A HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL CARE OF THE INSANE IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.*

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The American Medico-Psychological Association is by several resolutions committed to a scheme for the compilation and publication of a history of the institutional care of the insane in the United States and Canada, although at no time has any definite plan been outlined by the Association. It is evident, however, to all who have given thought to the matter that this history should present a detailed record of the early beginning and later of the wide-spread and comparatively rapid movement which, between 1840 and 1860, resulted in State care for the insane in all parts of the United States and Canada, and should pay a tribute to the efforts of philanthropic men and women to rouse the public conscience to action in behalf of a neglected and helpless class of patients. These men established institutions in States and Provinces where they had never before existed; they were also foremost in fostering a public sentiment which would serve as a sure guarantee that these institutions would be taken care of when they had entered upon their beneficent career. It is consequently necessary that the biographies of such men should accompany an account of the institutions which they created. Nor does this cover the whole scope of the undertaking. In the majority of instances the success of the institutions which had been founded depended wholly upon the labors of self-sacrificing, public-spirited and able medical men who devoted their lives to the management of them and relinquished all personal prospects of fortune or worldly aggrandizement. For this reason it seems equally desirable and just that biographical sketches be given of those men who were such all-important factors in the success of the great work.

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The movement to write a history of the Association and its work had its origin at the Baltimore meeting in 1895, when Dr. Powell, of Georgia, presented a very interesting outline of the "rise and progress of a vast system of charities in the fifteen Commonwealths of the South," with detailed accounts of institutions in Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia. It was evident from the interest which was then excited that much had been done by similar foundations in all the States of the Union, and from this conviction grew the original resolutions subsequently presented by Dr. J. W. Babcock, of Columbia, S. C. These resolutions were considered and favorably acted upon, and a committee was appointed, but nothing seems to have come of it, although progress has been reported from time to time, and an effort has been made to stir up a general sentiment in favor of completing the work. For this and other reasons, although not aware of any special personal fitness for the work, I did not feel at liberty to decline the appointment made at the Cincinnati meeting, and of which, by the way, I learned for the first time in June last at Atlantic City. Since that time I have made an intermittent effort to organize the work and to collect such material as I could find.*

The object of the present paper is to give some account of the progress of the work and to say what needs to be done. I hope, also, to stir up in the minds of the members of the Association a feeling of responsibility for it, so that there may be co-operation in gathering the material and preparing it for publication at the proper time. The difficulties in the task are very great. Those who have been interested in the construction of the institutions for the insane in the United States have been largely isolated workers, and their records are, consequently, widely scattered throughout the different States of the Union.

In some instances, as in Georgia, the names of the men who began the movement to establish an institution for the insane are absolutely lost. It is simply known that an unknown man made

* The full committee is as follows: Dr. Henry M. Hurd, Chairman; Dr. William F. Drewry, for the South; Dr. Richard Dewey, for the West; Dr. Charles W. Pilgrim, for the Middle States; Dr. G. Alder Blumer, for New England; Dr. T. J. W. Burgess, for British America.

his appearance about the year 1837 in Georgia and so moved the Legislature by his fervid appeal as to induce that body to start an institution for the insane. No one now knows his name or where he came from or his subsequent history. It has been conjectured that he was an invalid temporarily in Georgia for his health. He performed a worthy work and passed on into obscurity and no one can now do him honor.

The principal difficulty, however, in collecting material thus far has been a lack of a feeling of individual responsibility on the part of the members of the Association. Everybody has felt perfectly willing to have somebody else undertake the task. It, however, is of such a character that it must be undertaken by individuals in every State. Members of the Association living in Michigan cannot write an adequate history of what has been done in Maryland; nor would it be possible for a person living in Maine to appreciate what has been done or get any adequate information about the history of an institution in Texas or in California, or any other State except his own.

The work, consequently, needs the co-operation of every single member; records of corporate, State and private hospitals should be searched and material should be gathered concerning everything essential to a proper understanding of it. Acts of General Assemblies should be examined, messages of Governors should be scanned; reports of committees should be read; reports of commissions charged with the location of institutions and the erection of buildings and the purchase of sites should be studied; plans of buildings, projects of laws, methods of maintenance—these and a multitude of other data are needed for the information of the committee in charge of the history. A chapter in the proposed work should be devoted to the changes which have been made from time to time in the laws of the different States in regard to the commitment of the insane to better protect the rights of the insane and at the same time to guard the interests of the community, and these changes should be traced from one stage of progress to another. The present almost universal movement even for the voluntary admission of patients to institutions has been an evolution from past very strenuous laws for the detention and commitment of the insane persons which followed in their turn the former period of no-law when the insane were not

gathered into institutions or adequately cared for. It is very important to know how these changes have been brought about and what has influenced the present happy state of affairs.

