

*The Medico-Psychological Association.*

THE Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane has done wisely in adopting Dr. Maudsley's resolution, proposed at its recent annual meeting, and changing its name to that of the Medico-Psychological Association. Were it only as a matter of convenience, the change was desirable; but as the new name really expresses its essential scientific aim, rather than, as the old one did, an accidental feature in its operations, there are far higher reasons in its favour than mere convenience. It is obvious that there may be some interested in the scientific objects of the Association, and perhaps eminent in the department which it cultivates, who have no connection with any asylum, and who may willingly join its ranks now that the scope of its work is enlarged and its true scientific aim prominently expressed. Another step in advance which it has taken, in the appointment of many foreign honorary members, will probably be fruitful of good results. By including in its list of members, as it now does, all those in Europe and America who are distinguished in psychological medicine, it presents an excellent organization for the study and advancement of the special objects which it has in view. In the progressive specialization which inevitably takes place in the development of science as in the development of organic life, it is most necessary that there should be the means of effecting a due co-ordination of results; and an essential pre-requisite to this end is a complete scientific intercourse between the different workers in different countries.

It is satisfactory to observe that the subjects which occupied the attention of the Association at its recent meeting were of an important practical character. The question of the condition of the insane in workhouses is one to which we have recently called earnest attention. Whether a few old and harmless imbecile patients may not properly be left in the workhouses is not a matter of very great moment; but that it is entirely unjustifiable to keep in the workhouse for one hour longer than is absolutely necessary an acute case of insanity, any one who knows what are the requirements of treatment in such cases, and what workhouses at present are, must feel most strongly. It will be remembered that our commissioners, in the course of their inspection of workhouses, discovered such things as a patient suffering from recent acute insanity, whose treatment consisted of the ordinary diet of the house; the plain meaning of which is, that just at the period when there is always the best hope, and often the only hope, of recovery through proper treatment, the unfortunate patient was, through official apathy or official neglect, left to degenerate into hopeless madness and to become a lasting

burden upon society. It would be impossible to pass too severe a censure on so grave, cruel, and foolish an injustice. The Commissioners in Lunacy have already expressed their fixed opinion that workhouses are not adapted by construction and management for the proper care of the insane; and the Medico-Psychological has done well to place on record a resolution to the like effect.

It is certainly very much to be regretted that the large amount of important material which the experience of different asylums must afford should hitherto have been of such comparatively little scientific use. One of the reasons why it has not been properly made use of, and cannot yet be made use of, is the want of a complete and uniform plan of recording asylum statistics. This was a subject urgently demanding immediate consideration; and we are glad to observe that the attention of the Association has been aroused to it, and that there is a fair prospect of something being done to make available for scientific purposes the experience of our numerous asylums. It may then, perhaps, be possible to settle the question, which yet remains undecided, whether insanity is really on the increase or not.—*The Lancet*, July 22, 1865.

*The "Restraint" System in French Public Asylums for the Insane.*

DR. LOCKHART ROBERTSON has forwarded to us an interesting paper—which we cannot print entire owing to heavy demands on our space—on the condition of the insane patients in two asylums belonging to the department of the Seine Inférieure. Considering that one of these asylums (that at Rouen) is under the care of M. Morel, and the other (that at Quatremares), under the superintendence of M. Dumesnil, it might have been supposed that the influence of these two enlightened physicians, whose reputation is European, would have availed to do away with the worst features of the dark times of alienist medicine. It is not so, however. Although the establishments in question appear to be favorable specimens of French county asylums, the general mode of treatment practised in them is such as would be considered a disgrace to any English provincial asylum. We regret to be obliged to draw this odious comparison, but it will be allowed that we are justified in making it when it is stated that restraint in its most objectionable forms seems to be the pivot on which all efforts at subduing the violence of the insane turn; that the value of food and alcohol in subduing maniacal excitement is unknown; that seclusion *for so long as two years* had been inflicted on two patients said to be suffering from nymphomania (!); that the rooms are crowded, bare, ill-ventilated, ill-furnished, and unprovided with means for washing; the beds wooden and cumbrous; and, what is as bad as anything, employment (except