

disgusting litter). To visit its buildings (as more and more are doing) you pay a small charge—unless you are a member, when a minimum fee of ten shillings a year gives you the run of the list. This is surely astonishingly good value.

The present membership is about twenty-five thousand. I am convinced it would be far higher if the public realised how much, in influence as well as cash, membership helps a body which is fighting to keep England a place worth living in. Since the war the Trust's work has been made more difficult by two new problems. Few owners have enough capital left for a maintenance fund, and past endowments that once were adequate can no longer meet rising costs.

But if you and I care sufficiently the work will go on.

ERIC KEOWN.

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BEAUTY IS THE only thing that time cannot harm. Philosophies fall away like sand, creeds follow one another, but what is beautiful is a joy for all seasons, a possession for all eternity.

OSCAR WILDE.

Mental Diseases of the Past.

By L. Goddard.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO FIX the precise date when man first became aware of the existence of definite mental diseases. Although afflictions of the mind are mentioned in some of the oldest books extant—reference to mental disturbances is made on papyri discovered in Egypt dating back over 5,000 years, while other records mention that temples existed for the treatment of the insane—actually, the topic of brain disorder was spoken of long before books were ever written.

In the Old Testament we read how David feigned epilepsy, and how Nebuchanezzar, suffering from deliriums, believed himself changed into an animal. Saul also had unreasonable impulses followed by acute mental depression.

Mental diseases affect all races, civilised and uncivilised, but it is among the savages that the grosser forms of insanity are found. These are soon stamped out, however, by the laws of nature which demand the survival of the fittest.

The ancient peoples believed insanity to be due to a divine inspiration. Epilepsy, for instance, was considered a sacred disease, commanding respect and even worship. Sufferers believed their utterances to be guided by the God in possession of them—a belief which still exists in some eastern countries. The ravings and mutterings of affected people were carefully interpreted through a prophet or priest.

In a few countries, however, it is believed that when a man became insane it was because evil spirits had taken possession of him. The superstition frequently led to the victim being put to death.

In 460 B.C., people afflicted with mental illness were at once taken to the temple of Saturn in Egypt. Here the priests tried to cure them by suggestion, occupation, kindness and music. Monasteries, therefore, appear to have been our first "asylums."

Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, who lived 500 B.C., boldly asserted in his teaching that disease was not due to "demons," but to disregard of natural laws. He is thought to be the first man to establish

insanity and epilepsy as natural diseases due to disorders of the brain, requiring not the services of priests but treatment from a physician. He maintained that epilepsy was not a supernatural disease; that it must not be regarded as due to demoniac possession, or that the convulsions were caused by a demon in the body and that the person afflicted was struggling and fighting in an effort to dispel it.

Old beliefs cling hard, however, and the Romans regarded it as an evil omen if any person had a fit during the conduct of a public meeting. Business was at once discontinued until another day.

In England, a strange cure was attempted for those suffering from "falling sickness." In the Stone Age, trephining was practised in order to "let out" the devil or evil spirits responsible for such illness. A hole was bored, by means of a sharpened flint, into the skull of the unfortunate person. Should this treatment not prove satisfactory, a further hole was made. Sometimes as many as five holes would be bored from time to time.

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, born in 384 B.C., was renowned for his knowledge of human intelligence and imagination. He appeared to neglect the question of the brain, however, and placed mental affection in the region of the heart. The heart, he asserted, was the seat of the "rational soul." The nerves, also, arose in the heart, but of their functions he made no mention. He described the brain as being moist, cold, white and bloodless; "that by the coldness of the brain, the heat of the heart may be tempered."

Erasistrates, the grandson of Aristotle, was perhaps the first man to dissect the human brain. He traced the connection of nerves and even noticed that the complexity of the convolutions of the gray matter was greatest in man, and that they were, to some extent, a measure of intelligence.

During the next 400 years or more, no further useful advance was made in brain science. Mental diseases were still commonly attributed to demons. Monasteries and temples continued to give quiet refuge to the mentally afflicted and priests and nuns administered to them.

And then, about A.D. 150, Galen, one of the most eminent physicians of any age or country, revised the sounder method of experimental inquiry by careful and frequent dissection of apes, goats and other animals. He proved that during life the arteries contained blood and not as was thought to be the case up to that time, merely air.

He refuted the doctrine of Aristotle, that the brain was hot and not cold, and appears to be the first physician to state definitely that the brain, spinal cord and nerves are the organs of sensation and intelligence, and that the nerves of sensation and movement are distinct.

In the Early Christian times and during the medieval period, many monasteries and convents of various orders still cared for the insane. Unfortunately, however, no use was made of the knowledge and teachings of Hippocrates, and many people—both insane and innocent—were burnt at the stake for practising witchcraft.

Dancing mania, a form of hysteria, became common in Germany during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In Italy "Tarantism," a somewhat similar disease, was ascribed to the bite of a spider called the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)