of colonial and foreign hospitals, should be considered by members of the medical profession with attention. They need not necessarily acquiesce in Sir WILLIAM OSLER'S views—there are merits or drawbacks apparent upon the face of the individual suggestions—but the matters require earnest consideration. It will be found when ultimate results are considered that each of the four recommendations of Sir WILLIAM OSLER, if carried out, may affect to some extent the "voluntary hospital system" as now established in this country, and that to accept the four propositions as they stand might imply the initiation of a completely new hospital system. On the other hand, it is arguable that Sir WILLIAM OSLER'S suggestions, as well as others which are being made and likely to be made, might be adopted and carried out to the improvement of the usefulness of our hospitals and of their financial stability without any destruction of their voluntary character, and without the introduction of State or municipal control to any extent likely to prejudice their efficiency as institutions for the healing of the sick poor.

The first of Sir WILLIAM OSLER'S recommendations related to that part of our voluntary hospital system which consists of giving all the benefits that any hospital can bestow, and which any patient's state demands, to that patient without charge and as an act of charity. He may be accepted or refused for treatment, but his treatment, when he is once in the hospital, is free, whether his income is more or less than his neighbour's in the next bed. On the other hand, the fact that he may be rejected as not being poor enough to receive charity may lead to concealment of means by one who is thus tempted to commit fraud; and again, a man may be rejected as too rich from the hospital's point of view, although the obtaining of anything approaching the benefits of hospital treatment is, owing to his financial position, impossible to him. Sir WILLIAM OSLER, with regard to this system of pure charity, says tersely, "Give it up." In further explanation he calls attention to the hospitals of Canada and the United States where payment according to means, where means exist, is part of a system found to work well in practice. Sir WILLIAM OSLER, declares emphatically that from a financial point of view the system pays, the importance of which is clear if we wish to see our hospitals maintain independence of official control administered by a State department or a local authority. Those who consider that the National Insurance Act should have provided definitely for the admission of insured patients to hospitals, subject to payment from funds provided under the Act, cannot assert that as a matter of principle no voluntary hospital should receive

money in respect of services rendered. Sir WILLIAM OSLER'S second point referred to the equipment of hospitals which, he urged, should in all cases be fully provided with laboratories for chemical, bacteriological, and pathological research. He alluded in particular to provincial hospitals from which, in the absence of such laboratories, material for investigation has to be sent to London or to some other large centre. As to the broad bearing of this advice none will probably be inclined to contradict Sir WILLIAM OSLER. As to its effect upon the voluntary hospital system, we need only refer to the financial difficulty which must always occur when more or less expensive structural improvements and apparatus are demanded by the developments of modern science; and point out that the construction and maintenance of research laboratories are very fitting undertakings for municipal authorities or the State to assist in, but that the question of the extent to which, in exchange for such assistance, the municipality or the State should be allowed to take part in hospital management is a question for serious consideration. The third point was put forward as a somewhat delicate one affecting the medical profession. He suggested that in view of the rapid development of modern medicine there should be in every county in connexion with every county hospital a paid medical officer, a pure physician, receiving a fixed stipend and devoting his time, or the greater part of it, to medical investigation combined with the care of the patients in the hospital. The adoption of this recommendation would apparently imply the exclusion of those medical men from the wards of a county hospital who now give their services gratuitously, accepting in return the advantages to themselves which hospital practice confers upon medical practitioners undertaking it. The effect of such a proposal upon the existence of any hospital as a voluntary institution must depend to some extent upon its financial position at the time when it decides upon any such innovation. If money has to be found in order that the patients of any hospital may receive better treatment, the questions of where it is to come from and upon what conditions it will be given must at once arise. Sir WILLIAM OSLER'S fourth recommendation, that county hospitals should be used for purposes of instruction, and particularly of post-graduate instruction, is interesting and important in itself. It also has an indirect bearing upon the question of the maintenance of voluntary hospitals, in that such a system would seem to be more likely to flourish and maintain its efficiency in voluntary hospitals through the goodwill and coöperation of the medical men of a county working for a common cause, than in rate or State-aided institutions conducted by persons not immediately interested in medical progress.

Sir WILLIAM OSLER did not directly concern himself with the question of the source of the hospital's funds except in so far as he urged that all patients able to do so should pay according to their means, a principle accepted to a limited extent by those who desire to see insured patients accommodated and payment made on their behalf from insurance funds. At present the difficulty of discussing the question of how far hospitals should cease to be "voluntary" (in the sense of how far they should