Histories of asylums and hospitals are also needed; biographies of individuals, superintendents of institutions, medical officers and trustees should be sedulously gathered and perpetuated. All changes in the organization and construction of institutions should receive attention; the development of the cottage system with detached buildings and farm colonies, the open-door system—all should be presented in contrast with the old-fashioned closed and monastic institutions which were built for 40 or 50 years throughout the United States and Canada.

Every epoch-making change in the architecture and arrangement of institutions, or in the management and the treatment of cases, should be carefully sought out in the various States. The material at present available in the hands of the committee may be briefly described to prevent any waste of effort on the part of members by repeating the labor of others.

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF INSANITY furnishes interesting descriptions of the earlier institutions, as well as biographies of the members of the Association or of men interested in insanity. THE JOURNAL OF INSANITY and the *Transactions* of the Association contain about 150 such biographies. Another source of information of a similar character is furnished by the writings of Dr. Curwen. He published a "History of the Association," also a "History of the Original Thirteen Members of the Association of Superintendents of Institutions for the Insane"; also a "Presidential Address," which appears in Volume IV of the *Transactions*, covering a space of about 60 pages, in which, in addition to an account of several institutions, he gives biographies of a large number of men who were eminent in the earlier days of the Association. These writings are of great value and can be utilized. Another valuable contribution is the paper of Dr. T. O. Powell, of Milledgeville, Georgia, already referred to. Much of it can be published without change, and the briefer portions will serve as an excellent outline for fuller treatment. Another interesting and valuable sketch is Dr. J. W. Babcock's chapter on "Public Charity," in a book entitled "A Handbook of South Carolina," published in 1908. This contains illustrations

and valuable biographies of men who were eminent in South Carolina and did philanthropic service in initiating hospital provision for the insane in that State. Another book which contains much useful material is the "Life of Dorothea L. Dix," with an account of her travels throughout the United States to awaken public sentiment in behalf of establishing institutions for the insane. Dr. J. T. W. Burgess, of Montreal, has also published among the transactions of the Royal Society of Canada "A Historical Sketch of Canadian Institutions for the Insane," which shows great research and industry; it has preserved many details which might otherwise already have been lost. Another similar book is "Annals of the Vermont Asylums" by the late Dr. Draper, of Brattleboro, Vt. These books will enable all members who have access to them or to the files of THE JOURNAL OF INSANITY or the *Transactions* of the Medico-Psychological Association to acquaint themselves with what has already been written and published.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, if in old times bricks could not be made without straw, it is equally true at the present time that history cannot be written without the fullest access to original documents. Every sort of a document is essential to a writer of modern history, and no collection of material can be considered trivial which bears in any way upon the truth or casts a fuller light upon history. It is desirable that every member should write the story of his own institution, and as far as possible the history of the general movement in behalf of the insane in the State should be entrusted to some citizen of that State who is familiar with the facts. Wherever it is not practicable for any reason for a superintendent of an institution, or for persons who are most familiar with the facts, to gather them into connected history, the committee will undertake the work of compiling it, and later will submit it to the proper persons for revision, correction and criticism. It is, however, important that every person should feel a sense of personal responsibility, and that the work should be done immediately and not relegated to an uncertain future. Already much valuable material has been lost, especially in the Southern States, by reason of a failure to gather such documents when access to them was possible. In several States, in fact, the ravages of the late war destroyed many

important records of State institutions, and some of them are irreparably lost. The industry of other members of the committee is worthy of special mention: Dr. Burgess, of Montreal, has gathered considerable material to amplify and complete his paper already referred to. Dr. Pilgrim, of Poughkeepsie, has begun to collect the records of hospitals and asylums in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Dr. Dewey, of Milwaukee, notwithstanding his absence in Europe, has done valuable preparatory work, and is now planning to secure aid from his associates in the Middle West.

The question of the mode of publication becomes an important one. My personal impression is that it is desirable to write this history fully, with much detail. Even if the work grows to two, three or four large volumes, it should be undertaken. It also should be adequately illustrated, and printed in good form so that it may be a lasting record of the movement and those who promoted it. I would suggest that a sum not to exceed \$250 per year be allowed for clerkship, postage and similar necessary expenses in order to prepare the manuscript of the first volume. The committee thus far has worked without funds, except such as has been supplied by its members individually; if need be it can continue to do so. If, however, authority is given to employ a stenographer occasionally, or to secure clerical assistance for copying and the like, it will expedite the work much. All members of the committee are busy men and cannot profitably spend many hours a week in routine clerical work.

I have taken the liberty to embody the substance of this paper in a resolution which I now offer to ascertain the will of the Association in the matter of the publication of the book. I shall be very glad to have it modified, revised, or in any way changed so as to bring out more completely the wishes of the Association in this matter. I am not wedded to any theory of publication, or any form of work. I am anxious that the work go on with as much rapidity as possible. It is equally important, however, that the work be done thoroughly, so that in future all may know what in the past contributed to the success of an important philanthropic achievement.