

There are eight weighing and Consultation Centres in connection with the work, and each Centre meets twice a month.

About 400 mothers have brought their babies, but less than half of that number attend regularly. This is largely due to the mothers going out to work.

The babies are supposed to attend a Consultation Centre until they are old enough to go to school. The photograph shows twelve of our most regular attendants at a party given in honour of their first birthday.

In February the fathers of the babies were invited to a smoking concert at St. George's Town Hall: sixty-five turned up, and it must be said to their credit that they were as much interested in the address of one of our medical officers on congenital diseases as in the songs and recitations that preceded it.

There are three medical officers, one of whom is a lady. No treatment is given to sick babies, but the mothers are beginning to appreciate preventive medicine.

The women are taught the elements of home nursing and infant care by simple health talks given by the Superintendents at each Consultation Centre. It is just fourteen months since the first Centre was opened, and much of the work is still tentative. The workers as well as the mothers are learning; but we look forward to the day when we can say truthfully, "The world is growing better, for we are saving the children."

MACK CALL.

### THE MATRONS' COUNCIL.

Mr. Charles Spencer, the Secretary of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester, has written to the President of the Matrons' Council as follows:—

"DEAR MADAM,—I am requested to extend to you and to the ladies of the Matrons' Council the Committee's very hearty invitation to visit this Hospital on April 25th next."

Miss A. Hulme, Hon. Secretary, will be obliged if members who intend to attend the meeting will let her know as early as possible, so that arrangements for luncheon may be made.

Miss Dorothy Snell, Matron of the Scuola Convitto Regina Elena, at the Policlinico Hospital, Rome, will represent the National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland at the forthcoming meeting of the International Council of Women, to be held in the Eternal City in May. The Council could have no better representative than one so identified with Italian nursing as Miss Snell.

### NURSING IN ASYLUMS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FEMALE NURSING ON THE MALE SIDE.\*

By MISS THYNE,

*Matron of the West House, Royal Edinburgh Asylum.*

In the old days in this country the treatment of the insane was inconceivably brutal, and we, now living in humanitarian times, can hardly believe that these poor patients could have been subjected to and have survived the awful treatment meted out to them. I shall mention a few of the practices to which these insane men and women were subjected.

An excited patient would be confined alone in a stone cell with flagged floor and a hole in the wall for ventilation and light, the only furnishing being straw on the floor for bedding. On Saturday bread and water would be supplied to him and no one visited him again till Monday when he would be taken out into an open courtyard and washed down with a broom, the state of the room being like a pigsty.

The bath of surprise was a bath concealed under a trap-door, through which the patient suddenly fell, the fright being supposed to bring him to his senses. The rotatory chair was a chair into which the patient was strapped, the rapid circular movement causing severe sickness and diarrhoea. When even George III. became insane his attendants thought nothing of throwing him on the floor when he was excited or violent, and one of these told the late Dr. Paul of Camberwell that he had seen him knocked down "as flat as a flounder."

The word asylum signifies a place of refuge, but the madhouses of those times were degraded into places of torture. Pinel was the first man, in 1792, to take the chains off some fifty patients in an asylum in Paris, and had it not been for the devotion of one of the patients thus liberated following him about and protecting him, his life would have been endangered through the anger of the citizens. In 1796 the Retreat at York was opened, and Dr. William Tuke there set an example to all of the more humane treatment.

Dr. Gardiner Hill, in 1836, the Superintendent of Lincoln Asylum, next introduced a more rational and kindlier treatment of the insane, and like all reformers, was subjected to very adverse criticism, both by his colleagues and by his staff. Fortunately for the insane people of this country, he carried through his method of reform in spite of the greatest opposition. Dr. Hill abolished restraint, and by that I mean the strait waistcoat, handcuffs, and anklets, by which patients were fixed to their seats in the day time and to their bed at night and which, as he pointed out, were in many cases the cause of death. He abolished chairs into which the patients were strapped and

\* Read at the Scottish Nursing Conference, Glasgow, February, 1914.

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