Ad

cease to be supported entirely by charity) is increased by our not knowing as yet to what extent they will be affected by the National Insurance Act, and whether the making up from voluntary sources of any financial deficiency that may arise is going to be practically possible. Meanwhile the Council of the British Medical Association has reported upon the question of the advisability of the medical staff of a hospital being paid for its services, to the effect that such an innovation would be undesirable on the ground that it would tend to undermine our "peculiarly British" voluntary system; and we may take it that the general body of the medical profession regards with distrust any possibility of State-supported and locally directed institutions supplanting voluntary hospitals, with the possible subsequent development of a State medical service. The views of Sir HENRY BURDETT will naturally be studied in this connexion. We gather, not only from what he said recently at Oxford, but also from his speech at the annual meeting of the Home Hospitals Association in last March and from other utterances of his opinion, that he regards State financial assistance to the hospitals, in view of the calls made upon the latter under modern conditions, as a matter of justice, and its acceptance as a matter of necessity. We also gather, however, that he does not regard the giving and accepting of such assistance as likely to be fatal to the voluntary element in our hospital system, either immediately or in the future. In short, he advises the voluntary hospitals that they should be able to obtain Government aid in return for work done for Government patients, and retain, as all should desire them to do, the dignity of their present position and the efficiency which has won them the confidence and gratitude of the country. This is comforting but not quite convincing.

Annotations.

"Ne quid nimis."

ROGER BACON.

As a nation we are singularly slow in commemorating our scientific heroes by any public memorial. For one statue or building or institution in honour of science or of a man of science there are 20 in memory of a naval or military leader. This comparative neglect of science may be justified in some minds by the fact that the labours of the scientific worker touch us at nearly every point of our daily life, while those of the navy and the army, though by their labours the works of science are rendered possible, may be forgotten when once the actual battle is over. Although, to use the words of the Prayer Book, the navy is "a security for such as pass upon the seas upon their lawful occasions; that the inhabitants of our island may in peace and quietness serve Thee our God; and that we may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land with the fruits of our labours," yet when the military or naval exploit has been long performed its protagonist may be forgotten unless a concrete memorial is raised to him. The services of science being more obvious from day to day are supposed not to drop out of mind so quickly. This may be the reasoning which leads to public monuments to the sailor and soldier in greater profuseness than to the man of science, but it seems to us that its outcome is carried too far. Nearly

700 years ago there was born, probably at Ilchester, one of the greatest of our scientific heroes, by name Roger Bacon, and a proposal is on foot to commemorate the seventh centenary of his birth next year (1914) by erecting a statue in his honour in the Natural History Museum at Oxford, and by raising a fund for the publication of his works. To the average inhabitant of these islands Bacon is little more than the name of a man who made a brazen head which talked, and invented gunpowder or something of the sort; few know that Bacon was a man of encyclopædic knowledge and held a very high estimate of experimental science, concerning which he says in the *Opus Tertium* that it "neglects arguments, since they do not make certain, however strong they may be, unless at the same time there is present the *experientia* of the conclusion. For experimental science teaches *experiri*, that is, to test by observation or experiment the lofty conclusions of all sciences." A strong committee has been formed to further the memorial, the chairman being Sir Archibald Geikie, President of the Royal Society. Subscriptions may be sent to the secretary, Lieutenant-Colonel H. W. Hime, 20, Park-road West, Kew. Subscribers of 1 guinea will be entitled to an invitation to the Roger Bacon Commemoration at Oxford in July, 1914, and to receive a copy of a memorial volume of essays dealing with Bacon's life and works which it is proposed to publish.

THE GERMAN EMPEROR AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

FROM his position at the head of a great military nation the German Emperor is not likely to applaud the passage in the *Iliad* where it is declared that a wise physician "is more than armies to the public weal." For him, on the contrary, the German army and navy are of paramount importance, but he has nevertheless during his reign of 25 years taken many opportunities of showing that he holds medical science in high esteem, and various incidents of this kind are recorded in a recent number of the *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*. His active interest in the efficiency of the army medical department and in the restoration of military invalids to health, whenever possible, has several times been a feature of addresses delivered by him at the laying of foundation-stones, the opening of military sanatoriums, and other ceremonies of a like kind. Some useful innovations, such as the appointment of nursing sisters to army hospitals, are said to have been introduced in a great measure through his influence. His interest in medical questions has frequently led him to take counsel with eminent members of the profession, and in return there have been instances in which he gave valuable assistance to schemes approved by them. The Emperor is an advocate of post-graduate study for medical men; in the year 1906, at the opening of the Empress Frederick House in Berlin, he delivered a characteristic speech, and ever since that time arrangements made for this purpose have always been sure of his support; he returned to the subject on another occasion when he visited the Virchow Hospital and expressed the hope that it should as far as possible be made available for post-graduate instruction. He took a deep interest in the discoveries of Professor Robert Koch, giving him whatever assistance was possible, and attending his lecture on sleeping sickness shortly before the second sleeping sickness expedition left Germany. A tangible proof of the Emperor's cordial sentiments towards Professor Koch was afforded by his contribution of £5000 to the Robert Koch Memorial. Professor von Bergmann, Professor Ehrlich, and Professor Behring have also received from the Emperor various honourable tokens of esteem. Among the numerous questions of public health on which the Emperor has bestowed attention the prevention of