

PUBLIC HEALTH.

SIR KINGSLEY WOOD AT MIDDLESEX COLONY, SHENLEY.

Sir Kingsley Wood, the Minister of Health, on May 20th, opened the new Middlesex Colony, Shenley, which has been established for the care of mental defectives in the county.

The patients are accommodated in separate "homes" of the villa type, each accommodating from thirty to sixty patients. Patients who are capable of being employed are provided with suitable agricultural occupations on the land or at various industrial occupations in the workshops of the Colony, and children are also to be engaged at a variety of simple occupations. The Colony is situated on grounds of about 420 acres and will provide for approximately 2,000 patients. Approximately, £360,000 has been expended in developing, furnishing and equipping the Colony.

Sir Kingsley Wood said there was no branch of our public health service in which such striking changes had been effected in recent years, with regard both to national outlook and to our methods of treatment, as the mental deficiency services. Much was being done to-day which had not only transformed the whole atmosphere of mental treatment, but was giving better and happier conditions to those who were mentally afflicted. Charles Reade once suggested that the best hope for the insane was to be found in trying to treat them as sane. This could not be adopted successfully in all cases, but much was being done in this direction in providing happier conditions of living and, particularly for the young and trainable, carefully chosen and well-directed occupations, out-door recreations and other beneficent means which were designed to bring interest, control and self respect.

There were approximately 300,000 mental defectives in England and Wales, of whom some one-third required institutional care. The community owed a debt to those authorities who were taking the right steps to deal with this difficult problem. It was a costly matter, but from the point of view of finance alone, if the Mental Deficiency Service did not make proper and humane provision for the defective, we might well have to pay a bigger bill in all the social and other consequences that would ensue if the problem was neglected or inadequately dealt with. There were, however, higher and better motives which animated all who were engaged in this work. Colony provision for the young and trainable was essential, and a properly equipped colony was the most humane and most economical provision in the long run. Middlesex could rightly claim a very important share in the advances which were now being made.

He was particularly glad to note that the Shenley Colony was to provide for the children what almost amounted to a little village on their own account. Facilities for the occupation and amusement of the patients were included as a matter of course, and proper provision was being made for the nursing staff, giving them also means for rest and recreation. The happiness and well-being of the patients depended in the main upon those in whose care they were hour by hour. At Shenley they had provided an institution which could be emulated with advantage by other local authorities up and down the country.

STERILISATION OF UNFIT.

At the National Conference of Labour Women, recently held at Swansea, a resolution favouring the legalising of voluntary sterilisation of the unfit was passed by a large majority.

The resolution, moved by Dr. Caroline Maule (North Lambeth), recommended legalising of voluntary sterilisa-

tion of persons who were mentally defective or suffering from mental disorder, of persons suffering from, or believed to be carriers of, a grave physical disability, which had been shown to be transmissible; and of persons believed to be likely to transmit mental disorder or defect. This voluntary sterilisation should be subject to the safeguards as proposed by the Brock Committee.

Dr. Maule said that there were 14 kinds of blindness which could be transmitted from parents to children, and people suffering from them should have the right to be sterilised.

Referring to the Roman Catholic opposition to voluntary sterilisation, she said that no one who felt strongly on the question had the right to impose their views on Protestants or Agnostics. The suggested Bill would make sterilisation voluntary, and Roman Catholics would not have to be sterilised if they did not wish to be.

Miss Spencer (University Labour Federation), who opposed the resolution, suggested that it might be dangerous to put a piece of legislation through which would be used for other ends.

From the show of hands it was obvious that the resolution had been carried, and the number of votes was not counted.

THE FIRST BATHTUB.

Adam Thompson, of Cincinnati, is credited with having the first known bathtub in America. During a business trip to England he was introduced to the English way of bathing. On his return to America in 1842 he decided to make a bathtub big enough to contain his entire body, and to be filled by a tank instead of by hand. He built a tank in the attic of his home, pumping water into it from the family pump. Pipes for hot and cold water led to the bathtub, the one for hot water coiled within the length of the chimney, through which hot air and smoke from the kitchen range passed.

The tub was seven feet long and four feet wide, and deep enough to hold the plumpiest of persons. It was built of mahogany and lined with sheet lead. On the first Christmas Day after installation of the tub, Mr. Thompson gave a bathtub party, all the men present trying out the wonderful invention. This party was featured in many of the newspapers and created a sensation.

Members of the medical profession fought the idea with warnings that the practice was dangerous to the health, and State and city governing bodies passed laws prohibiting and discouraging the use of bathtubs. The State of Virginia passed a law taxing owners of bathtubs \$30 a year. In Boston a law was passed which was in effect from 1845 to 1862, forbidding one to take a bath except on advice of a physician. The cities of Providence, Hartford, and Wilmington put a high water tax on buildings that contained bathtubs, and in Philadelphia a law was proposed making it unlawful to bathe between November 1st and March 15th. This failed of passage by a margin of two votes.

From the *Frontier Times*, U.S.A.

America is now in the van as to the installation of bathtubs, and in many of the leading hotels in the States a bathroom is annexed to each bedroom.

A WORD FOR THE MONTH.

Extend education to include the teachings of health, the laws of sex and parenthood, art and the life of the soul. Make travel a normal part of education . . . and give spiritual values their just pre-eminence.

THE AGA KHAN,
Religious head of the Ismaili
Mohamedans of India.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)