

præcox succeeded one another through several generations. Later inquiries have favoured the theory of polymorphism or transformation in which the hereditary disposition shows itself through several distinct forms of mental or nervous disease. Bischoff describes insanity in two families, in neither of which was there a marked neurosis in the ascendants, but in the first family four out of five brothers and sisters were insane. In the second family, there were ten children living; of these a son and a daughter, soon after puberty, quite independently of one another, became demented. Two others, males, were affected by the same malady, though in a less degree. The remaining members of the family were sane.

WILLIAM W. IRELAND.

On the Danger to Posterity of Neurotic Diseases in the Ancestors [Die Gefährdung der Nachkommenschaft durch Psychosen Neurosen und verwandte Zustände der Aszendenz]. (Allgem. Zeits. f. Psychiat., B. lxxiii, H. 3.) Tigges.

Dr. Tigges, of Dusseldorf, has made an elaborate inquiry into the diseases of the ascendants of the patients received into the asylums of Germany and Switzerland. The cases in which the father or mother were insane he styles direct heredity, where the grand-parents, uncles, and aunts were affected, indirect heredity, and where the sisters and brothers were affected, parallel heredity. He inquired into the number of deaths in these families and the members who remained healthy. These statistics are compared with the history of an equal number of healthy families, and the bearing of the figures very carefully analysed. The information thus obtained has been reduced to statistical tables. Nothing less than a translation of Dr. Tigges' paper would make a fair presentation of his results. In general, it may be said that they give a solid confirmation of the views which have been reached by most experienced physicians, of the frequent transmission of insanity and nervous derangements to the descendants. Those families affected with hereditary insanity have, according to some observers, more children to a marriage, but these children are not so healthy and there are more early deaths. This has been especially shown by Marandon de Montyel, though the evidence has been weakened by the Sachsenberg statistics. Moral defects accompany these neurotic families, and even the sound members often show decided peculiarities. Insanity, even when not inherited, has more tendency to be propagated by descent than any other abnormalities.

On inquiring into the ascendants of drunkards, comparatively few nervous diseases are found amongst the indirect and collateral relations. The proclivity to drunkenness is propagated from the parents in the direct line. The commonest legacy of drunken parents is epilepsy and *delirium potatorum*. There is a tendency in such families to die out in three or four generations. The mortality amongst the children in those families is abnormally great. Legrain has given some striking statistics supporting this.

Certain nervous diseases, especially apoplexy, common organic affections of the brain, and lesions at birth, are not liable to transmit insanity to the descendants; but epilepsy, hysteria, hypochondria, are liable to

beget further disorders. The evil influences of heredity are most marked in general paralysis. Tigges presents a number of these genealogies which show the hereditary transmission of nervous diseases in a striking manner. The following has been given by Jörger: Andreas Zero was born in 1639; both he and his son Ernst married women of the Lauter family. With these two men there was nothing abnormal on record. In the Lauter family, in 1713, one woman became insane and committed suicide. In a branch of the same family two sisters and three brothers were either insane or nearly so. The children of one of the brothers were most erratic—one daughter dull of hearing, besides this one was dumb, one weak-minded, one idiotic, one insane. It was this Lauter family that brought the heredity taint into the Zero family. While the eldest son of Andreas Zero and the youngest of Ernst Zero, by a second marriage, were the progenitors of a flourishing family of from seventy-six to ninety members, the son of Ernst Zero, by his first wife Lauter, Paul Alexius, was the progenitor of an abnormal family. He himself led a vagabond life with his wife. They had six sons and one daughter; from these seven children came a progeny of over 200 vagabonds, drunkards, thieves, prostitutes, idiots, weak-minded, beggars, murderers, infanticides, homicides, besides a series of lunatics, epileptics, paralytics, many squinting children—in one family eight of them. The feeble-minded members married several times and had a large number of children, amongst whom the mortality was great. Some of the children of the Zeros were boarded into private families, without any benefit.

Assuming that there is in the general population one insane person for 250 inhabitants, it would be only those who are married, widowed, or divorced who could give opportunities for hereditary transmission to their descendants; these constitute about 50 *per cent.* of the admissions into asylums. This proportion must be lower in the population outside, as the idiots form one half of the total insane, and it is only the more intelligent imbeciles, about 10 *per cent.*, who become married. We have thus to reckon with one insane person in the 500. If these abnormal persons had the average number of children as the sane, the proportion would be 0·2; instead of this the direct cases of insanity in German asylums give us 10 to 11 *per cent.* of insane children. Calculated at 10 *per cent.*, the incidence of insanity with those who have a direct hereditary predisposition is ten times 0·2, equal to fifty times more insane persons than occur in families without hereditary predisposition.

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On Nervous and Psychical Injuries through Electrical Discharges from the Telephone. (*Allgem. Zeits. f. Psychiat., B. lxxiii, H. 1.*)
Kurella.

Dr. Kurella described to the Psychiatric Society of the Rhine provinces seven cases which he had observed from 1900 to 1904 in which mental or nervous injuries had been experienced by professional telephonists. Five of these cases were owing to high electric discharges from the telephone, three being from a strong electric current and two of them through an atmospheric discharge. None of these cases ended