

## The Hospital World.

### A RECEPTION HOUSE FOR MENTAL DISEASES.

Infirmiry nurses, especially those who have worked in the "dotty" wards, will be in entire sympathy with Dr. Nathan Raw, physician to the Mill Road Infirmary, Liverpool, in his eloquent plea in the *Lancet* for making provision for the reception and early treatment of persons suffering from mental disease other than in the workhouse infirmary.

Dealing with the "Relation of Mental Symptoms to Bodily Disease," Dr. Raw says of Liverpool what is equally true of other cities.—

"There is a great want in Liverpool in the fact that there is no reception house or hospital for those suffering from mental disease and temporary insanity, both from the point of view of the patients and their relatives and the education of students. For instance, a man suffering from acute delirium tremens (and these cases are not uncommon in Liverpool) cannot be admitted anywhere in the city but to the workhouse hospital. These patients are the most dangerous lunatics for the time, and yet they cannot be certified as legally insane. In the large poor-law infirmaries and workhouses if a patient develops temporary insanity he is transferred to the mental wards, and there he remains in many instances until he is cured, but in a general hospital or private house he is removed to a lunatic asylum, private or pauper, and is equally well cured there; but the question is, was it necessary for him to bear the stigma of having been signed as a lunatic when he was simply suffering from temporary mental aberration, the result of bodily disease? There can be no question whatever that an asylum of some sort is the best place for the patient, but he need not be certified as insane, at any rate, until it is seen whether his insanity is likely to be permanent or not. These are the cases which swell up the recovery rate of admissions to asylums, especially those suffering from alcoholic insanity, and I have always very much doubted the recovery rates from organic insanity. I would like to see established in Liverpool, preferably by the Corporation, a reception house for mental diseases of all forms where patients might be admitted in the acute stage of the disease and kept under observation for one month, and at the end of that time, if the symptoms had not passed off, either be removed by their friends or then certified for detention in an asylum. After a long observation of lunatics—and I have personally certified over 2,000 patients to asylums—I am firmly convinced that a large number of people are certified as lunatics throughout the country who are simply suffering from temporary insanity the result of, or associated with, some form of bodily disorder or toxic poisoning. These people are not really insane, and should not be associated with lunatics. They quickly recover under proper treatment, and I maintain that from every point of view it would be to the public advantage for them to be treated in a hospital for mental diseases, with expert physicians in attendance and a clinique of students to study the acute phases of mental disorder, and where the patient and his relatives might be spared the stigma

of his having been detained in a public lunatic asylum as a certified lunatic."

The subject appeals to the public as one of great and pressing importance, and Dr. Raw's suggestion that a reception house for mental diseases should be provided either by the Corporation or by voluntary enterprise containing twenty beds for the treatment of cases of urgency and of persons suffering from temporary mental diseases might well be taken into consideration by public-spirited persons in every city. A hospital for this purpose would require to be centrally situated, and as an existing building might be adapted to the work of such an institution he considers it could be maintained for £1,000 a year. A system of the kind indicated already obtains in Glasgow, where it is found to work admirably, and to relieve the strain of admissions into the lunatic asylums and workhouses. So far, however, it has not been tried in England, and Liverpool now has an opportunity of leading the country in this, as it has already done in many another direction for the benefit of the sick.

## Reflections

FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.



Princess Louise had a lovely day on which to lay the foundation-stone of the new building about to be erected in line with the Victoria Hospital for Children at Chelsea. Our first memory of this charming hospital is of a beautiful old country house, adapted for this purpose, surrounded by fine and spacious gardens. How long ago that is may be realised seeing that it recalls visions of delightful teas in the garden with Miss Minks as Lady Superintendent and most sprightly of hostesses, and the present editor of the *British Medical Journal*—mighty man—as a mere medical officer.

The Victoria Hospital was established in 1866 for the purpose of treating as in-patients boys up to twelve years of age and girls up to sixteen years of age, and also for the attainment and diffusion of knowledge in regard to the illnesses of children. Since that time it has treated 31,891 in-patients and 1,105,669 out-patients, in addition to 7,491 having been sent to the convalescent homes at Margate and Broadstairs. The building at Chelsea has, however, but forty-two beds, which it was now found, owing to the rapid growth of the population in South-West London, were not nearly sufficient to meet the requirements of 1,000 cases weekly. Thus the necessity for the erection of a new wing arose. The cost will amount to £30,000, of which sum £13,000 has already been collected, and an offer of £3,000 has been made on condition that the total sum given and promised reaches £22,000 by the end of the present year.

As we go to press, the Great Coronation Bazaar in aid of the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, opened in person by the Queen, is in full

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