

(changes similar in kind to those occurring in insane brains) be shown to occur quite commonly outside of mental disorder, the demonstration would scarcely excite surprise. Even with respect to such changes the inquiry would be raised as to where, precisely, in what parts of the cerebral hemisphere, and in what cells or layers of cells they occur. But we shall be concerned with much more than these more obvious changes of cells, which are probably only end-changes. We shall expect *pari passu* with improvements in methods, comparative investigations in sane and insane, regarding the intimate structure of the nerve-cell and the state of cell processes; the condition of the neuroglia, especially the spider-cells; the state and disposition of blood- and lymph-channels. And, leaving mere structure, the question of chemical composition will need a place in the comparative investigation, an assertion for which we need no better argument than the recent work upon the chemical composition of the brain by Gutnikov.* And what are we to say of bacteriological investigation? Taking two brains, the one of a sane person dead of chronic nephritis, the other of a case of acute delirious mania, of puerperal insanity, or—we make bold to add—of general paralysis, dying after a series of “congestive” seizures, the pathologist may say “both show pigmentary degeneration, vacuoles; the only difference is a condition of ‘cloudy swelling’ of the cells of the lunatic’s brain, a congestion of vessels, and a diffused staining of neuroglia in the latter.” But until such cases receive proper bacteriological investigation we shall not to-day be content to believe that the “only difference” has been demonstrated.

Housing the Insane.

The supplement to the 50th Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy contains the plans of six new asylums, providing accommodation for nearly five thousand five hundred insane persons—London County building at Bexley Heath for 2,000, Lancashire for 2,000 (chronics) at Winwick, Stafford for 600 at Chedderton, West Sussex for 600 near Chichester, and Middlesborough for 250.

The multiplication of asylums is so rapid, their cost so great, and their import so threatening that the question

* *Allgem. Zeitschr. f. Psychiatrie*, 53 B., 2 H., 1896.

naturally suggests itself, is there no other way? Is it unavoidable that the great bulk of those suffering from mental disability must be housed in big institutions? If not, how else can they be provided for, and in what relative numbers?

Answers to these questions from an authoritative source are urgently needed to assist those upon whom the responsibility falls of providing for the increase of the insane, and certainly no body of men has greater knowledge or experience of this subject than the members of this Association.

The views of the members of this Association, whether individually or collectively expressed, should certainly be available for those needing information or guidance, and the Association would be only fulfilling a duty to the community in discussing, and, if possible, formulating its success on this question.

The London County Council has appointed a committee to inquire and report on this subject, so that the simultaneous consideration we have suggested would not be inopportune.

Suicides of "Unsound Mind."

Much interest attaches to the Parliamentary return* of the number of persons who committed suicide in England, Wales, and Ireland during the years 1892-3-4-5, not being inmates of asylums, etc., but who were found to have been insane by a coroner's jury.

The total numbers were: For 1892, 2,472; 1893, 2,542; 1894, 2,681; 1895, 2,764. The increase in the four years was 292, or rather over eleven per cent.

Several of the coroners furnishing the returns point out that this finding is based solely on the fact that the individual committed suicide, no other evidence of insanity being adduced. The coroner for Manchester estimates that this is the case in 90 per cent. of such verdicts.

Evidence of prior insanity in such cases is often withheld, slurred over, not inquired for, or is in many instances unattainable, so that the finding may still be correct in a large proportion of instances, although conclusive proof may be so often absent.

Greater exactitude in the wording of verdicts is certainly

* 16th July, 1896.