

The Hospital World.

ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL, OLD STREET, E.C.

St. Luke's Hospital, Old Street, E.C., for the treatment of the curable insane, was founded in 1751 for their humane treatment. It is curious, therefore, to learn that amongst its possessions is a "whizzing chair" in which obstreperous patients were placed and whizzed round and round with the object, apparently, of inducing rational behaviour, and that staples are also to be found in the walls to which tiresome patients were fastened!

Few of those who pass constantly up and down Old Street and obtain their impressions of the hospital from its unprepossessing exterior, can guess at the homelike atmosphere characteristic of its wards. Somewhat on the plan of Bethlem, the wards are of corridor form, and into these the single bedrooms and small wards open. The corridors are carpeted and furnished most comfortably. The hospital which is intended for the reception of those who can afford to pay something towards their treatment, has 200 beds, 125 for women, and 75 for men. The reasons for the larger number of beds being devoted to women are, apparently, that men can to some extent rough it better in the larger asylums, where it is impossible to give such individual attention, and further that as the man is usually the breadwinner, the means to pay for his care in sickness is less often forthcoming. The men's hospital is in charge of a head attendant, under the direction of the medical officers, and the Matron of the hospital, responsible for the women's side, is Miss Head, who has the double qualification of general and mental training, and also extensive mental experience. The patient's fees do not cover the cost of maintenance and treatment, and about 20 per cent. are received free, but the hospital has also an endowment. It is interesting to learn that the ground on which it is built belongs to the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and if St. Luke's were diverted from its present use it would revert absolutely, and unconditionally, to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. There is a large recreation ground at the back of the hospital where tennis and croquet can be played at the same time, space for a laundry, and a large chapel in addition to the hospital buildings, so the site must be extremely valuable. Supplementary to the hospital are two convalescent homes, one in Buckinghamshire and the other near Ramsgate, and here voluntary boarders can also be admitted without being certified as insane. The need of such institutions is great. Probably the public

scarcely realises the scarcity of institutions in which mental patients can be received before they are certifiably insane, when, of course, the disease has made considerable progress, and the chance of recovery is thereby lessened. Indeed, it was reported quite recently that a former patient at the City of London Asylum near Dartford, Kent, feeling an attack coming on, went down to the Asylum, seeking admission. He arrived there evidently confused, but could not be certified as insane, and therefore to his own, and his wife's great disappointment, had to be refused admission.

The hospital boasts of a Board Room, calculated to arouse feelings of envy in those less fortunate, with a lovely white marble mantelpiece, and steel grate, handsome table, a set of fine Chippendale chairs, which are carefully covered up when not in use, and excellent portraits of bygone benefactors. The only means of lighting it are by lamps or candles, for neither gas nor electricity is installed.

In regard to the present humane system of treating the insane, that, one learnt, is only a reversion to the method practised in ancient Greece. The dark and barbarous period really has its place in history between the ancient and the modern humane systems of treatment.

As regards the nursing staff, the women's hospital has now working under Miss Head a day staff of 27, including three Sisters with general training, eight Staff Nurses, all of whom hold the certificate of the Medico-Psychological Association, and the remainder probationers in various stages of training. The Night Staff consists of a Sister, Staff Nurse, and probationer; the acute cases are collected on one floor, and the others are kept under observation every hour during the night. Probationers are received after three months' trial on a three years' agreement, and on the satisfactory completion of their training are awarded a certificate. They are received at the age of 21, and Miss Head is therefore in favour of their taking this training before entering a general hospital, but she also regards as ideal the establishment of a system of reciprocity between general hospitals and hospitals for the insane.

The patients appear as happy and comfortable as it is possible for persons so afflicted to be. Some are confined to bed, but the majority are up, playing games, painting, doing needlework, or otherwise occupying themselves. Dancing is a favourite pastime, and each week dances or entertainments are given for their amusement. The Medical Superintendent is Dr. William Rawes, F.R.C.S.

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