

who have worked such a marvellous change in Egypt. Every department is emerging from the chaos which so long reigned supreme.

ASYLUM WORKERS' ASSOCIATION.

The Annual Meeting of this Association was held on the 28th March under the presidency of Sir James Crichton-Browne, M.D., LL.D., F.R.S., Lord Chancellor's Visitor. The audience, including (amongst others) Mrs. Creighton, wife of the Bishop of London, Mrs. Langdon-Down, Miss Honnor Morten, L.S.B., Dr. David Nicolson, C.B. (Lord Chancellor's Visitor), Mr. Bagot, Commissioner in Lunacy, Mr. F. D. Mocatta, the Rev. H. Hawkins, Drs. Alexander, Bower, Cassidy, Chambers, Elkins, Haslett, Gardiner Hill, P. Langdon-Down, Neil, Stilwell, Savage, and Outterson Wood. Miss Crouchley, Miss Warren, and other asylum matrons were present.

The President gave an eloquent and interesting address on the objects of the Association, especially dwelling on the misrepresentations recently made in regard to the training of asylum nurses.

The report of the Committee showed that the membership of the Association had risen from 2013 to 2534 during the past year (1897), and stated that an employment bureau (for male attendants only), under the auspices of the Association, had been established at 10, Thayer Street, Manchester Square, W.

The accounts showed a satisfactory balance at the end of the year.

MALE NURSES' (TEMPERANCE) CO-OPERATION.

The annual report of this co-operative society shows that it has continued to thrive during the present year.

The staff, it is reported, has considerably increased during the year, yet the average earnings per man, after paying all expenses, have been a little over £102.

The Sick Fund established last year has been drawn on only to the extent of 8*s*. 4*d*. per member.

The report affirms that the tendency to employ male nurses for male cases is increasing, and that applications are being received from provincial hospitals for young men with asylum experience for employment in the male wards and about the hospital.

The co-operative principle is steadily growing in many directions, and it is satisfactory to note the success of it in this particular form.

THE UNFORTUNATE MIDDLE CLASSES.*

"Passing reference was made at the last meeting of the City Council to a deficiency in our lunatic asylum system which is deserving of much more attention than it has hitherto received. This is the provision of accommodation for lunatics of the middle or lower middle class, to form a connecting link between the existing pauper institutions and the private retreats where the fees are such as can only be paid by people in comparatively affluent circumstances. We are wont to indulge, not without reason, in a good deal of self-satisfaction at the reforms which the present century has wrought in the treatment of the insane. A hundred years ago the attitude of the community towards those of its members who were mentally infirm was one of wanton savagery; to-day local authorities are held responsible by the State for the proper care and efficient medical treatment of all such lunatics as cannot be satisfactorily provided for by their friends.

* From the *Birmingham Daily Post*, May 12th, 1898.

No one who has been through one of our public lunatic asylums, and noted the liberal and enlightened lines on which it is conducted, can doubt the sincerity of the change which has come over the national sentiment on this subject. It is the more surprising, therefore, that no general and systematic attempt has been made to meet the case of those who, being far removed from the pauper class in habit and instinct, can only find refuge in a pauper asylum should mental affliction overtake them. This is really a practical question for a middle-class community like that of Birmingham to address itself to. There are fourteen registered hospitals—that is to say, partially endowed private asylums—up and down the country, but Birmingham does not possess one. Nor is it an easy matter to obtain the benefits of these institutions for what seem the most worthy cases. There is a strong feeling that some of them are more concerned about adding to their wealth and magnificence by catering for profitable patients than they are in using their endowments in a manner more consistent with the compassionate intentions in which they originated. Thus these “registered hospitals,” as they are officially termed, do not by any means fill the gap between the public and the private asylums. It is true that any accommodation in our public asylums which is not needed for pauper cases may be utilised for paying patients. The law gives this power, and in times gone by advantage has been taken of it in Birmingham. But in recent experience it has been found that the claims on the available accommodation are so heavy that there is practically no chance of gaining admission save as a pauper. Strange as it seems, private patients at Winson Green Asylum have actually had to be made paupers in order to qualify for continued treatment in the institution. Thus by a singular perversity the community in its corporate capacity taxes itself in order to thrust an abhorrent piece of patronage on some of its stricken members. Birmingham produces about four hundred lunatics annually, in addition to those who are treated in private establishments. It is computed that of these four hundred at least an eighth are in circumstances which would enable payment of something over and above the pauper rate. Particular cases might be mentioned in which people with incomes of over £100 a year have been humiliated to the position of paupers by the present anomalous arrangement. Imagine the case of a small tradesman, a well-to-do artisan, a clerk, or even a not too flourishing professional man, who loses his reason. There is, speaking practically, no alternative but to go through the formality of pauperising him, and consigning him to an institution erected and partly maintained at the public expense.

“The Poor Law authorities require a certain payment towards the cost of maintenance; but they may not accept more than the bare amount of that cost—fixed by the standard at 9s. per week, plus collector’s commission of 10 per cent.—and by no ingenuity can the pauper brand be averted. The same thing happens should the man’s wife or other relative become insane. While fulfilling its proper obligation to lunatics of the pauper class, is it not the plain duty of the community to give heed to the claims of those who value their independence, and would sacrifice a good deal rather than forfeit it? It is likewise the policy of the community, for more reasons than one, to give this latter class some alternative to a pauper asylum. There is good reason to believe that in many cases the friends of people seized with insanity are so reluctant to submit to what they regard as the indignity of accepting Poor Law relief that the administration of proper treatment to the unfortunate patient is delayed to the last possible moment, and the chances of an early or ultimate restoration are gravely imperilled. It is certainly not in the interests of society that this should continue.”

The article goes on to sketch a scheme for the provision of the accommodation required in connection with the projected new asylum at Hollymoor, and we have been informed that the weekly charges will be lower than those of any existing county asylum provided for non-pauper cases.