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## EDITORIAL.

### THE NURSING CARE OF THE INSANE.

Professor G. M. Robertson, M.D., who has for many years been a leader in Scotland in regard to the medical treatment and nursing care of the insane, presented a most interesting Report at the recent Annual Meeting (at which Lord Provost J. W. Chesser presided) of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum for the Insane, of which he is the Physician-Superintendent. In passing we take this opportunity of congratulating Professor Robertson on the high and well-merited honour of having been appointed to the first Chair of Psychiatry in Scotland.

Professor Robertson has steadfastly, and constantly, claimed for the insane the right to the care of women nurses, and has placed in charge of wards in mental hospitals for which he has been responsible, in Stirling and Edinburgh, women trained in general nursing, as well as in that of mental diseases—a policy which has been amply justified in the result. He has had the vision enabling him to realise that nursing, whether of the sane or insane, is pre-eminently the work of women; that the goal of those responsible for the insane should not be simply to incarcerate them in charge of keepers to prevent them from damaging themselves and others, but to place them in an environment which shall be remedial, and which shall inspire them with the hope of ultimate recovery. In such an environment mental and moral influence play a most important part, and, unquestionably, though there are men who exercise such an influence, in the main women are in this connection more effective instruments.

In the course of his Report the Physician-Superintendent referred to the negotiations of the Governing Body of the Asylum with their staff, the question of the recognition of the

Asylum Workers' Union, and the policy of that Union to do away with the employment of women nurses on the male side of the hospital. In forcible terms he stated the case for the continuance of the employment of women nurses.

We are of opinion that the patients owe Professor Robertson a deep debt of gratitude for his insistence on this point. Scotland has always been in the van in regard to the organisation of the nursing of the insane, and Professor Robertson foremost amongst those who claim for them, as for the physically ill, the care of highly trained women nurses.

The nurses also are indebted to him for opening up to them a branch of work which, as nursing goes, is relatively well paid, and, to those who have an aptitude for it, is exceedingly interesting, both from its humanitarian and scientific standpoints.

We strongly endorse Professor Robertson's policy, which is gradually becoming accepted, not only north but south of the Tweed.

In regard to the strain of the war, Professor Robertson said everyone imagined that the end—the successful end—of this strain would be followed by an emotional rebound of an opposite kind. The strain had lasted too long for such a rebound to be enjoyed, except by the young. Some people had broken down since the war came to an end. Many, as a solace to their feelings, had taken an interest in spiritualism. He reiterated a warning he had previously given on the danger of neurotic persons engaging in practical enquiries of a spiritualistic nature.

Another after effect of the war had been to cause not only those seeking consolation, but the medical profession also, to engage in a closer study of the mind. This interest had arisen from such a demonstration as had never before been given in the history of the world of the influence of the mind in creating symptoms, and of its power to relieve them.

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