

### Occasional Notes.

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#### *The Annual Meeting.*

The Sixty-sixth Annual General Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland, held in London on July 25th and July 26th, 1907, yielded pride of place to none of its predecessors in the importance of the business matters considered, in the scientific interest of the subjects discussed, in the number and representative character of the members present, or in the genial and hearty nature of the proceedings.

A society which can call together such a meeting in London so late in the season shows a vitality and energy that may well be a matter of congratulation to its associates.

Besides the ordinary affairs of the Association, such as the working of the nursing system, the relations of the staff of asylums to the new legislation in regard to employers' liability, and so forth, the unfortunate series of events which have come to be known as "the Carswell case" were considered at length.

Dr. Robert Jones terminated his year of Presidency in which so much useful and brilliant work had been done, and Dr. P. W. MacDonald assumed the responsibilities of President of the Association. Dr. MacDonald delivered an address of much eloquence and vigour, in which he reviewed in the most interesting way the lunacy and social statistics of his county for the last twenty-five years. The keen observation and shrewd thought which this distinguished and energetic superintendent has given to his life's work were thoroughly appreciated by his audience, while his dignified conduct in the chair augur well for the year of office which he has just begun.

The annual dinner was well attended, and the guest list contained many names of distinction in various walks of life. It has rarely been our practice to refer to after-dinner speeches, but one speech made on this occasion deserves more than a passing reference if only for the deep impression which it produced upon its hearers, as shown by many references in the debate on the following day. Professor Clifford Allbutt, whose position, character, and experience make everything that he utters respected, spoke in weighty and well-considered words

on the desirability of the establishment of a ministry of public health. His earnest reasoning was thoroughly convincing, and we hold that it is the duty of every member of our profession to aid by every means in bringing about an object so essential to the advancement of the best interests of the commonwealth. We fear it may be long before the factions, misruling our country for the benefit of nobody except professional politicians, can be got to see the light, but the time will come when even party must follow the general advance of the age, and when England will not be able to lag behind those other countries which have found that the mere making of money is not the sole criterion of a nation's well-being.

Another after-dinner speaker, reminiscent, perhaps, of Robert Burns' line—

“A chiel's amang ye taking notes”—

varied the flow of his polished and delightful oratory by a humorous application of the statistical method to the question of alcohol. The yellow press swooped gaily down upon the convives a few days afterwards with a circular requesting that they should advertise their sentiments and habits with regard to the consumption of alcohol! If the yellow pressman was under the patronage of a god as powerful as Bacchus, probably that divinity would

“Better for his life provide  
Than public means which public manners breeds.”

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The outstanding points connected with this meeting—the points which will give it a special mark in the history of the Association, are, besides the President's remarkable address, the following: Firstly, the discussion on the Carswell case, and the vigorous action which it was determined to adopt thereon. Secondly, the public recognition which all the speakers in the Clouston discussion gave to the necessity of reviewing the position of the various lunacy departments in these countries. The feeling was general that there is urgent need of a Ministry of Health, under whose control, and not under that of a multitude of incoordinate boards, the insane ought to be placed. Thirdly, the demonstration by Dr. Albert Wilson, which was as entertaining as a romance, as wonderful as the exploits of

Zoe, and had further beneath its fascinating attractiveness a profound interest for us, as showing, among other things, the vast power of personal influence in the borderland realm of mental instability. Dr. Easterbrook's carefully elaborated paper on tent life indicated that the broad, physical lines of treatment in insanity, first, perhaps, sketched by the school of Cos, have not lost their interest or their value to the most advanced observers of to-day. Last, though not least, we must commend to the special notice of our readers the epoch-making observations of Drs. Ford Robertson and McRae. Such work as this the scientific world will not willingly let die. It can never lose its worth in the history of progress, for it can only be superseded when it has brought forth observations more keen, careful, and laborious than those which lend to it eminent distinction. Such work as this is the best answer to the shallow and ungenerous sneers of those who strive to aggravate in modern minds the secular prejudice that exists against our specialty by insinuating that we are unscientific and indifferent to the advance of knowledge, because most of us are doomed under the Egyptian bondage in which we live to make bricks without straw. Give us a public who deems that out of the superfluity of the richest people in the world it can afford to endow clinical and pathological research, give us, in other words, opportunity, and the men will not be lacking who will be ready to give their lives to the service of science, as so many of our young men now burn to do, as so many of our older men have done under difficulties hitherto all but insuperable.

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*The Alleged Decrease of Insanity.*

The alleged increase of insanity has been a perennial source of interest in the lay and medical press for so many years, that it is almost with regret that its demise has to be recorded, and the introduction of a new head-line brought to notice. The decrease of insanity is certainly a more agreeable subject, although it cannot hope for the popular support that has been so cheerfully accorded to its predecessor by the melancholy pessimists, who love by pictures of decadence to make the national flesh to creep.