

small share given to drunkenness as a cause of idiocy is noteworthy as compared with Dr. Langdon Down's incorrect statistics in his book on *The Mental Affections of Childhood* which gave some offence in Norway.

Twins and multiple births were common amongst the families who had imbecile or idiotic children, and from 4 to 5 per cent. of such children were twins. He has found that rickets play a great part in the etiology of imbecility in cases at Hamar, Bergen, and Christiania, and he found 14.9 per cent. were affected with rickets. Infectious diseases, especially scarlet fever and whooping cough, occasionally become causes of imbecility and idiocy.

In the course of some enquiries which Dr. Looft has made upon mirror writing he found that out of 103 weak-minded children (55 boys and 48 girls) 5 boys = 9.1 per cent., and 25 girls = 12 per cent., wrote in mirror writing; but in Soethre's Institution, composed of cases of more decided imbecility and idiocy, out of 88 boys and 30 girls, 15.7 per cent. of the boys and 40 per cent. of the girls showed this peculiarity. On trying an equal number of normal boys and girls he found that the mirror writers were 2 with the boys and 4 with the girls = 5.7 per cent. and 11.1 per cent. Thus mirror writing was proved to be much commoner with imbecile children and commoner with girls than with boys. Amongst the normal children those who wrote mirror writing seemed to be less attentive, more irritable, or in weak health. Dr. Looft does not explain how these investigations were conducted, nor does he allude to the connection of mirror writing with left-handedness.

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*Staat und Kirche in der praktischen Irrenpflege.* Von Professor SOMMER. Jena, 1896. Verlag Von Gustav Fischer. Pp. 40.

*Psychiatrie als Examensfach.* Von Professor SOMMER.

*Soemmerings Lehre vom Sitz der Seele.* Inaugural Dissertation. Von ROBERT SOMMER. Würzburg. 1891. Druck der Stahel'schen K. Hof-Buchdruckerei. Pp. 20.

*Eine Methode zur Untersuchung feinner Ausdrucksbewegungen* (reprint). Wiesbaden.

In the first of these papers Professor Sommer makes a vigorous protest upon the interference of the pastors of the Evangelical Church who make claims for the treatment of the insane on the ground that the care of the mind belongs

to the clergyman as the care of the body belongs to the doctor. He cites the observation of one of these ecclesiastics that when the soul, deserted by the spirit, falls into spiritual death and drags the body to destruction, then soul and body become the playground of bad spirits, amongst whom are especially mentioned the mad spirit (*Irrgeist*), the spirit of the world and of the time, and the devils mentioned in Scripture. Those suffering from insanity are reminded of Nebuchadnezzar and are advised to imitate his acknowledgment that he was suffering for his sins, and like him to pray for recovery. One pastor has boldly said that the less the physician of the body practises his medicinal methods upon those deranged in mind the better for the sufferer. Other sayings of the clergy are recorded, bringing into striking contrast the views and language of the old divines and schoolmen and those of the medical men who approach the study and treatment of insanity from the corporeal side. It appears that in Northern Germany the clergy have obtained the lead in some charitable efforts to ameliorate the lot of the harmless insane, the idiotic, and the epileptic, and show a disposition to make light of the aid and oversight of the medical men. There are such tendencies in our islands.

Lay directors, lawyers, and other functionaries often show a distaste for the advice of the doctors, who, taking their premises from data incomprehensible to the lay mind, arrive at conclusions that are sometimes disagreeable. Unable to argue with them, these men in authority resent their dictation, and get on much better with secretaries who have no conscientious objections to yield, and who, even in arguing or expostulating, do so in terms which they cannot follow. We agree with Dr. Sommer that all the *vesaniæ* are diseases of the nervous system which for their successful treatment require the watchful study and sustained attention of the physician.

It appears that in Southern Germany priestly interference is even more grievous; in Great Britain we have little to complain of clergymen taking the management of asylums for the insane, idiotic or epileptic. Where laymen are in charge of such institutions, they are rarely educated men; but they look well after appearances, and if the mortality of the patients under such management is high, this does not seem to strike the directors as worthy of note.

Dr. Sommer bewails the incorrect and unhealthy books with which the public satiate their curiosity about matters

pertaining to insanity, and the deficient instruction of the ordinary medical practitioner. He wishes all students of medicine to have clinical instruction in mental diseases. Thus far we are quite in accord with the learned Professor; but when he insists that the radical cure for all this is additional examinations, we say that if the load on the candidates for degrees is to be made heavier by a new burden, some other weight must be taken off, otherwise the remedy would be worse than the evil. In this country we have enough of examiners, and in Germany men say that they have too much. The time, mental liberty, and even the health of our studious youth are already too much infringed upon by the inordinate demands of the examiner, and there are already signs of revolt, though perhaps things will need to get worse ere they are improved.

In Dr. Sommer's inaugural dissertation he recalls former views about the seat of the mind. The older anatomists were at a loss to understand how the unity of mental operations could be sustained with a double brain. They were thus led to make the immediate seat or point of connection between the immaterial mind and the body in some organ which did not appear divided like the hemispheres; the pons, cerebellum, corpora quadrigemina, corpus callosum and septum had each the honour of being the common sensorium. Descartes placed the mind in the pineal gland, and Soemmering assigned the function of uniting the spiritual and the corporeal to the fluid of the lateral ventricles, to which he believed that he had traced the ends of all the nerves. Dr. Sommer observes that this anatomical theory was conceived in obedience to the psychology of the day. In a similar way the speculations about so many centres and the fibres connecting them with one another correspond with our notions about the association of ideas, and are mainly founded upon assumptions.

Amongst his meritorious contributions to the study of the nervous system, Dr. Sommer has invented an apparatus for registering the finer movements of expression and emotion. It is these movements which the thought reader has learned to note and interpret. In nervous diseases they are often deranged or exaggerated. Dr. Sommer's apparatus may be had of the Mechaniker Schmidt in Giessen, at a price of 85 marks.