

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOARD OF CONTROL.*

The Fifteenth Annual Report of the Board of Control (Part I) for the year 1928 has now been published. It deals with Lunacy and Mental Deficiency, and is an important and illuminating document which should be widely studied.

We agree with the Board that it is a matter for regret that they have once more to record the postponement of legislation to give effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission which reported in 1926.

The Commissioners "recognise the difficulty of finding Parliamentary time for a measure of this character; but, while the delay is unavoidable, it is none the less regrettable that the poorer classes should continue to be denied facilities for voluntary treatment in the early and hopeful stages of mental disorder which are open to those more fortunately circumstanced."

It has long been recognised that reforms in regard to the treatment in institutions for persons suffering from various forms of mental disorders are overdue. Provision is made in Mental Hospitals for the care of certifiable patients, but by the time they have reached this stage their chances of ultimate recovery are greatly lessened. The brain is the most delicate and highly sensitised organ in the body, and any departure from the normal should at once receive skilled treatment as is the case with physical ailments. Instead the sufferer is too often allowed to go from bad to worse until the tension becomes unendurable, and reason gives way, with the result that certification and confinement in a Mental Hospital then become imperative.

The Board of Control say in this connection: "We are glad to note that an increasing number of centres for Out-patient Treatment are being opened, generally in conjunction with a local voluntary hospital, and with the co-operation of the Medical Superintendent. We wish to see the number of these centres very largely increased, but it is satisfactory to be able to record that there are already a number of them at which competent advice is available without charge. It is not to be expected that an attitude of mind due to a tradition which has persisted for so many generations can be altered in a short time. This is a matter in which the Press, so potent an instrument of popular education, can, and we hope will, co-operate to emphasise the irreparable harm which may be done by postponing any attempt to seek treatment until concealment is no longer possible and until the patient has to be certified."

"With respect to nursing personnel," the Board record that "gratifying progress has been made during the year in the provision of Nurses' Homes. We welcome this, not only because this provision is often the indirect means of releasing fresh accommodation for patients, but still more because we feel the vital importance of securing for the nursing staff restful and comfortable surroundings. . . . Every improvement in the conditions under which mental nurses work tends to secure a better type of recruit, and also, by increasing the nurses' physical fitness, it is directly beneficial to the patients under their care."

HEALTHY MENTAL HABITS.

If you think in the right way, you will develop:
The habit of expecting to accomplish what you attempt.
The habit of expecting to like other people and to have them like you.

The habit of deciding quickly what you want to do, and doing it.
The habit of "sticking to it."

The habit of welcoming fearlessly all wholesome ideas and experiences.

*Published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, Adastral House, Kingsway, London, W.C.1, or through any Bookseller. Price, 1/9 net.

THE REGISTRATION OF MENTAL NURSES.

The Royal Medico-Psychological Association is continuing its undignified struggle to retain its supremacy over the pupils in training in Mental Hospitals by placing them in a class apart, and thus preventing their obtaining the legal status which is their right after three years' arduous training if they prove themselves competent in the State Examination.

We may emphasise in this connection the opinion of Dr. J. I. Russell (N. Riding, Yorks) and Dr. J. F. Francis (Leicester), supported by Dr. D. Rice (Norwich) and Dr. R. Eager (Devon), who, at the Annual Meeting of the Mental Hospitals' Association, held in the Guildhall, London, as reported in the *Lancet* of July 27th, argued that the examination of the General Nursing Council was "the legal one, and must be accepted sooner or later, and the Medical Superintendents were in a sense deceiving their probationers by encouraging them to take another diploma and dismissing them if they did not." Dr. Francis said his committee had recognised the inevitability of the situation, and had given up training for the M.P.A. certificate. The examination fee was repaid by the bonus given to the nurses who had passed the examination. He had found no insuperable difficulty in teaching the requisite special subjects during the first year while training probationers for the G.N.C. examination, or in sending the nurses to the examination centre.

The last published number of *The Journal of Medical Science* (July), issued by the authority of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, publishes for general information, under the heading "The Registration of Mental Nurses," correspondence between the General Nursing Council for England and Wales and the Council of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, and prints in parallel columns the Application (dated February 6th, 1929) of that Association for the recognition of the Association's Nursing Certificate as Qualifying for admission to the State Register of Nurses, together with a Memorandum, attached to the above letter, of Reply from the General Nursing Council for England and Wales (dated June 14th, 1929) with the comments of the General Secretary of the R.M.P.A. in italics under each paragraph.

We draw attention to the following points.

(a) *Letter of Medico-Psychological Association* (Clauses 19 and 20). It is stated:—(19) The Association's effort to facilitate registration (Birmingham resolution, 1925) had largely proved a failure. This resolution recommended that the course of training in the public mental hospitals should be so planned that the mental nurse might, subject to the convenience of the hospital service, sit for both R.M.P.A. and G.N.C. examinations—the latter solely in order to become eligible for State registration. (20) This duplication of almost identical examinations, though regrettable, was inevitable.

The General Secretary, commenting on para. 19, says:—"It is a concrete fact, and both paras. 18 and 19 demonstrate the Association's concern that the majority of trained mental nurses are not State registered."

A Disingenuous Argument.

The argument is disingenuous.

The R.M.P.A. is composed largely of Medical Superintendents of Mental Hospitals, who are in supreme control.

The Nurses' Registration Act has now been in force for just on ten years, and the Medical Superintendents have held the key to the position as to registration of Mental Nurses. The R.M.P.A. need have had no concern

previous page

next page