

ASYLUM VERSUS HOSPITAL.*

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AS we ring out the closing years of the 19th century, laden with accumulated treasures of knowledge and experience, in every department of human activity, we naturally become retrospective of the past and prophetic of the future.

This vast inheritance bequeathed entails upon us the tremendous responsibility of passing it on to posterity, not only unimpaired in value, but magnified and enriched by our own contributions as faithful stewards of our own day and generation.

As the vanishing shadows of the old century lengthen into oblivion, already we see in the distance the glimmering dawn of a new century, heavily freighted with stupendous opportunities and possibilities for the future. The century now drawing to a close has given such a gigantic impetus to every branch of scientific, commercial and industrial thought, that we stand appalled and confounded at the very richness and magnificence of our heritage. Two great forces have been in operation, the one destructive of the old, and the other constructive of the new. Step by step, in rapid succession, old theories, customs and superstitions, the offspring of ages of ignorance and credulity, lie prostrate in the grave in the presence of the electric blaze of scientific enquiry and demonstrated truth. No branch of human research has been crowned with richer results, or rewarded with greater advance, than in the departments of medical, surgical and mental science.

The purpose of this paper is to take a rapid review, historically, of the evolution of the asylum and its sister charity, the hospital, to point out the uses and abuses of each in the past, the distinctive function of each at the present, the lessons to be drawn from past experience, and the lines upon which we shall proceed in the future.

The early history of the asylum is meagre and involved in much obscurity. We have sufficient knowledge of its history, however, to

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