

The Asylum Workers' Association.

The Annual Meeting of the Asylum Workers' Association was held at the Medical Society's Rooms, 11, Chandos Street, on Wednesday last. At the beginning of the meeting the chair was taken by Dr. Hyslop, Medical Superintendent of Bethlem Hospital, who, after the minutes of the previous meeting had been read by the Hon. Secretary, Dr. Shuttleworth, and confirmed, proposed from the chair the election to the presidency of the Society of Sir William J. Collins, F.R.C.S., M.P., in the place of Sir John Batty Tuke, M.P., who felt unable to continue longer in office. The Chairman said that Sir William was known to everyone, not only in the worlds of science and literature, which he adorned, but in fields of general activity, and in connection with municipal affairs, in work for the benefit of humanity.

The nomination was warmly seconded by Dr. Robert Jones, President of the Medico-Psychological Association, who said that whether in the cockpit of disputation in professional societies or in Parliament, Sir William Collins was known for his wise judgment and statesmanlike tact. He was a most successful surgeon, and in municipal administration the London County Council had placed him in the highest point of honour it could bestow by making him its Chairman. One might envy the Colonial Premiers their position, but the Chairman of the L.C.C. had a more responsible position than even a Colonial Premier. No man of his acquaintance had a repertoire of greater triumphs than Sir William Collins.

The proposition having been carried, Sir William Collins, in the invitation of Dr. Hyslop, then took the chair, and called upon the Hon. Secretary to present the Annual Report. This, being in the hands of the meeting, was taken as read.

In moving its adoption, Sir William said that his first words must be words of thanks for the honour which the Association had conferred upon him, but he could not compliment it on its choice of a President. He eulogised the qualities of the first President, Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, and the gifts of language of the retiring one.

The objects of the Association were, he said, eleemosynary and elevatory. Such a union commended itself to public esteem. There were spurious forms of unionism, but the combination of workers, having a common occupation, for the above purposes, was a just and equitable project.

He noticed that previous Presidents had discussed such subjects as State Registration of Nurses, the Relations of Nurses and Doctors, and Pensions for Asylum Workers, all important questions, but he proposed to diverge from the well-worn route, and to speak for a while upon Ethics.

The amelioration of the care of the insane was in great measure due to the large-hearted philanthropy of Wesley and Howard. The "Rake's Progress," depicted by Hogarth, had preserved excellent illustrations of the melancholic, of those

days, later of the solitary cell, and the last phase of dementia. The mob-capped nurse depicted might be considered an earnest of the reform which was to follow later, when the 18th century produced such men as Wesley and Howard, worthy of being classed with that mediæval saint, St. Francis of Assisi, with whom they had little in common except the desire to do good to their fellow men, and the infinite pity which was at the root of their asceticism. If their brothers, members of the same human race, could not have the good things of this world, then they would forego them, too.

It must be insisted that for the amelioration of the care of the sick and insane, the sympathetic heart was essential, and we should do well to remember always that we worked in vain if, in the pursuit of knowledge, we let go the heart in seeking the qualities of the head. Amid the boredom of routine, the vexation, the ingratitude, and the peril of their daily life, he begged the members of the Association to cultivate the acquisition of the gift, which was also a grace, of sympathy. This was not possible to a selfish person. The first ingredient of sympathy was unselfishness.

Asylum workers were embarked on a calling which required no mean talents. Their hours on duty ought not to be excessive. The strain in the acute wards was great, and work in the imbecile wards monotonous. In the past their housing had often been most inadequate, and their emoluments were most modest. Asylum service demanded the highest type of worker, and happily in the asylums of this country, day and night, services were rendered which no salaries could requite. But if public opinion declined to recognise work well done then they must put up with the commonplace.

There was a mediæval picture of the Transfiguration, showing the healing of the epileptic at the foot of the Mount. Might we not with all humility associate kindly thought for the most pitiable class of mankind with the life's work of Him who transfigured and transformed humanity.

The Bishop of Croydon seconded the adoption of the Report, which was carried, in a most sympathetic speech. A most interesting part of the proceedings was the presentation of two gold and two silver medals to members of the Association, for long and meritorious service in Asylums.

Gold.

Attendant George Gregory, 45 years.

Mrs. R. Martin, 39 years and 9 months.

Silver.

Attendant R. Kean, 28 years.

Miss Thompson, 27 years.

Miss Thompson, who, on receiving her medal, thanked the Executive Committee for awarding it to her, said that she felt as the heroes of the V.C. must do. Her medal would be one of her most treasured possessions.

The meeting concluded with thanks to the Chairman, to Dr. Shuttleworth for his onerous work, and to Mrs. Shuttleworth for hospitably providing the tea to which those present were invited.

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