Occasional Notes.

The Royal Medico-Psychological Association.

FOLLOWING the last Quarterly Meeting, which took place on November 17, 1925, a well-attended but informal dinner was held at the Langham Hotel, London, to commemorate that His Majesty had been pleased to command that the Association should henceforth be known as The Royal Medico-Psychological Association. Sir Frederick Mott, *K.B.E.*, presided.

After the usual loyal toasts had been honoured, the toast of the evening was proposed by the President-Elect, Lt.-Col. J. R. Lord, *C.B.E.*, in the following words:

"It seems a fitting thing to do on an occasion such as this, when a long-established Association has been granted a higher status and the position it has risen to and its achievements have been recognized in a signal manner by the Head of the State, to turn our minds to those who years ago laid its foundations, to imagine what their thoughts and feeling would be, could they be present, their pride and gratification, and their satisfaction at the realization of their aspirations and the fructification of their ideals; and then to do honour to them as builders of an edifice which has proved so enduring, and has still the vitality to press forward. Such is the position to-night in regard to the Royal Medico-Psychological Association. There are doubtless many present well acquainted with the early history of our Association and the facts regarding its foundation, but it is well that the younger members, who, in the course of time, will be called upon to assume the responsibility for maintaining the traditions and usages of the Association and to carry on its activities, should know something of the circumstances which gave rise to its inception, and of those worthies, now all gone to their rest, and, I fear, becoming forgotten, who founded it. I will briefly recall the position in regard to psychiatry at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

"As regards general medicine, the old-time notion which had prevailed throughout the Dark Ages that disease was a something foreign which had entered the body, and had, at all costs, to be driven out, still influenced treatment to a large extent—hence blood-lettings, sweatings, purgings, blisterings, and other reducing measures which were still largely practised, though to a diminishing extent. But the idea was gaining ground that much disease could

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be viewed as normal body-processes endeavouring to carry on under adverse and unnatural circumstances, and that these normal processes needed to be strengthened and built up, and that under the watchful care of the physician the body would cure itself.

"The treatment of the mentally afflicted, however, remained entirely unenlightened, and the ideas of the Dark Ages were still in the ascendant in all their terrible malignity. The 'devil possession' notion guided all care and treatment. There was restraint and repression of every kind, some of it most ingeniously devised; blistering, purging, starvation, flogging, shock-baths, bleeding, and cruelties too horrible to mention were recognized as legitimate forms of medical treatment. That anybody in charge of the insane in those days could bend the knee and bare the head and offer up a prayer is inconceivable to us nowadays, yet the doctors, at any rate, were good-living and respectable men, many of them held in high esteem; so ingrained was the heritage of religious bigotry that both justice and humanity were dethroned.

"But the period 1798 to 1835 saw the beginning of the salvage of an ancient and honourable branch of medicine from the dominance of superstition and cruelty, and psychiatry began once more to take its place among the medical sciences. I need not detail to you the work of Pinel in Paris, of Tuke at the Retreat, of Fox at Brislington House, or speak of that humanitarian movement in this country which owed so much to Lord Ashley, afterward the Earl of Shaftesbury, for its success; sufficient to say that from 1823 onwards county asylums began to dot the country-side. Gardner Hill and Charlesworth at Lincoln in 1835 commenced the non-restraint treatment which was taken up and perfected by Connolly at Hanwell, whose influence and writings led, in a few years' time, to its general adoption through the land.

"In the year 1841, a memorable one for psychiatry in these Isles, the non-restraint treatment was on the ascendant, and the public gaze was directed towards lunacy matters, much as now. The great Lunacy Act of 1845, often called the Magna Charta of the Insane, was being conceived, and the medical superintendents of the newly created asylums and the other mental institutions felt they ought to meet together for the common good of their profession, their institutions, and the patients under their care.

