

GERMANY.

By Dr. JOHANNES BRESLER.

The most important event in the department of psychiatry in Germany since my report in 1910 has been the Fourth International Congress for the Care of the Insane, which was held at the house of the Prussian Deputies in Berlin, from October 3rd till the 7th, 1910. The Congress was attended by about six hundred members. It compared favourably with its predecessors in the number and practical and scientific importance of the reports and in its general arrangements; it was evident that the interest of psychiatrists and of laymen in those congresses is on the increase. In addition to the meetings of the members, there was an important exhibition of models, plans and photographs of establishments and institutions for the insane, of sick-rooms and of machinery, of work done by patients in public and private institutions, and of scientific apparatus and books, which was visited with great interest, and which gave a very true idea of the progress in Germany in the care of the insane. The exhibition had been arranged by Dr. Alt, at Uchtspringe (Altmark). A no less true insight into German methods is given by a work on German Hospitals, which was edited by Dr. Bresler. A copy of this work was presented as a souvenir to each member of the Congress. It was edited with the assistance of the superintendents of the public and private asylums, and contains in an elegant volume of 666 pages the description of about seventy institutions for the insane, illustrated with numerous plans and photographs. This work has since been continued, and a second volume of 465 pages, with illustrations, has recently appeared. At the same time a similar work has been edited by Dr. Schloess, of Vienna, on Austrian asylums for the insane, copies of which (and of the second volume of the above-mentioned work) were also presented to the members of the Berlin Congress. So that it may be truly said that seldom have members returned from a congress with so abundant a supply of literature. A special number of my *Weekly Journal of Psychiatry and Neurology* was devoted to the members of the Congress, and contained about fifty portraits with short biographical sketches of the most distinguished alienists present. The more important papers are perhaps worthy of mention in this retrospect.

The most important was that contributed by the universally revered Tamburini (Rome) on the connection between insanity and civilisation. Some of Tamburini's conclusions are as follows: It is not correct to assert that insanity was once less common than it is now, for nowadays mental diseases attack single individuals, whereas in former centuries whole masses of people were involved in psychical epidemics. In less civilised and savage nations certain psychical disorders are still of frequent occurrence which have long since disappeared from civilised countries. Whether, in the latter, the large number of insane admitted into institutions is evidence of an increase of mental disorder still remains an undecided question, for the limited statistics which exist extend only to a few decennial periods, and so important a question cannot be decided by the consideration of so brief a period. On the

other hand, the greatest importance must be given to the fact that in the present age mental derangements are more quickly recognised and are better understood, and civilisation must be regarded as a factor in the rapid diagnosis rather than in the causation of insanity. Moreover, to-day we treat as insane conditions which were not formerly so regarded. The present complications of industry and commerce, the excellence of modern institutions and the increased care devoted to the insane have resulted in more patients being confided to these establishments than formerly. Also statistics have become more exact. Civilisation *per se* effects no increase in mental diseases. On the contrary there are factors of the highest importance in the causation of insanity which can be, and are, combated with success by civilisation, namely alcohol and syphilis. If the success of the battle against these foes is still incomplete, it only proves that civilisation has not yet progressed far enough.

Less optimistic were the conclusions arrived at by another speaker, Rüdin (Munich), who believes that in our civilised nations there is a marked tendency to bodily degeneration, and that sooner or later this must bring with it a diminution of nervous energy and a disruption of the fundamental basis of our civilisation.

Blin and Vigouroux (Paris) believe that it is not civilisation itself which must be made answerable for the development of psychosis, but the particular kind of civilisation, which, aiming at perfection and the improvement of the conditions of life, leads to physical and mental over-exertion and renders the organism more vulnerable to many toxins.

Hellpach (Karlsruhe) read a paper on "The Psycho-pathology of Modern Art and Literature." Among his interesting reflections was a warning against the supposition that the importance of either is reduced by its association with disease. He states that, on the contrary, development in nature and history often comes by disease, and that sickness is often a path of Nature to manifold great and new attainments; that finally the pathological may be ennobled by the valuable effects which it produces.

Cramer (Göttingen) contributed an article on institutions for the nervous diseases of the poorer classes. Sommer (Giefesen) on the conditions of forensic psychiatry.

Much time was devoted to a consideration of the relation of military service and of war to mental diseases. Among those who took part in the discussion were: Deknatel (Alkmaar, Holland), Kay (Bristol), Krause (Berlin), Stier (Berlin), Pactet (Villejuif, near Paris), Apt (Przemysl, Austria), Schultze (Berlin).

From these contributions it was evident that in every country the military authorities endeavour strictly to exclude abnormal individuals from entering the military service, to remove those who, in the service, have become insane or are known to be abnormal, and lastly to place under immediate and efficient care those who have become insane during war.

An excellent article was read by the well-known psychiatrist, Dr. Peeters (Gheel), on the family care of the insane at Gheel and its influence upon the sane population. He proves in detail that there is no question of a noxious influence, but that, on the contrary,

the constant sight of one of the saddest human afflictions and the care of the insane by the members of families have produced a high degree of altruism and of kindly feeling.

