

Surgical Treatment of Mental Disorders.—Dr. Auguste Voisin related a case of severe continuous headache, principally in the left temple, which had persisted for three years in a woman *æt.* 21. The pain resulted in suicidal melancholia. She had convulsive attacks, incorrigible vomiting, right-sided hemiparesis, and facial hemiplegia. An opening was made in the left temporal region, and a serous cyst was found under an area of pachymeningitis, affecting the ascending frontal and parietal convolutions. The removal of the cyst was followed by recovery.

Gelatinous Tremor of the Tongue.—Dr. Victor Parant referred to patients suffering from recent melancholia of infective origin with special tremor of the tongue, to which he gives the name *Gelatinous*, because it closely resembles the shaking of a jelly.

BELGIUM: By Dr. JULES MOREL.

Report of the Government on the State of the Insane.

The Government of Belgium have published (1895) a Report of the State of the Insane in the Kingdom for the period 1883-92. This came under the notice of the Belgian alienists in the beginning of 1896. It is certainly the most important yet published, for it marks a great step in the way of progress. It criticises and suggests improvements in the asylums in all directions. Most of these institutions are in the hands of private proprietors, but financial difficulties stand in the way of any modification of this condition of affairs.

As to the medical service it is not what it should be. The powers of the Medical Superintendents are not wide enough; many are not independent, and feel themselves unable to raise the scientific level of their asylums. The Minister of Justice has promulgated the idea of a special degree of *Doctor of Psychological Medicine*.

There are still detained in asylums too many patients who might be sent to the colonies of Gheel and Lierneux, and it would be a humane endeavour to retain as few as possible of these who are inoffensive. The Report makes a distinction between the curable and incurable for whom asylum care is necessary. If the Board of Charities in many towns could take the initiative in the erection of wards for the reception of the incurable who do not require special medical care, asylums would soon be disencumbered. And if in every town provisional wards could be organised for the cure of recent cases these would constitute substantial progress. The curable should be sent to asylums, which would then become real hospitals, whilst the very dangerous should be confined in special institutions. This last, however, is a matter of great difficulty. The Minister of Justice

desires to institute special hospitals for curable patients, built with that end in view, and managed by a scientific staff of officers. He would also extend the colony system for those not absolutely requiring asylum care and control. There are 9,149 incurable cases in the Belgian Asylums, 2,670* curable cases. The aim of the Minister is to place the last-named in the Hospice Guislain and the two State Asylums of Mons and Tournai, besides certain other institutions who would grant every guarantee.

Manual occupation has no place in the Belgian Asylums with few exceptions, and the Government intends to do all that is possible by formulating special rules to extend this department. Supervision is generally sufficient by day, but it requires to be more effective by night. This remark applies generally.

The general directions, issued by the Government in 1852, are now no longer sufficient, and it is the intention of the Minister to prepare new rules for the planning, building, and organisation of asylums.

Concerning private care the law of 1874 is silent, but it is very difficult to state when sequestration in these circumstances legally begins and when it ought to cease. That must be solved before any official decision can be issued.

After-care of the insane has existed for a few years in connection with the State Asylums, and ought to be extended. Every institution receiving poor patients should have special arrangements for after-care. It exists now in the State Asylum of Mons.

The population of the asylums in Belgium is constantly increasing. From 1872 till 1882 the numbers rose by 5,485; from 1883 till 1887 by 7,630.

The patients are classified as follows:—Imbeciles 20, mania 18, systematised psychoses 15, secondary dementia 13, melancholia 12, neurotic psychoses 9, organic dementia 3·9, general paralysis 3, and intoxications 3 per cent. This last-named class is stated too low, but very many certificates fail to show habits of intoxication. The information given is faulty and incomplete in many respects. In my opinion alcohol is the chief cause of mental diseases and degeneracy amongst men in this country.

Imbeciles and idiots constitute at least one-fifth; while with the demented and neurotic insane they constitute at least the half of the asylum population.

We cannot say more about these statistics. They are undeserving of confidence while medical officers continue to be insufficiently paid to permit of them giving their whole time and attention to their special duties. There are nearly fifty asylums in Belgium, and only at Mons, Tournai, Gheel, and Lierneux are the Medical Superintendents restricted from private practice.

