

## Some Charities in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

By MACK ALL.

### THE GENERAL INFIRMARY AT LEEDS.

#### I.

The General Infirmary at Leeds is one of the best known hospitals in the North of England. It stands at the heart of the West Riding. One hundred and forty years ago there was a General Infirmary at Leeds.

The present building was erected forty-one years ago. It cost £120,000 then, and a larger sum has been expended since, keeping it up to date and enlarging its borders. Yet one has to remember that four decades ago the structural ideas concerning hospital building were not the ideas that prevail to-day. It is possible a modern architect would plan the building in a different way. It is scarcely possible that better work or more scientific could be done even in a modern building.

The site of the hospital is on an elevation, and has the advantage of being wind-swept. The outside of the hospital is not attractive. The walls are grimy and the windows bare. The entrance hall compensates for the dingy exterior. A fire burns in a wide grate, and the decorations and colouring are very fine. Doors at each side of this hall lead into the casualty department, the Manager's offices, and the apartments of the resident staff. In front is a wide staircase; this lands one on a circular corridor, surrounding a court. This court is the first thing to strike a stranger—it is so unexpected. It has a glass roof, seats around its sides, and in the centre a tennis court. Allegoric figures are ranged round. It reminds one of a corner of Hampton Court.

It would take days to explore this village within walls; and much more space than the Editor will allow me to describe what I noticed in a few hours.

There are 400 beds in the hospital, and between seven and eight thousand patients are treated there annually. This is the only hospital in Leeds where casualty cases and accidents can be brought at any time. The out-door department in 1908 treated 48,635 patients. Over 500 maternity cases were looked after from the Infirmary. As a matter of fact, there seemed to be some overcrowding in the wards. All the wards are built so that two beds stand between each pair of windows; this did not seem to give sufficient floor space. Another thing that was very noticeable in the wards was the number of acute cases; there were literally no convalescents. The con-

valescents, we learnt, are removed to a semi-convalescent home, but this unique establishment deserves an article to itself.

The wards contain 28 and 32 beds each. The walls are of light colour, painted and varnished. The floors are of oak, and beeswaxed. The white counterpanes and folded crimson rugs at the foot of the beds made a welcome bit of colour in the wards. There is one modern-sized ward in the hospital, and the authorities aim at bringing all the others into line with it. This is the Weatherill Ward, called after a gentleman who left over £124,000 to the Infirmary in 1905. A marble medallion of Mr. Weatherill is in a niche of the wall near the door. The walls of this ward are pale green, and the paint oak-coloured. The windows are fitted in summer with blinds that roll from the bottom upwards. The beds are constructed so that the top end can be used as a bed rest. Chains take the place of springs and the mattresses are of horsehair. Tents were around many of the beds here, so arranged as not to get in the way of the nurse, and yet to screen the patient sufficiently. One old man was very proud of the method used for supplying him with steam instead of the old-fashioned steam kettle. Nearly everything that science and ingenuity could devise to ease suffering and prolong life was to be seen in this ward. The patients were accident cases, and it was literally "a palace of pain."

The lockers were of the newest patterns, and a structure in the centre of the ward acted as table and drawers. All dressings are placed in covers of strong calico and lint, and sent to the centre sterilised.

A room leading out of the ward had many labour-saving contrivances. One was for heating hot-water bottles. Two sterilisers, one for instruments and another for gloves, had water taps over each for refilling. The bathroom and lavatories were also at the end of this ward. Just outside the ward door was a small kitchen with a gas stove. This is used for heating plates, milk, and beef tea, all meals being sent from the centre kitchen ready to be served out.

There are five theatres in the hospital; these are heated and ventilated by the Plenum system. Drawers and cupboards are dust-proof. In connection with the theatres there are rooms for the honorary staff and for the students to prepare themselves for operations, anæsthetic rooms, and recovery rooms. The nurses while in the theatre wear overalls and caps made to cover their hair and neck; the latter lend a very sweet, Madonna-like look to the face, and are not likely to be forgotten.

The air in the theatres was oppressive, and both the theatres and rooms used in connec-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)