

## Asylum Workers' Association.

The annual general meeting of the Asylum Workers' Association was held at 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, W., on Friday, May 29th, at 3.30. The chair was taken by Sir William Collins, M.P., President of the Association.

### THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

The adoption of the report, which was in the hands of the meeting, and taken as read, was moved from the chair by Sir William Collins, who said that both he and Dr. Rutherford, who was his medical colleague in the House of Commons, considered it a great privilege to be there.

The Association had its benevolent aspect and its practical legislative aspect. The granting of pensions to asylum attendants was connected with the latter. The Chairman pointed out that it was in the power of many local authorities to give adequate pensions, but this right was not always exercised.

The State Registration of Nurses was another matter in which the Association was interested. When legislation was enacted the asylum workers did not mean to be left out. In a Bill recently introduced by Lord Balfour of Burleigh into the House of Lords to establish an Official Directory of Nurses, no provision was made to meet the claim of asylum attendants and nurses for recognition in a separate register. Those present, with himself, would not regret that that Bill had met with the fate it deserved.

Two Bills for the Registration of Nurses were now before the House of Commons—one in charge of Mr. Munro Ferguson and the other of Mr. Claude Hay. One was more satisfactory than the other, but the friends of the asylum workers must see if these Bills were discussed that their interests are considered and represented.

He regretted to note a decrease of membership, and it had been suggested that raising the subscription from 1s. to 1s. 6d. had something to do with this. The Association was a bona fide organisation of workers, not a spurious trade union, and should commend itself more largely to asylum workers. Amongst the objects of the Association were the maintenance of the Journal and the Home of Rest Fund. Both these needed support. Sir William said that he would be pleased to give £5, and hoped other contributions might be sent also to Dr. Shuttleworth, so as to relieve him from the worry of unsatisfactory resources and of carrying on the work of the Association on a ridiculously small revenue.

### DR. ROBERT JONES' ADDRESS.

Dr. Robert Jones, F.R.C.P., Medical Superintendent of Claybury Asylum, and Vice-President of the Association, then seconded the adoption of the Report, and gave an admirable address on "The Mental Recreations of the Mental Nurse," first expressing his own sympathy and that of the meeting with the President, who had come to preside that afternoon notwithstanding the physical pain of a fractured collar-bone and rib. His presence there demonstrated two traits in the character of a strong man—sympathy with worthy causes, and

the pluck, courage, and endurance which go to make the man who is prepared to overcome his environment, as all successful men do.

Dr. Jones referred to the membership of the Association—3,000 out of a possible 18,000—as unsatisfactory. He hoped to see it largely increased. Touching on the Home of Rest Fund, he said that no one, unless he had lived in actual touch with the insane, could appreciate the need of their nurses for complete change from time to time if they were to exercise the tact, gentleness, and serenity so essential. There was absolutely no parallel to asylum work, and the services of the workers were neither justly nor adequately recognised, so that there were many claims on the Home of Rest Fund.

Public authorities sometimes refused pensions to asylum workers, but he was glad to say that the London County Council showed a readiness to consider their claims in this respect.

Within the last few years the nursing of the sick in mind and in body had become much more exacting. The Medico-Psychological Association had extended the period of training for three years, and probably few were able to complete their training in that time. In no department of nursing was a good nurse of such incalculable value as in mental work, where the essence of treatment was that alluring, baffling, and even mysterious influence of one mind upon another. It was remarkable what power could be exercised over an insane person by a well-disciplined mind. It was very desirable that applicants for training should be refined and cultivated.

Dr. Jones held that it was the duty of every mental nurse of either sex to make his or her life worthy, and that it was incumbent upon them to educate their reasoning faculties. He impressed upon them the need for mental diversion. They needed to be endowed with a variety of gifts, and to have well-disciplined minds. If their own minds were rightly poised, they would be able to influence others. He emphasised the dignity of labour, which he said was not sufficiently understood. It was an essential duty of an asylum attendant to cultivate the power of encouragement and the faculty of effort. Gardening was an excellent pastime for mental patients; it taught patience and quickened curiosity.

He advocated reading as an excellent recreation for mental nurses, and advised them to take lessons in elocution, so as to cultivate the art of reading aloud. It was through books that most of us enjoyed intercourse with great minds. Many of the nurses at Claybury joined a circle of the Home Reading Union.

Music, again, had a purifying influence, and the effect exercised by it might be observed in the widespread influence of the Church Army, the Salvation Army, Sankey and Moody, Alexander and Torrey. Music had a definite effect on the nervous system.

Painting and pictures had also their definite place in the relief of mental fatigue and the monotony of routine. He wondered how many of his hearers put in a spare half hour at the National Gallery.

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