Von Olah and Fabinyi read papers on the further development of family care in Hungary. Plaut (Münich), A. Marie and Beaussart (Paris), Hallager (Aarhus) read papers on "The Wassermann Reaction in Mental Disease."

We had also the privilege of hearing the well-known English pathologist Mott, who spoke on his researches on sleeping-sickness; he, Ehrlich and A. Marie contributed detailed and illuminating accounts of the cause, course and pathology of this disease. I will only here refer to the important statement made by Marie, that the form assumed by many cases of sleeping-sickness is very difficult to distinguish from that of dementia præcox. The excellent demonstration of living trypanosomes and spirilla in kinematograph by Marie evoked the enthusiastic applause of the Congress.

Very interesting also were the demonstrations by Alzheimer of degenerative processes in the nervous system. Schloess (Vienna) read a paper on "The Admission of Voluntary Boarders into Institutions for the Insane" and van Deventer (Amsterdam) "On the Treatment of Nervous Diseases." We regret that our space does not permit us to mention the other papers; there were more than sixty in all. We may be allowed to include in this retrospect the official report of the Congress, which is published by C. Marhold, Halle-a-S. President of the Congress was Prof. C. Moeli (Berlin). Honorary Presidents were A. Marie, Régis, van Deventer, Peeters, Bajenoff, Tamburini, Obersteiner, Macpherson, Donkin, Buffet, Moreira, Olah, Nerander. The progress of psychiatry in Germany was, as hitherto, steady and continuous; there have not been any great revolutionising discoveries and innovations. Psycho-analysis still gains adherents; its literature is vastly increasing, but it is not accepted by the official scientific world; and there are phenomena in connection with this method of investigating morbid mental conditions which deter many observers from adopting it.

In the Department of the Histology of Mental Diseases we are indebted to Alzheimer (Munich) for a series of epoch-making researches. Above all, he has elucidated the processes of degeneration in the cortex cerebri in an interesting manner by his discovery of the amoeboid glia cells, and by his demonstration of their importance in nerve-cell degeneration, and in removing the products of degeneration. The Möbius prize was accorded to him in recognition of his valuable work. The clinical importance of a work by E. Bleuler (Zurich) is worthy of mention, entitled *Dementia Præcox, or the Group of Schizophrenias*. He does not consider the dementia to be the only characteristic feature of the disease, and presents an interpretation of the symptoms in many respects new and original; he regards the essential condition as a splitting of the different psychical functions and a failure on the part of the organ of reasoning to accommodate itself to the morbidly changed psychical mechanism. On these grounds he explains, in a skilful and convincing manner, his choice of the term "schizophreny" instead of "dementia præcox."

With regard to treatment there is nothing new to report. Salvarsan has achieved no success in the treatment of general paralysis, and has disappointed the hopes placed on it with regard to this disease.

New hypnotics are produced nearly every month, and are for the most part combinations of the old ones. It would serve no useful purpose to enumerate them. Only one seems to be of particular importance, namely, luminal (natrium phenylæthyl barbituricum), made by the firm Bayer & Co., of Elberfeld; the numerous experiments made with it at many asylums have shown that it is a good hypnotic, and can be given without danger in effective doses.

In England, where the term "moral insanity" has been coined, it will be learned with interest that, particularly in Prussia, the greatest attention is being devoted to the care of psychopathic children, who have come under the working of the Compulsory Education Act. At the present time, in the provincial asylums at Goettingen and at Potsdam, wards have been instituted for such children, and careful observation of their mental state, and if necessary treatment, is there carried out. It may also be recorded that in many of the lunatic asylums of Germany the patients on admission, and in some cases even the staff, are submitted to a searching examination with a view to discovering if they are carriers of dysentery or typhoid bacilli. By isolating those patients who are carriers, and by adopting particular precautions and methods of cleanliness towards the sane carriers, it is hoped to radically prevent epidemics of dysentery and typhoid which have recurred again and again in our asylums, or to find out their cause and successfully apply the remedy.

We may record an interesting innovation made in one provincial asylum (Eickelborn, in Westfalen), which has a special ward for dangerous criminal lunatics. In this asylum they have begun to employ watch-dogs, by which the attendants are accompanied when on duty, and which serve to prevent attacks on the attendants and to hinder escapes.

You will not, perhaps, regard this innovation as an advance in the treatment of the insane.

A REVIEW OF THE CONGRESS OF ALIENISTS AND NEUROLOGISTS OF FRENCH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES HELD AT TUNIS, APRIL 1ST TO 7TH, 1912.

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From April 1st to the 7th this year the Twenty-second Annual Congress of Alienists and Neurologists of France and of French-speaking countries, consisting of a membership of about 300 adherents, was held in Tunis, and the writer attended as a delegate of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland. More than thirty institutions for the care and treatment of mental cases were associated with the Congress, and numerous delegates representing learned societies as well as foreign countries attended. The President of this year's Congress was Dr. Mabile, Medical Superintendent of the La Fond