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## EDITORIAL.

### THE PROBLEM OF MENTAL DEFICIENCY.

The problem of mental deficiency is one which presses very closely on the hearts and consciences of thoughtful nurses, in relation to the adequate care of mentally deficient persons, the protection of the public from the degeneration of the race, and from acts harmful to the community.

The Minister of Health, on Wednesday, opened a Conference on mental deficiency at the Central Hall, Westminster, convened by the Central Association for Mental Welfare, in a very sympathetic speech, and even hastened to intimate that he would be prepared to consider schemes for social betterment—in which he included the work of the Association—even if they involved some additional expenditure.

Mr. Wheatley also expressed the opinion that the "whole subject of how far people are responsible for their actions should be gone into with greater care than it has been up to now. If a person is not by God endowed with the power to resist evil doing, it is a very deep question as to how far we, who have been given that power, are entitled to punish that person in the light of our understanding." Whether or not we are entitled to punish them, it is certainly the duty of the State to exercise effective control over them.

### THE NEED OF VISION.

We are entirely at one with the suggestion made by Sir Berkeley Moynihan, recently, when he re-opened the Harrogate Infirmary Bazaar, which resulted in some £40,000 being available for extension work at the Infirmary. After pointing out that we had made no advance in respect of art and of literature in comparison with other ages, he proceeded to say that there was one thing upon which we could take up a challenge, and say nothing compared with to-day, namely the reign of science. In the last fifty years greater advance had been made in science than in the fifty centuries which preceded those years. He would be perfectly prepared to defend the thesis that of all the advance in science, the advance of medicine was regarded as equal to many, and, in respect of the benefits conferred upon humanity, considerably greater than any. If that were true, a demand was made on those responsible for the building of new temples of healing greater than ever before. How did science answer the demand for better and greater accommodation for the sick people?

During the latter half of the war he was, he said,

Chairman of the Army Medical Advisory Board, which was responsible for some 2,500 hospitals in various parts of the world. The lessons they learnt were extremely disturbing. Many of the old beliefs with regard to the quality of hospitals were really not capable of being substantiated. The patients on the whole did better in tents than in any other kind of accommodation, next best were open air huts, and huts were certainly better than buildings.

He read recently that it was contemplated building a hospital in London at a cost of £3,500 a bed, and was horrified that anyone should have the ignorance and audacity combined to make such a suggestion after the experience of the war. If he were responsible for the building of a new hospital at Harrogate he should try to set an example to the world in the erection of a hospital from the experience gleaned in the war, and would build it in a way so that his successors could destroy it in forty years' time without much loss. The administrative block would have to be substantial, and the operating theatre the best the country could show. These would involve great expense. Otherwise the expenditure of money need not be large.

In order to give a lead to the world in the building of a modern hospital the primary needs were vision, great administrative zeal, and great organising capacity. They also needed money, and a medical staff. Harrogate had better medical men, and more of them to the square mile, than any other place. In that kind of town it was really their bounden duty to give them the very best they possibly could, because the work of the medical profession was not only concerned with the individual parish, but was going to make of mankind in the future a better and stronger race than it had ever been before.

We agree that with the experience afforded by the South African and the Great War, the open air treatment where available in hospitals at present, and the good results gained with delicate children in open air schools, it seems folly to build costly hospitals, when those of a temporary character, and affording a maximum of fresh air, light, and sunshine have been proved more efficacious.

We are a very conservative people, but it is surely time to make fundamental changes in regard to the construction of our hospitals.

Whilst agreeing with every word of Sir Berkeley Moynihan's practical remarks, we must claim that the medical profession cannot alone raise the health of the nations, so much of the practical application depends upon the skilled hand of the nurse. Team work is the order of the day, and the nurse has the right to her appropriate place in the science of healing.

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