POST GRADUATE MEDICAL JOURNAL

LONDON, AUGUST, 1943

EDITORIAL

MEDICAL PLANNING. PART V. THE RE-ADJUSTMENT OF THE INJURED WORKMAN

At St. Mary Cray, near Orpington, there has recently sprung into existence the Smit-Asquith Factory, where the manufacture of gem-diamonds is carried on by men crippled by war casualty or by civil accident. None of these men has had any previous experience of this specialised work, all of them are unfitted to resume their former occupations.

The workmen are drawn from diverse sources, clerks, dairymen, fitters, labourers of various kinds; one who shows outstanding aptitude was formerly a milk-roundsman. To this process of re-adjustment of the partially disabled man into industry that blessed (and much abused) word Rehabilitation can be applied. The special feature of the enterprise is the training of the men, not at a "Rehabilitation Centre," but in the Works; they learn their jobs in an atmosphere of real and constructive activity.

Starting with a minimum wage of £3 5s. a week, for some time the workman is a financial charge on the Company, but within a few weeks he becomes an asset and his earnings mount to over £7 a week.

This purely private enterprise with a capital of £150,000 unaided by any Government subsidy, is confidently expected to prove a commercial success. Founded by a Dutchman of vision, success has been made practicable by the inventive genius of a Yorkshire engineer whose machine eliminates, by doing mechanically and accurately, certain stages of the process which hitherto have required long training and highly specialised skill.

Watching these men, some lacking a limb or part of a limb; here a man with a huge scar over a depressed fracture of the frontal bone, beside him a one-eyed man, another with a diplegia, and listening to their histories of fruitless appeals to Labour Exchanges, and of their hopeless outlook, one realises the tremendous significance of an enterprise that can transfigure them into contented enthusiasts, full of eagerness to become proficient, their self-respect restored now that they have been re-adjusted into congenial and profitable work.

The factory began with 10 cripples, already there are 50; eventually, when the lagging planners of town and country have translated into action some settled policy, there will be 500 working in a new factory "somewhere in England." It is strange but true that there is a steadily increasing demand for gem—and for commercial—diamonds. An adequate world supply requires some 80,000 workers. Before the outbreak of war, Germany employed four-fifths (over 60,000) of these; the industry had been captured to a large extent by our acquisitive enemy. It is a pious hope that this will be in turn firmly established in this country, although eventually, it is predicted 50 per cent will be transferred to Palestine, an instance of poetic justice to the special victims of Nazi malignancy.

The courteous Managing-Director, Mr. Woltman, showed with justifiable pride the excellent Cafeteria, the Rest-rooms, and First-aid equipment, all in accordance with enlightened modern practice, and explained that, in conjunction with adjacent firms, a joint "Central Medical Clinic" had been established at 65 High Street, St. Mary Cray and officially opened on May 28th by Mr. George Tomlinson, M.P. An agreement has been reached whereby one of the doctors practising in the district attends in rotation each day to deal with injuries and emergency illness. The contributions of the employers, 24s. per employee per year are pooled and shared by the doctors; these appear to be advantageous terms.

There are several other crafts which can be established on similar lines, leather-work (e.g. bookbinding), woodwork, toymaking, special branches of tobacco manufacture, tea-packing, etc. Almost the entire personnel could be staffed by the injured workman. The attempt to place these cases, on any worth-while scale, into large Works will create grave difficulties in management, as the experience of the last war soon made evident.

If the orthopaedic surgeon demands, now, a substantial expansion of his Outpatient Department (if necessary by Government grants) and if he will assume full responsibility for his cases not only to the stage when fractures are united (the lesser part of his job) but on to the
point when his patient is fit to be re-adjusted into industry, he will find enlightened industrial concerns like the Smit-Asquith Factory waiting to complete his work. The proper liaison officer would be the Almoner, who might be, with advantage, relieved of the uncongenial task of watching the financial interests of the Hospital, and so able to concentrate on acquiring a practical knowledge of industrial conditions and on fulfilling the functions of the suggested Government Official.

In this way the work of the Hospitals would be in direct line with various specialised centres of craftsmanship; the cases would pass into an atmosphere of creative work instead of into the artificially created atmosphere of a "Rehabilitation Centre."

It may be that training centres will be needed for a residue of cases that cannot be directly readjusted into industry, but there is no need to christen them by a flatulent polysyllabic name, and instil into the public mind the idea that the Rehabilitation Centre is something new and revolutionary. It only remains for the major Hospitals to act in concert, with foresight, swiftness and resolution to rescue from the clutching hand of bureaucracy this important part of their rightful functions.

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The Editor would welcome correspondence on the subject of Medical Planning.

Apologia

The Editor regrets that apologies must be proffered to our members on two counts. First, owing to the unfortunate ill-health of three of our contributors, the second part of the OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY number, planned to be published this month, has had to be postponed. It is hoped that the advertised articles will be published in the near future.

Second, owing to various factors, all of which are to be attributed to war-time conditions, an unfortunate error occurred in the illustrations of ALCOCK'S paper on anaesthesia which was published in the July issue. Five Figs. were given, but the diagrams numbered Figs. III and IV should have been transposed. The captions given to the Figs. were, however, correct. It has been impossible to trace the source of this error, but the Editor accepts the responsibility, and apologises not only to Dr. Helen Bower Alcock, but also to our members.

It is hoped to publish another special number next February. The subject chosen is MENINGO-ENCEPHALITIS. Many distinguished neurologists have promised to contribute to this number.

The Editor wishes to thank all our members for their continued support in these difficult times, and to welcome the many new members who have recently subscribed to the Fellowship of Medicine.