This Report is certainly conceived on a higher standpoint than

* This proportion is very high and cannot be the right one

those published from 1850 till 1882. Notwithstanding, it cannot be compared favourably with similar documents issued in Holland, England, Scotland, Ireland, and the United States of America. Let us hope that the next will inform us of a complete reformation of Belgian Law and Belgian Asylums.

The Nursing of the Insane.

The question of attendants was brought before the Société de Médecine Mentale by Dr. Morel, who had, in 1894, reviewed what had been done in Britain, Holland, Germany, France, and the United States. He recorded an enormous advance, and repeated the words of Dr. Peeters in 1893, "The responsibility of the Medical Superintendent increases in proportion to the inferiority of the condition of the attendants. The attendant in an asylum is not merely a nurse; the best will, the greatest devotion, the highest degree of suitability, are insufficient to attain the object in view. He who is charged with the selection of attendants ought to raise their intellectual and moral level. Educate him for his work."

In 1895 the same Society had decided to publish an Attendants' Manual, and a circular was sent to all Superintendents and physicians of the Belgian Asylums in order to obtain subscriptions for the forthcoming book. It was mentioned that every attendant should possess a copy. Most of the Superintendents only subscribed for one copy, and the enterprise had no success. This is the reason why the initiative of the Society was temporarily abandoned.

In the discussion, following on the reading of the plan of the manual by Dr. Morel, some members were of opinion that no instruction in anatomy and physiology should be given, and this notwithstanding that it was abundantly proved that these subjects were fundamental in the course of teaching in the countries already mentioned. Dr. Morel thought it impossible to produce a satisfactory book without following nearly the same plan as that found necessary by the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain.

Radio-bicipital Reflexes.

Professor Francotte, of the University of Liege, has published his observations on the radio-bicipital reflexes already mentioned by Sternberg in 1893. His conclusions were based upon investigations on 527 persons (427 in dispensary practice and 100 insane). Of the whole number the reflex existed in 402, and in these the contraction was moderate in extent in 159 (a slight raising of the forearm), while it was more pronounced in 243 (flexion of the forearm on the arm). In the first group of 427 the reflex failed in 23 per cent.—for women 16, for men 41 per cent. In the second group of 100 it failed in 17 per cent.—for women 13, for men 20 per cent.

Thus the reflex was observed more frequently in women than in men, but less in the second group, which included numerous general paralytics. The existence of radio-bicipital reflex has no signification. However, any exaggeration proves a reflex hyperexcitability. It is found especially among the anæmic and neurotic groups, and is very frequent in general paralysis. The exaggeration on one side only generally indicates a state of hyper-tonicity or the beginning of actual contraction. Professor Francotte has observed it in two cases of paralysis agitans.

There is usually a connection between the radio-bicipital and the knee-reflex, although there are cases in which the first is very feeble, while the last is very marked, and *vice-versâ*.

Trional.

Dr. Villers prefers trional to sulphonal and many other hypnotics in cases of obstinate insomnia, senile dementia, etc. It has no noxious action, even in patients suffering from mitral insufficiency.

GERMANY: By Dr. J. BRESLER.

Although many an urgent desire of the German alienists remains unfulfilled, and the accomplishment needs still greater efforts, the last year has brought some important progress in the practical psychiatry of our country, and there is hope that the aims before us will soon be reached too.

In the creation of the *new code of civil law* of the German Empire, which in the last year has been accepted by the Parliament and sanctioned by the Emperor, and which will come into operation in 1900, many an occasion naturally was given to consult scientific psychiatry, and to pay regard to its claims. The best evidence how this has been done is the remark added with general applause by the President of the Association of German Alienists, Dr. Jolly, at the annual meeting on the 18th and 19th September, 1896, at Heidelberg, on the paper read by Mendel on the "Insane in the New Code Civil, according to the Resolutions of the German Parliament," "that any discussion be unnecessary, and it be sufficient that alienists express their satisfaction with the accomplishment of the great national work which pays such full regard to the desires of psychiatry."

The paragraphs of the new civil code in which the alienist may take interest are the following:—

Section 6. Under guardianship *may** be placed a person—

1. Who, in consequence of insanity or of weakness of mind, is unable to take care of his affairs;

* Not "must," as it was formerly!