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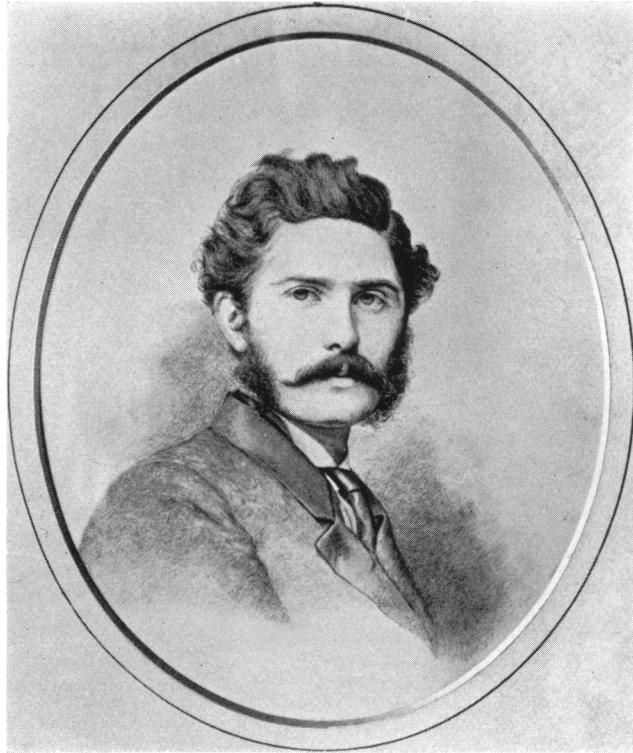
EAST LONDON HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN

ON 30 April 1963 the hospital formerly known as the East London Hospital for Children was closed, a few years before reaching its centenary. This institution originated in January 1868 in a warehouse in Ratcliff Cross. Dr. Nathaniel Heckford of the London Hospital, the founder, when working with his future wife Sarah Goff during the 1866 cholera epidemic in Wapping, saw the great need for a children's hospital in East London. The original building contained ten beds which were later increased to fifty, and was the first hospital in London to admit babies under the age of two years. Public generosity was stimulated by Charles Dickens, who publicized his visit to this 'small star in the East'. Dr. Murray of the *British Medical Journal*, on behalf of the Editor, also emphasized that financial support was 'direfully needed' (*Brit. Med. J.*, 8 February 1868). In the same journal Dr. Heckford, writing about special institutions, stated that 'qualified men would benefit by attending such hospitals where they would learn more and where, from the special influences and interests at work, the patients would gain morally and physically'; thus he anticipated the present demand for postgraduate training.

The need for larger premises resulted in the building of the hospital at Shadwell, but Dr. Heckford, who died of consumption in 1871 at the age of twenty-nine years, did not live to see its foundation. The hospital on its new site was opened in 1877 by H.R.H. the Duchess of Teck. The original 180 beds were later in 1881 increased by the addition of a further floor.

This voluntary hospital continued to thrive and gradually acquired an international reputation. In 1932 the name was changed to the Princess Elizabeth of York Hospital for Children and later in 1942 this hospital with the new country branch at Banstead was amalgamated with the Queen's Hospital, Hackney Road, to form the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children. With the closure of the hospital in Shadwell, the paediatric work is now being actively maintained by the Hackney Road and Banstead branches of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Today with the rising birth-rate and the changing emphasis of paediatrics there is still a need for the special care of infants and children in hospitals, where training in this particular branch of medicine can be sought as in Heckford's day.

V. A. J. SWAIN



Dr. Nathaniel Heckford (1842–71)



East London Hospital for Children about 1900