HOSPITAL REVENUES AND THE WAR EMERGENCY.

By T. HOLMES.

I NEED hardly say with what gratification I have read Sir H. Burdett's paper under the above heading in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* for June 23rd, in reply to mine of March 10th. Sir Henry's most kind appreciation of my attempt at the close of my life to do some service to my old hospital and to the cause of hospitals generally is naturally very grateful to me; and still more so is his opinion, publicly expressed, that the large expenditure which the governors of St. George's have felt it their duty to bear has been "absolutely justifiable." It has not been incurred without severe searchings of heart, prolonged discussions, and considerable adverse criticism from some of our own body. But I believe it has borne good fruit in saving the lives of our patients and hastening their convalescence.

I hope Sir H. Burdett will bear with me while I make a few final remarks on his reply to my criticisms.

THE RESERVE FUNDS.

Sir Henry is in error in thinking that the publication in his *Hospitals and Charities* of the state of the funds of each London hospital in any way meets my objection to a method of reasoning which uses the fact that there is a large reserve fund at the disposal of hospitals generally as an argument against particular hospitals when they say they have no reserve. The list given in that book commences with one hospital—St. Bartholomew's—which is in need of nothing, and ends with seven hospitals which have no reserve at all. The whole number amounts to seventy-five, which are in every variety of pecuniary position from complete security to total destitution. What useful deduction as applied to any individual among them can be drawn from the total sum which they hold amongst their whole body?

DAMAGING APPEALS.

I confess that I entirely missed the intention of Sir H. Burdett's sentence on this head, which ran thus—that "the financial position of the London hospitals can be made secure if the old bad system of making out a case by muddling the figures is given up of deliberate purpose by each institution." How was the reader to know that this did not refer to any "system" to which "each institution" had "deliberately" conformed, but only to some unnamed appeals issued by members of their body, and to which the whole body had never assented? I entirely agree that every appeal for funds should be a plain business-like statement of the facts. But is it wise at this time, when our hospitals are being assailed by "antivivisection" on the one hand, and by "municipalisers" on the other, to throw out charges in general terms which are sure to be used by our enemies to impugn the honesty of the system under which they are carried on? I used the experience of St. George's to prove that at that hospital we at least try to put everything as plainly and as fully before the public as possible, and my belief is that the same plan is followed at all respectable hospitals. If it is not, it would be much to the public benefit to know who are the culprits, though one can easily apprehend the motives which restrain any individual from appearing as accuser.

EXPENDITURE ON SURGERY AND DISPENSARY, INCLUDING OUTPATIENTS.

I do not see in the figures given by Sir Henry any proof that this is an item on which any really important economy can be made. The expenditure at St. George's is not higher than at most of the other hospitals in the list; and it is made apparently higher than it really is by the accidental fact that the comparison is made in a year (1898) when wards were closed in consequence of building alterations, and therefore the average of occupied beds was low.

INCREASED COST OF NURSING.

This is really the most important item of the whole, and I am inclined to agree with Sir H. Burdett that we have already reached the utmost limit of permissible (that is, remunerative) expenditure. But I doubt whether we ought to tie the hands of our successors in the way which he suggests, and I still more doubt whether we can.

MISUSE OF HOSPITAL FUNDS.

I am glad that as to the financial arrangement between a hospital and school, Sir H. Burdett approves of the plan followed at St. George's, apart from the very trifling detail of providing for a sinking fund. I have no personal wish to argue the general question; but I believe Sir Henry underestimates the support which a hospital derives from its school. I know that a large percentage of our subscribers come to us through the medical school; and I quite fail to understand (I am afraid he will think me very stupid) what he means about "a young medical man economically managing his department." Surely he does not think that any departments are under the management of the honorary officers, who, though legally qualified, are of course *in statu pupillari*. I make this remark lest the paper should fall into the hands of one of the ill-informed people above referred to, and we should be told shocking tales about the house-surgeons managing the London hospitals.

I need make no observations on the remaining part of Sir H. Burdett's paper, beyond perhaps saying that it is no new thing to find the older hospitals alive to the necessity for reconstruction and refurnishing. This has been going on more or less for at least thirty years as their means have permitted.

THE PLAGUE.

PREVALENCE OF THE DISEASE.

INDIA.

THE plague deaths for all India were 503 and 417 for the two weeks ending June 9th and 16th respectively. During the previous week 746 deaths from plague occurred, so that there is again a substantial fall to be recorded. In Bombay city the deaths from plague during the fortnight numbered 281. In the Bombay Presidency beyond the city 160 plague deaths occurred. With all the improvement, however, it must be noted that the mortality from plague alone is twice what it was at this time last year. The same is also true of the general mortality, which is double the average normal rate. This is largely due to cholera, which, although not present in any epidemic form, is still giving rise to anxiety as to the future.

Calcutta.—On June 6th the total number of deaths in Calcutta for the first time since the recrudescence of plague was below the normal. Plague deaths during the weeks ending June 9th and 16th numbered 122 and 138 respectively. From what we know of the history of plague in Bombay and Calcutta, the death-rate is likely to fall in the former still further, but in the latter city in all probability the number will remain stationary for some time. Plague in Calcutta has behaved as if the disease were endemic, whereas in Bombay epidemics have been the rule.

In Bengal, exclusive of Calcutta, 75 and 54 deaths from plague were recorded during the two weeks ending June 9th and 16th respectively, and in Karachi city 16 and 12. Aden seems for the time being to be free of plague.

HONG KONG.

During the three weeks ending June 16th, 23rd, and 30th, the plague statistics in Hong Kong were as follows: Fresh cases, 74, 63, and 99; and deaths, 57, 64, and 93 respectively. The Hong Kong Chinese community still seem to thwart the work of the Government in every way, as during the two and three weeks of May the sanitary officials discovered 25 plague cases by a house-to-house visitation; of these, 12 were dead when found. House-to-house visitation may be an objectionable form of eradicating plague from the native standpoint; but in view of such a state of affairs it seems absolutely imperative that it be enforced in Hong Kong at all events. It is particularly unfortunate that plague is present in epidemic form in Hong Kong at the present moment. The crisis in China is bringing an enormous increase of trade to the port and of residents to the town, and the presence of plague in the port is calculated to cause anxiety as to an active spread of the disease.

JAPAN.

Plague still continues to appear in what, from the information supplied, would seem to be isolated localities in Japan. The most recent notification of the kind comes from Nakanogo, on the Tokaido railway, where, during the third week in May, an alarming outbreak occurred.

FORMOSA.

Plague continues to appear in rather a sporadic form in Formosa. The number of cases and deaths for all Formosa since the commencement of the year up to May 5th were 379 and 273 respectively.

ARABIA.

Muscat is now declared free of plague.

TURKEY.

At Smyrna a death from plague was recorded on June 20th.

PORTUGAL.

The announcement that plague had reappeared at Oporto caused considerable anxiety in Western Europe. The most recent information is, however, that only one case of the disease has been met with. The reassurance as to the limitation of the plague in Oporto must be received with caution. We are aware that Portuguese residents in Lisbon have taken their departure for Madeira for their summer change at a much earlier period than is usual, and the reason they assign for the haste is that plague existed in Oporto, in spite of official statements to the contrary, and they wished to avoid the impending quarantine.