

## SCOTTISH DIVISION.

A MEETING of the Scottish Division of the Medico-Psychological Association was held in the Royal College of Physicians, Queen Street, Edinburgh, on Friday, November 21st, 1919.

*Present:* Drs. Buchanan, Clarkson, Crichtlow, Fraser, Henderson, Hotchkis, Kerr, Macdonald, T. C. Mackenzie, Tuach Mackenzie, G. D. McRae, Orr, G. M. Robertson, Ford Robertson, Maxwell Ross, Shaw, Skeen, H. Yellowlees, and R. B. Campbell, Divisional Secretary.

Dr. G. M. Robertson occupied the Chair.

The minutes of the last Divisional Meeting were read and approved, and the Chairman was authorised to sign them.

The SECRETARY intimated apologies from Drs. D. G. Thomson, Bower, Easterbrook, Dods Brown, Ross, Steele, Ferguson Watson.

The Business Committee was appointed, consisting of the nominated member, the two representative Members of Council, along with Dr. G. M. Robertson, Dr. D. K. Henderson, and the Divisional Secretary.

Drs. T. C. Mackenzie and G. Douglas McRae were nominated by the Division for the position of Representative Members of Council, and Dr. R. B. Campbell was nominated for the position of Divisional Secretary.

The following candidate after ballot was admitted to membership of the Association:

Ian D. Suttie, M.B., Ch.B. Glasgow, Assistant Medical Officer, Glasgow Royal Asylum. Proposed by Drs. Oswald, Henderson, and Campbell.

The SECRETARY submitted a letter from the President of the Association suggesting that the Scottish Division should nominate a representative from Scotland to act as Chairman of the Educational Committee, and the Division unanimously resolved that Dr. L. R. Oswald be nominated for the position. As Dr. Oswald was not present at the meeting, it was resolved that in the event of his not seeing his way to accept office, Dr. G. M. Robertson should be nominated in his stead—Dr. Robertson consenting to do so.

Dr. FORD ROBERTSON read an interesting and very instructive paper on "The Relation of Infections to Mental Diseases," which was followed by a discussion, in which several members took part.

Dr. MACDONALD referred to the importance which the National Asylum Workers' Union had placed on the teaching and training of the Nursing Staffs of Asylums, and he suggested that, in view of the high wages now paid nurses and attendants, the entrance fees for the examinations for the Association's Nursing Certificate should be increased.

After some discussion it was unanimously resolved to instruct the Secretary to send a Resolution from the Division to this effect to the Secretary of the Educational Committee.

Dr. G. M. ROBERTSON referred to the objections which the National Asylum Workers' Union had raised regarding the employment of female nurses in male wards of asylums, and in view of the probability of the Union taking action in the matter, it was unanimously resolved to draft a Memorial in support of the existing method of employing female nurses to nurse suitable male cases, and that all medical men interested in the treatment of mental diseases in Scotland should have an opportunity of signing the memorial before sending it to the General Board of Control, District Boards of Control, and Royal Asylums Boards.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman for presiding terminated the business of the meeting.

A dinner, after the meeting, was held in Messrs. Ferguson and Forrester's, and was well attended.

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 THE LATE DR. CHARLES ARTHUR MERCIER.

Sir GEORGE SAVAGE writes:

I feel that in some ways the characteristics of Mercier were better understood by the general public than by the medical profession, and better by the medical press than by our specialist journals, yet I believe it is due from us to record our personal regard for Mercier and our regret at his death.

Indirectly, Mercier's name came under my notice when he was a student at the London Hospital. My father-in-law, Dr. H. G. Sutton, whose medical clerk I believe Mercier was, spoke of his ability, but also of his unbounded self-assertion, for he had the audacity to go round the wards and alter some of the physician's prescriptions. From a student who would do this a good deal might be expected.

Dr. Mercier began his association with insanity by becoming Assistant Medical Officer at Stone, The City Asylum, near Dartford, in 1882. He was there till March, 1885. His senior was altogether unlike Mercier and their relationships were not cordial. Mercier was the student and was not distinguished in sports or social duties. The incompatibilities increased and Mercier gave up his post, and in a short time arrived at consulting work. He became Resident Physician at the Flower House, Catford, a private asylum which had belonged to the Winslow family.

Here he was more in his element; the house and grounds were attractive and the patients not numerous. His genial and friendly relationship with the patients gave him his deep insight into disordered states of mind, which is such a marked character of his writings.

He was greatly influenced by the teaching of Hughlings Jackson, who, in turn, was the follower of Herbert Spencer. As a writer on psychological subjects he must be compared with Maudsley, whose life work was so similar to that of Mercier, and whose books have such a remarkable parallelism in titles and subjects to his.

