

Early treatment, too, would probably be facilitated, from the fact that there would certainly be less reluctance on the part of patients and their friends to go to an institution not an asylum and not a workhouse, than is now the case. This reluctance at the present time constantly leads to delay, with the result that illnesses which might have been abbreviated become protracted and incurable, or the sufferer is permitted to commit some overt act of insanity.

Great economy in the long run should result directly from the diminution of the number of cases going to asylums, and indirectly by a more systematic distribution of the cases to the institutions most appropriate to their mental state. Under existing conditions great expense is often entailed by cases having to be transferred from one institution to another, as well as from want of systematic inquiry as to settlement at the outset of the case.

We may earnestly hope, therefore, that the rumour is well founded, and that we may soon be able to record that the London County Council has made another advance in the care of the insane, of even more importance than those which we have from time to time with satisfaction recorded.

Hypnotism in Court.

In the newspaper reports of a recent action for slander it was stated that the British Medical Association had officially recognised hypnotism as a therapeutic agent. The medical man whose evidence led to this incorrect statement has shown that his remarks had been misapprehended by the journalist. It is of some importance to recall the circumstances, to show how the matter really stands. The committee appointed to report upon the subject included well-known names, and after a considerable interval presented their conclusions. They expressed themselves as satisfied of the genuine nature of the hypnotic state, and were of opinion that, as a therapeutic agent, hypnotism was frequently effective in removing pain, procuring sleep, and alleviating many functional ailments. As to its permanent efficacy in the treatment of habitual drunkenness, the evidence before the committee was encouraging, but not conclusive. They specially indicated that care in the employment of hypnotism was necessary, and suggested important limitations.

The report was referred to the committee on its first presentation, and when it was again brought up in 1893 it was

disposed of by a motion that the report be received and the committee thanked for its services, on the understanding that it be not adopted by the Association.

The general sense of the profession was against the recognition of hypnotism as a means of treatment. Dr. Kingsbury complains that a handful of men, who had not engaged in close observation of the phenomena in question, should thus have disposed of the report. In fact, he holds their verdict to be incompetent. But hypnotism must win its place in the armoury of medicine by general acceptance. Unless it commands the confidence of the profession it will continue, as heretofore, sporadic, limited, uncertain of favour. While it must be acknowledged that it is potent for good in certain directions, the most enthusiastic must admit that it entails very grave disadvantages. Just as some men of tender conscience and decided opinions decline to prescribe alcohol, others will avoid the employment of hypnotism. No doubt it may be urged that medicine must not be restricted to the use of innocuous drugs, but in our special department, at least, the evils consequent on hypnotic influences are so grave, and the scope of the remedy is so limited, that we doubt if it will ever be other than an infrequent means of treatment. We recall a visit to the Zurich Asylum, where Professor Forel has long studied the phenomena of hypnotism, and where many of his "subjects" could be seen among the members of the staff. Only one patient, an habitual drunkard, was then sensitive to the hypnotic influence exerted by Professor Forel. And, in our own experience, the few cases in which it seemed prudent and desirable to induce hypnotic sleep were, in the end, apparently deteriorated in mental condition. The conservation of mental power, so urgently indicated, was in fact endangered.

In our opinion the British Medical Association acted discreetly in refusing to endorse the finding of the Committee with its approval and recommendation.

The Darenth Scandal.

The special committee appointed to consider whether any measures should be taken on behalf of this Association, in support of the sufferer in this matter, by his desire has taken no action.

That the victim of such apparent ill-treatment and unpleasant publicity should desire to avoid the continuance of