"The first definite step in this direction was taken by Dr. Samuel Hitch, the Resident Physician of Gloucester General Lunatic Asylum, who addressed a circular letter to 88 medical men engaged in the treatment of the insane. The outcome of this circular was a small gathering at Gloucester on July 27, 1841, at which there were present:

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"Dr. Shute, Visiting Physician of the Gloucester Asylum (in the Chair).
Mr. S. Gaskell, Superintendent, Lancaster Asylum.
Dr. S. Hitch, Medical Superintendent, Gloucester Asylum.
Mr. Powell, Superintendent, Nottingham Asylum.
Dr. Thurnam, Medical Superintendent, York Retreat.
Dr. Wintle, Medical Superintendent, Oxford Asylum (Warneford).

"Among the resolutions adopted was Resolution 3, which ran as follows:

"'That an Association be formed of the Medical Officers attached to Hospitals for the Insane, whose objects shall be improvement in the management of such institutions and the treatment of the insane, and the acquirement of a more extensive and more correct knowledge of insanity. That the medical gentlemen attached to Hospitals for the Insane be individually addressed, and requested to join the Association.'

"The First Annual Meeting was held at Nottingham, on November 4, 1841, at which Dr. Blake was appointed chairman, Dr. Shute, Treasurer, and Dr. Hitch, Secretary. The annual subscription was fixed at one guinea, and among others the following resolution passed:

"Resolution 14:

"That without pledging themselves to the opinion that mechanical restraint may not be found occasionally useful in the management of the insane, the members now present have the greatest satisfaction in according their approbation of, and in proposing a vote of thanks to, those gentlemen who are now engaged in endeavouring to abolish its use in all cases.'"

Colonel Lord then sketched the proceedings at subsequent meetings at Lancaster, Morley's Hotel (London), York and Oxford. At a meeting held at Oxford on July 21, 1852, it was decided to establish a journal, and Dr., afterwards Sir J. C. Bucknell, was appointed Editor. He then traced the history of the Journal, which was first issued on November 15, 1853, as the *Asylum Journal* (giving the contents of this number), and how it was changed in October, 1856, to the *Asylum Journal of Mental Science*, and again in 1858 to the *Journal of Mental Science*.

In 1865 the Association became the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland, and on September 9, 1925, the Royal Medico-Psychological Association. Continuing he said: "I ask you to drink to the memory of six worthy gentlemen. Our early annals show that they were animated by the highest ideals in regard to the care and treatment of the mentally affected—ideals

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which to us are still a precious heritage, and which throughout the history of the Association they founded have been fruitful in the art of healing and for the welfare of humanity. To the memory, then, of Drs. Hitch, Shute, Thurnam and Wintle, and Messrs. Gaskell and Powell." The toast was duly honoured.

For fuller details of the early history of the Association members are referred to our number dated April, 1896 (vol. xvii, p. 241), in which will be found an article by Dr. T. Outterson Wood, whose painstaking research on this subject, for which the Association owe him a debt of gratitude, has preserved to us for all time the annals of the Association from the time of its first inception to the publication of the Journal which has since recorded the transactions of the Association. We also reproduce as a frontispiece to this number an excellent photograph of Dr. Samuel Hitch. Sir J. C. Bucknill's recollection of him to Dr. Outterson Wood was " as an able, busy, bustling, intelligent man. In stature he was small, and he had red hair." He served the Association as Secretary from its foundation (Joint Secretary from 1847) and Treasurer from 1844 to 1852, when he resigned both posts. He continued a member until 1871, but nothing further regarding him can be gleaned from the Annals of the Association since that date.

The Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh.

We learned with the greatest satisfaction that Prof. George M. Robertson, M.D., F.R.C.P.Edin., Professor of Psychiatry since 1919 in the University of Edinburgh and Physician-Superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, had been elected President of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh. He became a member (and a very active member) of our Association in 1887, and has been closely associated, if not identified, with its work ever since, and has seldom missed either a quarterly or an annual meeting. The Association elected him its President in 1922, and the annual meeting of that year, which took place at Edinburgh, will be long remembered as one of the most instructive and enjoyable, owing largely to the personality and hospitality of its President. The Association and Psychiatry owe much to the abilities and zeal of Prof. Robertson, and a further evidence of the latter is shown by the readiness with which at short notice he consented to deliver the Maudsley Lecture for 1926, owing to Sir John Macpherson being unable to fulfil this engagement.

As President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, he has followed in the footsteps of several of Scotland's greatest

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