

of no service, to speculate upon the manner in which the coarsely granular eosinophile cell acts in the human body. But it is firmly impressed upon my mind that this leucocyte is the most important of all others in the acute insanities.

Its behaviour has always been definite in excitement with confusion, but my observations in depression with excitement are not so conclusive; its occasionally irregular appearances, sometimes in increased numbers, are most difficult to explain.

(¹) The Essay for which was awarded the Bronze Medal of the Medico-Psychological Association, 1909.

Occasional Notes.

The Annual Meeting.

The years roll on, president follows president, yet each succeeding year finds the presidential chair filled by a successor worthy of the long *rdle* of honoured predecessors, each distinguished by some special service in the cause of that form of human suffering the alleviation of which is the life-spring of this Association. That this should be the case in a body so limited in its membership is proof of the stimulating character of the work in which it is engaged.

At the recent annual meeting the Association acclaimed a president distinguished alike in the science, literature, and practical treatment of insanity, whose example and influence should strongly reinforce the high stimulus of his immediate predecessors.

The history of the Association shows steadily progressive evolution in the scope of its aims. In its earliest days the amelioration of the condition of detention called for its most urgent efforts. Treatment—medicinal, hygienic, and moral—has occupied its attention continuously; much effort has been given to the improvement of the legal relations of the insane, and in recent years to the education of those employed in their care.

The presidential address embodies a new departure in effort whose coming has long been presaged—the study of insanity from the preventive aspect. Preventive medicine, or rather preventive hygiene, is the dominant character of the medicine

of the age, and this Association would be wanting in sympathy with general medicine did it not share in promoting one of the most hopeful means of human evolution. Insanity in its asylum aspects is, alas, to a large extent, a waste product of the social manufactory, a lamentable result of remote unhygienic conditions over which the psychiatric physician has no control. He may, however, hope, by the careful study of these waste products, to suggest to society the means by which their production may be limited.

The statistical tables of the Association, together with the more scientific study of heredity in the light of recent knowledge, so admirably summarised and so suggestively analysed by the President in his address, should stimulate the Association to take an active share in this preventive teaching. The scientific study of causation of one of the most preventable forms of insanity, general paralysis, was the basis of very important communications by Dr. Williamson and Dr. Ford Robertson. The extent of the work and observations of the latter are well known and appreciated, and Dr. Williamson's communications gave evidence of an extent of research, with elaboration of procedure, of an eminently scientific character. The experiments of these observers appear to clash, but whatever ultimate decision may be reached in regard to the part played by the *Bacillus paralyticans* in general paralysis, there can be no doubt that the investigation is leading to a vast acquirement of knowledge of a very valuable kind.

The preventive treatment of insanity in the pre-asylum stage received an important contribution in the paper of Dr. Helen Boyle, descriptive of a home for the early treatment of nervous and mental breakdown in the poor. This is a most practical new departure, which should be imitated throughout the country. A few score of such homes would materially limit the numbers of those needing asylum care.

The treatment of insanity associated with exophthalmic goitre was the subject of a most interesting communication from Dr. Gilmour. Dr. Fuller, at the conclusion of a capable review of alcoholism, crime, and insanity, urged the adoption of indeterminate detention in inebriate reformatories.

The business aspect of the meeting, if the sittings of the various committees dealing with education, legal and association matters can be thus deprived of their really medical

character, was especially vigorous. The Educational Committee almost rivalled a Parliamentary Budget Committee in the duration of its *séances*.

The social side was as successful as the rest, and the many pleasantnesses of the meeting will long remain in the memory of those attending.

Nor was the meeting without its own special psychologic teaching. An eminent member, coming from a sick bed, almost from the operation table, took a leading part in all the work and enjoyment of the meeting, apparently with excellent results. His numerous friends witnessed with pleasure this forceful demonstration of the beneficent influence of the mind over the body.

Asylum Officers Superannuation Bill.

More progress has been made with this Bill than seemed probable when our note in the July number was penned. After a very thorough enquiry by the Select Committee of the House of Commons, who held eleven meetings and examined twelve witnesses (amongst the latter being Drs. Bower and Hayes Newington, specially representing the Association), a Report was unanimously agreed to, approving the main principles of the Bill, and recommending legislation on its lines forthwith. Certain alterations were made and additional clauses inserted, so that the Bill as revised by the Committee differed in several respects from that originally drafted by the Asylum Workers Association. The most important change was the provision enabling any officer or servant in the employment of an asylum authority at the commencement of the Act (if he so prefer) to contract out of it by giving notice within three months so as to remain subject to his old conditions of service and prospects of pension. The Bill, as amended by the Select Committee, had subsequently to be submitted to a Committee of the whole House, and at this stage it suffered some slight mutilation by a private member, who threatened otherwise to bar its progress. However, it was safely piloted through this peril, and passed its third reading in the House of Commons on August 26th. The tactful way in which Sir William Collins utilised every opportunity that offered for advancing the Bill commands the admiration and gratitude of all interested in its provisions.