

Mr. Winch's Plan

Editor, The Sun: Sir,—Congratulations to Mr. Winch on his plan for a home for ex-patients from the mental hospital!

No one who is acquainted with Mr. Winch's activities in connection with the mental hospital can doubt his sincerity of purpose. The heavily increasing population at the hospital should be a matter of concern to the taxpayers, and I, as an ex-patient, would like to emphasize the necessity for a "middle house" as proposed by Mr. Winch.

One is, I expect, self-condemned by preconceived opinions as to the social status of anyone who has been a mental patient. At any rate, the dread of facing society again with the stigma of implied insanity is sometimes far too great a psychological handicap for patients to overcome without help and understanding.

The experience of being in such a hospital is almost indescribable, but the understanding gained is of definite value. From personal experience, as well as knowledge of the viewpoint of many patients still at the hospital, I know that the unsympathetic and accusatory attitude of the general public toward ex-patients is one of the greatest hindrances to complete emotional recovery.

To return from a "lost world" and to plunge, midstream, into everyday living feeling emotionally guilty at having been temporarily overcome by the stream itself, is a task which has caused many patients either to return, or remain, at the hospital.

Discussing the situation further, a home would have the advantage of providing a gradual break-away from the apathy of institutionalization. Being regimented and herded from ward to ward like cattle brings sooner or later, a sense of frustration as an individual. That, and the conviction that one is continually disbelieved, builds a complex that often takes many months of normal living to eradicate.

I don't think my own reaction was unusual, and I know that although I was a patient for a comparatively short time, it was fully four or five months before I felt any returning confidence in myself as a respected member of society.

It is surprising to me, that Canada should lag so far behind in the scheme of home placing for patients, particularly in view of the fact that similar schemes have been tried and proven successful in the main countries of Europe and, more recently, in the United States.

"EX-PATIENT."