

## OCCASIONAL NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

*The Annual Meeting.*

It may safely be affirmed that no Annual Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association has been more successful than that which assembled in Edinburgh on the 6th of August, 1888.

The three divisions of the United Kingdom were well represented in the Scotch Capital, and the proceedings of the morning meeting were business-like and lively. To one of the questions discussed we refer in the next article.

The afternoon meeting was devoted exclusively to the Presidential Address, and the intention of the orator was secured—that, namely, of raising an interesting debate upon the propositions which he formulated for the consideration, and, if tenable, the acceptance of the meeting. We think that Dr. Clouston's Thirty-One Articles are in a fair way of becoming historical in the annals of the Association. It is a pity he did not make them thirty-nine. Perhaps they will grow. Had the President of the sister association (Professor Gairdner) been present at the discussion, he could not have resisted the temptation of emphasizing his favourite theme by the illustration the occasion afforded of the contrast between the enforcement of ecclesiastical articles by threats of excommunication and still worse penalties, and the request of our President for free discussion and criticism of *his* medico-psychological articles.

Dissent from these conclusions was frankly expressed. There was no difference of opinion, however, as to the ability of the Address, its value as a contribution to psychological medicine, or the many-sidedness of the study which it suggested. Indeed, its suggestiveness must retain its importance, whatever may be the ultimate verdict on the dogmata laid down. No greater service could be rendered to the cause of the insane than to devise some means of lessening the fearful and depressing "tendency to dementia," which is the mill-stone ever suspended round the neck of the alienist physician in or out of an asylum. But profounder knowledge of the pathogenetic and pathological conditions of dementia ought to help us to discover the solution of this great and pressing problem; and to this end the President's discourse is at once a stimulus and a contribution. We may believe that as physical death is the

eventual lot of the body, so the supreme brain-centres have a limit set to their functions in the present state of being, and tend to dissolution or devolution as certainly as their evolution has been brought about in the past; but this ultimate reversion to original weakness ought not to paralyze our efforts to postpone the evil day as far as possible. We are disposed to think that the unique character of dementia on which so much stress is laid in the Address is open to doubt, and that what is said in the Thirteenth Article—that we have no reason to think that a brain which has a perfectly sound heredity can by any series of bad conditions known to us be made to exhibit typical secondary dementia—applies just as forcibly to any other form of mental disease. We think that there is great novelty in the position taken that almost all pure cases of secondary dementia originate in pubescent and adolescent insanities, for this is going far beyond the common and but too painful experience as to the number of adolescent dements in our asylums. If Dr. Clouston's statement can be substantiated, it is as pregnant with instruction as it is bold. We have no intention, however, of rediscussing the Address, and must refer the reader to the report of the Annual Meeting, under "Notes and News," for further comments.

Of the welcome given to the Association by our Scotch *confères* it is impossible to speak too highly. From beginning to end their kindness and hospitality were unstinted, making the visit to Edinburgh a most agreeable one, and largely contributing to the unquestionable success of the Annual Meeting of 1888.

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*Mode of Electing a President of the Association.*

The question was raised at the Annual Meeting whether the present system of nominating a President\* by the Council is the best that can be devised, the objection being that deference to its nomination, and a delicate consideration of the feelings of the nominated, prevent the members substituting any other names on the balloting list, should they be so disposed. On the other hand, it is considered by some that the objections, which a few years ago were so

\* Our remarks are confined to the office of President, because his election takes place annually as a matter of course, while it is usual for the other officers to remain in their posts until their resignation.