

NOTE BY DR. ROBERTSON.

It is with no small diffidence that, in accordance with the unanimous vote of the Association, Dr. ROBERTSON now assumes the conduct of this Journal.

It will be his anxious endeavour, in the performance of the task now entrusted to him, to maintain the Journal in the position of honour which it has hitherto held, by following the example of independent, straightforward action set to him by his distinguished predecessor. He trusts that during his editorship the pages of the Journal will continue, as heretofore, unsullied by unseemly disputes and personal discussions unworthy of the members of a learned profession, against which Dr. BUCKNILL has firmly closed his pages. He deems it right to take this first opportunity of explicitly stating his rule of action on this important point, and no fear of offence to individual members of the Association will induce him to depart therefrom.

Nine years have elapsed since the first number of the Journal appeared; it may be not uninteresting on the present occasion to look back on the work which during these years this Journal has accomplished. The year 1852 found the Association few in numbers, of limited funds, and less influence. The Annual Meetings had almost fallen into abeyance, and the objects of the Association in the improvement of asylum management, the diffusion of the knowledge of the treatment of mental disease, and the promotion of free communication on these subjects between its members, were alike unfulfilled; the Association was but a dim name, and of its existence even many members of the department, including the present writer, were ignorant.

The 15th of November, 1853, the first number of the Asylum Journal appeared. Some of the readers of this

note will remember its unpretending bi-quarterly form. In October, 1855, it assumed its quarterly form, and in April, 1861, it was transferred from the provincial printer to an excellent London establishment. Forty-two numbers in all have been published. Dr. ROBERTSON ventures to say that the thought and tone of the articles contributed in this period have materially raised the position of the English psychological medicine both at home and abroad. The Journal now circulates in our most distant colonies, and it was only this summer that Dr. ROBERTSON learnt from a distinguished foreign visitor that no less than seven copies circulated in Sweden.

With the issue of the Journal the Association rose into new life. With one or two exceptions, whose absence Dr. ROBERTSON personally regrets, as that of men whose work he has learnt to know and value, all the medical officers of the public asylums in England, Ireland, or Scotland, have joined our ranks, which have had further added to them every physician of any character or pretensions engaged in the private practice of this department in medicine. Moreover, men of European fame, as Sir BENJAMIN BRODIE, Sir HENRY HOLLAND; of high official position, as Mr. GASKELL, Dr. NAIRNE, Mr. WILKES, Dr. BROWNE, Dr. COXE, Dr. NUGENT, &c., have willingly consented to enrol their names in the list of our honorary members. It is superfluous to point out the increased influence which such an extension of our members has given to the Association.

The contents of the 'Journal of Mental Science' may be divided into—

- I. ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND LECTURES.
- II. REVIEWS.
- III. ENGLISH AND FOREIGN QUARTERLY PSYCHOLOGICAL RETROSPECT.
- IV. CORRESPONDENCE AND NEWS.
- V. MEDICO-LEGAL CASES.

I. ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND LECTURES.

Dr. ROBERTSON knows how able the members of the Association are to supply such articles. Few pleasures in this vain world are more real than the satisfaction which flows from successful intellectual effort. It is, moreover, a duty which each owes to his calling, to make known, as widely as opportunity may offer, the results of his thought and labour. The French physicians herein set us an example which we would do well to imitate. Our asylum case-books, to quote Dr. CONOLLY'S emphatic words, contain treasures hitherto hidden.

II. REVIEWS.

It will be the desire of the Editor, and of those associated with him in the conduct of the Journal, fairly and without favour to pass in review all recent works bearing on practical psychology and its kindred subjects.

III. ENGLISH AND FOREIGN QUARTERLY PSYCHOLOGICAL RETROSPECT.

In this section of the Journal will be given a quarterly summary of the progress of medical science at home and abroad in all that relates to subjects embraced in the 'Journal of Mental Science.' The Editor ventures to add that the experience which he acquired when associated with Dr. RANKING, as a writer in the 'Half-yearly Abstract of the Medical Sciences,' will enable him to conduct this important department of the Journal to the satisfaction of the Association.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE AND NEWS.

In the earlier numbers of the Journal some very interesting letters are to be found relating to everyday asylum life. "A class of articles (writes the Editor in the number for November, 1854), to which we attach much importance, and which we hope to see developed, is one for which it is difficult to find a name. We mean the multifarious little

matters of practical utility, ranging from pins and needles upwards—the utilitaria by which the ship is kept neat and cleanly or comfortable. Little matters, but of great importance to the well-being and economy of a large institution, and not unfrequently also to the health and the safety of the patients.”

V. MEDICO-LEGAL CASES.

The increasing attention which the public press as well as the medical and legal professions pay to trials in lunacy, renders it desirable that a record of these cases be preserved in the pages of the ‘Journal of Mental Science.’ The Editor has promises of help in this section of his work, such as will enable him fairly to deal with this difficult department of medical jurisprudence.

In thus surveying the work before him, Dr. ROBERTSON candidly admits that he feels unequal, single-handed, to undertake it. It is only the promised aid and co-operation of so competent a writer as Dr. HENRY MAUDSLEY that now emboldens him to embark on his editorial duties. It was a matter of much regret to Dr. ROBERTSON’S supporters, as well as to himself, that the rules of the Association prevented the election, at the late Special Meeting, of more than one Editor, and that consequently they were prevented from formally associating Dr. MAUDSLEY’S name with Dr. ROBERTSON, as joint Editor of the Journal. Moreover, Dr. ROBERTSON was overruled by a special vote at the conclusion of the meeting in his wish to leave the public announcement of the names of the conductors of the Journal open till the next Annual Meeting. Under these circumstances he adopted the only course left open to him, of giving the notice to the Secretary, required by Rule 18, of his intention, at the Annual Meeting of 1863, to move that Dr. MAUDSLEY be associated with him (in the event of his re-election) as joint Editor of the Journal, as until that date he will be in its management.

September 18th, 1862.