

the existing congestion, as well as to secure a reasonable margin for future requirements, and further suggesting how this accommodation should be distributed, this Committee made certain important general recommendations. For instance, that at every Mental Hospital there should be an admission ward where recoverable cases could be treated without the necessity of their being admitted into the ordinary wards of the Institution; that there should be wards set apart in general hospitals where early and acute cases could be detained for observation and treatment, so avoiding the necessity for sending such patients to a Mental Hospital at all, if found recoverable; that an Act for the Union be passed as early as possible which should provide for the appointment of a Commissioner in Mental Disorders and local Mental Hospital Boards; that from that Act any terms calculated to offend the susceptibilities of persons requiring treatment in Mental Hospitals should be left out, and that the placing of patients within the precincts of prisons or Charge Offices should not be allowed when such a course could by any possibility be avoided. All the recommendations of the Committee were accepted by the Government.

In 1916 the Mental Disorders Act was passed, which realized to the full the wishes of the Committee. I think it would be interesting to this Association to draw attention to certain portions of that Act.

Sections 27 and 28 give Magistrates, Judges, or Courts power to commit for observation to a Mental Hospital any person who, while awaiting trial on arraignment or during trial, shows signs of mental derangement. These Sections have been coming more and more into general use, and I do not hesitate to say have very much improved the character of the medical evidence given in such cases, has materially helped the Courts and Juries when called upon to decide whether or not an accused person is fit to plead or would be better dealt with by care and treatment in a Mental Hospital or otherwise.

Chapter 7 of the Act provides for the treatment of incipient cases of mental disorder in general hospitals, but has not been used. Quite a number of cases have been treated in general hospitals, but without recourse to the provisions of this chapter, the real difficulty in the use of which has been financial stringency, caused by the War, which has prevented the Provincial Authorities raising the requisite funds for the building of special wards in the general hospitals. I believe and hope that this unfortunate state of affairs is about to be remedied, at least in Johannesburg, and plans are already being discussed for special wards to be erected at that centre, and a site has been selected for the building.

Another Section, which I feel sure will interest you, is Section 76, which provides that no person who does any act in pursuance of this Act has any liability in respect thereof if that act be done in good faith, and