Though polished and clear, the writings of Mercier will not, in my opinion, remain as medical classics as have those of Maudsley. Mercier had the strength of his failings. He was a perfect bulldog in his pertinacious hold of his own ideas, and these were not always true. Take, for example, his tiresome insistence on the distinction between insanity and unsoundness of mind. He had for twenty years or more an obsession that he alone had recognised this though it was more than once made clear that this was not the fact.

He was a most prolific writer and a very able speaker. I knew him as a member of the Casual Club, a social club where any and every subject was discussed—certainly without any regard to the private feelings of previous speakers. The discussions were as a rule carried on vigorously but without loss of temper. Mercier was at his best here.

Whether later in the Journal some special articles appear on his literary labours must rest with the Editor, but it is a task not to be readily undertaken. A rather wild suggestion might be made that for a Maudsley lecture the parallelism between the two be studied.

For the past few years one has looked upon Mercier as a kind of hero, for one recognised that he knew he was fated and that nothing could stop the fatal issue of his disease, yet with superb pluck he stuck to his work and seemed still as briskly combative as ever. He has left a great gap in our ranks, and with reverence we leave him.

*November 28th, 1919.*

DR. H. DE M. ALEXANDER, Medical Superintendent, of Kingsseat Mental Hospital, Aberdeen, writes: "In your last number of the Journal you ask for any 'recollections' of the late Dr. Mercier. He was good enough to bother writing to me sometimes, and the enclosed extracts—though they possibly are not what you want—are rather typical of him. Like others I have more characteristic remarks of his, but they are personal."

"Relative to the absence of an index in the second edition of his text-book: 'As to the index, let me confess that my querulous remarks were dictated partly by laziness and detestation of the task of making an index, and partly by annoyance at the laziness and inefficiency of those reviewers, and they are the majority, who form their opinion of a book from reading the preface and looking at the index. If I must be honest and frank, I have been abominably annoyed and have been made to waste much time by the absence of the index in that very book.' (*June 28th, 1917.*)

"I believe one reason my Text-book does not sell is that it is only crown 8vo in size; students like a good pretentious-looking book, and plenty of paper for

their money. What is printed on the paper does not much matter, so long as there is plenty of paper." (*September 24th, 1917.*)

"Imbecile *v.* Feeble-minded: 'The imbecile is distinguished from the feeble-minded by this—that the feeble-minded can, and the imbecile cannot, under efficient supervision and control, earn enough to keep body and soul together. When controlled and supervised his labour has this market value. The labour of the imbecile costs as much or more in supervision and control than the product will bring in the market.' (*June 21st, 1917.*)"

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SIR JAMES CRICHTON-BROWNE AND THE MAUDSLEY LECTURE  
LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE.

CRINDAU,  
DUMFRIES, N.B.;

*August 7th, 1919.*

DEAR MAJOR WORTH,—I am much gratified by the invitation of the Medico-Psychological Association which you have conveyed in such kind terms, and shall be glad to deliver the first Maudsley Lecture in London in May, 1920.

I am keenly conscious that there are many who are much more capable than I am of representing the most advanced stages of that movement in mental science which Maudsley did so much to inaugurate in this country, but I have this qualification—and it is that no doubt that has procured me your honouring invitation—that I was a contemporary worker with him in the field which he so intensively cultivated from the beginning to the close of his career.

Believe me,

Yours very faithfully,

(Signed) JAMES CRICHTON-BROWNE.

Major R. WORTH, M.D., etc.

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IMITATIVE SUICIDES.

IN the course of a recent inquest Dr. F. J. Waldo, Coroner of the City of London, made some interesting observations on the imitative factor in the causation of suicides. He pointed out that, as was his custom, he had merely read in court two or three material, relevant lines from the bulky correspondence found on the body of the deceased. The jury and others interested in the case had had an opportunity of perusing the documents in full. The reading of details in court lead to their publication by the press, which not only gave pain and distress to the relatives, but, he believed, often led to further suicides by suggestion and incitation. For example, a short time ago three brothers, one after another, took their own lives by placing their heads in the same stove with the gas turned on. A lessening in the number of suicides would undoubtedly follow the suppression by the press of detailed reports of sensational and "interesting" cases of suicide. If any class of case might advantageously be held in private by Coroner and jury to the exclusion of the press and other members of the public, he thought it was that of a certain number of selected cases of suicide. He did not for a moment suggest, for instance, that cases in which the good name of an individual was at stake should be held other than in the presence of press and public. The return of weapons, such as pistols, knives, ropes, etc., by which suicide was accomplished, to relatives also in some cases acted injuriously by suggestion and incitation. Dr. Waldo added that he was a great believer generally in the usefulness of the full publicity of the Coroner's court, and he trusted that before long the pre-war constitutional and uniform method of sitting in all cases of inquisition with a jury would be resumed.—*Medical Officer, October 25th, 1919.*