

THE HOSPITAL SHIP MAINE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I wish, with your permission, to set forth a few facts about the hospital ship Maine, in view of the comments made by newspapers here and in the United States on the subject. At the outbreak of the South African war the Atlantic Transport Company offered the steamship Maine to the Government for use as a hospital ship, including the captain and crew, who were to be maintained at the company's expense during such time as the ship was in use. The Government accepted the offer; but, the ship being a cattle boat and the expense of fitting her out as a hospital ship being very great, the Admiralty had taken no steps to alter her up to the time when the American ladies' committee was formed for the purpose of sending out a hospital ship. Mr. Bernard Baker, president of the Atlantic Transport committee, hearing of the committee and its aims, proposed to the Admiralty to hand over the Maine to the committee to fit out. The Admiralty agreed. The committee took over the ship from the Government on the same terms. The committee collected £41,597 13s., a sum sufficient to fit out the ship and keep her in commission over 15 months, sending her to South Africa and China. On her return from her final voyage Mr. Bernard Baker presented the ship to the British Government, the ladies' committee giving all the fittings, equipment, &c., which greatly enhanced the value of the vessel, and had entirely altered its character. The committee have been accused of arrogating to themselves the credit of having given the ship and of presenting a medal to his Majesty the King commemorating the gift. As chairman of the committee, and on their behalf, I deny this allegation, which is absolutely false. The medal and the address were intended as a souvenir for the late Queen Victoria in remembrance of the work done by the ship and of her interest in that work, and was entirely a private affair. Mr. Bernard Baker was publicly thanked for his gift in both Houses of Parliament, and in the committee's final report, which was widely circulated and sent to all subscribers, the following paragraph appears:—

“With much generosity the Atlantic Transport Company provided the ship and crew during the whole time, which materially helped towards our fund. It is a source of great gratification to the committee that Mr. Bernard Baker, president of the Atlantic Transport Company, has most generously presented the ship to the British Government, and the ladies' committee have donated all the hospital fittings and equipment.”

No doubt Mr. Baker would be the first to repudiate the busybodies who have tried to deprive his gift to the British Government of much of its grace by representing him as seeking for repeated and interminable thanks.

I remain, yours most faithfully,

JENNIE CORNWALLIS WEST, Chairman of the late Maine Committee.

35, Great Cumberland-place, W., Oct. 15.