

"New Look" in Mental Health.

Dramatic Increase in Numbers of Voluntary Patients.

OPENING A Mental Health Exhibition at Chichester on February 28th, Miss Pat. Hornsby-Smith, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, said:—

"This national-wide campaign on Mental Health emphasises the new approach to mental illness. The days of the care and custody of a patient in an asylum have been replaced by the care, treatment and, frequently, cure of the patient in a mental hospital. There is ample evidence for this 'new look.' First of all, the dramatic increase in the proportion of voluntary to certified patients—in some hospitals it is as high as 94 per cent. voluntary, and over the whole country in the last ten years it has risen from 45 per cent. to 72 per cent.

"Further, nearly three-quarters of all new patients in mental hospitals are discharged within a year; the majority after a few months only. When one realises that over 40 per cent. of all the hospital beds in this country are on the mental side, this dramatic record of treatment and cure is all the more remarkable.

"Enormous progress has taken place in the character of mental hospitals and the treatment given to the patients. As a result, the work of mental nurses has undergone a great change. From being a mere attendant and custodian, the mental nurse has become a fully-fledged member of the great nursing profession with duties and responsibilities in no way inferior to those of the general trained nurse. Medical science and modern treatment add interest to the work and the high proportion of cures gives a sense of achievement which was regrettably absent in former years. The continuous and close personal contact between nurse and patient provides a field of unparalleled human interest and in this, the mental nurse, as well as carrying out her basic and technical nursing duties, also plays the part of friend, guide and teacher.

"This exhibition has a two-fold purpose: first to enlighten the public as to the work going on in our mental hospitals, and to encourage them to grant to the mental hospital in their minds and in their conversation, the respect and status and, indeed, affection which they give to their local general hospital; and, secondly, to encourage more people to take up mental nursing as a career, emphasising that it is just as important to nurse the sick mind as it is to nurse the sick body, and that it is just as satisfying to see restored to good health a disturbed and turbulent patient as it is to mend the broken limbs of someone injured in a car accident.

"A lot of nonsense has been talked about the declining appeal of nursing when, in fact, we have more nurses today than ever before, despite the many new professions opening to women and industry's overwhelming demand for every pair of hands. In nursing, generally, we had 35,000 more nursing staff in 1954 than we had in 1948. Even on the mental nursing side, where there are still grave shortages, the number of trained nurses rose from 14,647 in 1948 to 16,369 in 1954, and the nursing assistants from 8,700 to 12,907. What is even more remarkable is the fact that in 1954 there were 25 per cent. less available girls of the 18-19 age group and it would therefore be understandable if we had less rather than more nurses. Thus, in the present fierce competition of full employment, we have not only held our own, but the appeal of nursing has encouraged a greater number of girls to enter the Service than did pre-war.

"A great feature in bringing home to the public the new status of mental hospitals has been the development of Leagues of Friends attached to individual hospitals or groups of hospitals. Half the hospitals in the country have Leagues of Friends, but whilst it is customary for people to help their general hospital, it is only recently that we have been able to develop to any great extent Leagues of Friends for mental hospitals, and there are 84 mental hospitals with a League and 181 as yet without one. Inevitably, a considerable proportion of patients in mental hospitals will be elderly

and some of them permanent. Some may be alone in the world or forgotten by relatives; to them, the regular monthly or fortnightly visit of a friend, the weekly magazine passed on, the birthday card sent once a year, or the few garden flowers brought in, may make all the difference in the world to that patient's life. The friend brings to the patient a feeling of the outside world, so that they are not shut away and isolated from it. They make them feel they are still an individual with a status and not a patient forgotten."

In the afternoon, Miss Hornsby-Smith opened a similar exhibition at Fareham, Hants.

R.S.H. Health Congress.

A NEW FEATURE of this year's Royal Society of Health's annual Health Congress to be held at Blackpool from April 24th-27th, will be a World Health Section. The latter will be addressed by Dr. M. G. Candau, Director-General, World Health Organisation.

The Congress is expected to be attended by nearly 3,000 public health experts from all over the world. The Marchioness of Reading, as President of the Congress, will deliver the Inaugural Address.

Detailed arrangements for the various health sections are as follows:—

TUESDAY, APRIL 24TH (2.30 P.M.—5 P.M.)

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE SECTION

President: C. Fraser Brockington, M.A., M.D., D.P.H., F.R.S.H., Professor of Preventive and Social Medicine, University of Manchester.

Recording Secretary: H. C. Maurice Williams, O.B.E., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.H., F.R.S.H., Medical Officer of Health, Southampton.

Address by the President.

"Public Health Practice," by Sir W. Allen Daley, M.D., F.R.C.P., D.P.H., F.R.S.H., formerly Medical Officer of Health, London C.C., and Huntingdon Williams, M.D. Dr.P.H., Hon.F.R.S.H., Commissioner of Health, Baltimore, U.S.A.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25TH (10 A.M.—12.30 P.M.)

MENTAL HEALTH SECTION

President: Kenneth Soddy, M.D., M.R.C.S., M.R.C.P., D.P.M., Medical Director, Child Guidance Training Centre, Central Middlesex Group Hospital Management Committee; Physician in Psychological Medicine, University College Hospital, London.

Recording Secretary: J. W. Starkey, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H., F.R.S.H., Medical Officer of Health, Kingston-upon-Thames.

Address by the President.

Discussion of "Mental Health Aspects of School Children":—

(a) "The Place of the Nursery School in the Community," by E. Mildred Creak, M.D., F.R.C.P., D.P.M., Physician to the Dept. of Psychological Medicine, Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, London.

(b) "The Growth of Independence in the Young Child," by John Bowlby, M.A., M.D., Deputy Director, Tavistock Clinic, London.

(c) "The Problems of Adjustment facing Handicapped Children and their Parents," by Miss Norah Gibb, M.A., Senior Psychologist, Child Guidance Training Centre, London.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25TH (10 A.M.—12.30 P.M.)

TROPICAL HYGIENE SECTION

President: Clement C. Chesterman, O.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P., D.T.M. & H.

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