

There is yet time to restore our self-respect and make amends. If we fail to respond we may yet find ourselves erecting monuments, with tears of compunction, to one whom in the flesh we stoned.

As an Association we did in 1923 what we could to repay the debt psychological medicine owed to Havelock Ellis, poet, physician and psychologist, by electing him an Honorary Member. May we not as individuals use our influence with medical science generally to bestow on him some signal evidence of appreciation of his pioneer work in the almost untouched field of sexuology, and of unqualified admiration of all his strivings to place it securely within the domain of science?

Nobody can read this book of Houston Peterson's without feeling the justice of our appeal. For this and for its real merits as a literary production of the highest order we hope that it will be widely read. It shows Ellis's humble beginnings; his strivings as a teacher, medical student and physician; his realization of his mission in life and the circumstances which led to it; the buffetings of his soul by temptations and questionings; his periods of despair and self-abasement; his conversion to the gospel of beauty in nature; his victory over self and his dedication of himself to the cause of truth; his ultimate triumph in the field of humanity; all depicted with the delicacy of touch of the true artist.

Readers in every walk of life will find this book of absorbing interest. To study it is the duty of every physician.

J. R. LORD.

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## SEVENTEENTH CENTURY INSANITY.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS SYDENHAM (1624-1681).

It is mainly through his description of chorea that Sydenham is known to the present generation, but he was a keen observer of the ills of the flesh, and his views on insanity may be of interest to those concerned in its treatment. He had a fashionable London practice in the years of the English civil wars, and his *Medical Observations* were upon cases which he began to record soon after 1660.

The present City of Westminster was then very different, and the swamps of St. James's seem to have been a fertile breeding-ground for malaria-bearing mosquitoes. Sydenham seems to have believed that malaria was a cause of insanity, for he wrote as follows (*he is discussing the complications which follow the intermittent fevers*): .

“ One sort of symptom, and that an important one, it may be proper to mention in this place ; it yields neither to purges nor evacuants of any kind, least of all to blood letting. In defiance of these it even takes strength from their administration. It is a form of mania, peculiar and *sui generis*. It occasionally follows long agues, especially if they be quartan ; it stands beyond the reach of all the usual remedies. From the exhibition of strong evacuants it degenerates into fatuity, and ends only with the life of the patient. I have often wondered that no notice has been taken by Authors of this symptom, as I have observed it not infrequently. The other forms of madness are mostly cured by means of copious evacuations, bloodletting and catharsis. This can bear none of these. To fight against it, is to mitigate, indeed, the volume of the disease, but to reduce the patient to a state of incurable fatuity.”

Sydenham's pathology may seem crude, but his powers of clinical observation were remarkably acute. It is hardly likely that he would omit to take notice of a disease with such marked characteristics as general paralysis ; yet, in no other place in his writings, does he describe any condition which seems to correspond with this category, “ a form of mania, peculiar and *sui generis*, which degenerates into fatuity, and only ends with the life of the patient ”—this must surely refer to general paralysis.

Sydenham's experience that, what we now call dementia, can follow what we now call malaria, is frequently repeated in the present day. It is found that the syphilitic infection may occur while malaria is rife ; soldiers on foreign service may acquire the two diseases at much the same period, and the one seems in no way to hinder the progress of the other. The treatment of general paralysis by the induction of malaria seems, on the face of it, a little irrational ; but as Sydenham himself would probably have said, “ *Periculosæ plenum opus alexæ.*” His Latin seems to have been a little weak, and when he felt that a classical quotation was required, this was the one that he commonly used.

A further extract gives some of his views upon what we now call schizophrenia :

“ However the common form of madness, which befalls healthy men, and which is not preceded by any fever, is wholly of a different breed from the present and is to be treated upon wholly different principles in respect to the use of evacuants.”

He proceeds to describe the treatment with a compound of colocynt and scammony at stated intervals (now some prefer to speak of bowel intoxication and recommend colonic lavage instead). He

describes a consultation with his learned and dear friend, Dr. Thomas, upon a lady at Salisbury, whose faculties were seriously impaired, and how, although she was pregnant, the usual remedies were adopted with an entirely satisfactory conclusion.

He tended to include under the general name "hysteria," many of the diseases whose nature he did not understand; he attributed this to a disorder of the "animal spirits" (*libido*!). His concept of hysteria was rather broader than we would use to-day, and it seems to have included conditions so widely apart as dropsy and toothache. His clinical descriptions are very readable:

"The patients believe that they have to suffer all the evils that can befall humanity, all the troubles that the world can supply. They have melancholy forebodings. They brood over trifles, cherishing them in their anxious and unquiet bosoms. Fear, anger, jealousy, suspicion, and the worst passions of the mind arise without cause. Joy, hope and cheerfulness, if they find place at all in their spirits, find it at intervals few and far between, and then take leave quickly. . . . In these, as in all painful feelings, there is no moderation. All is caprice. They love without measure those whom they will soon hate without reason. Now they will do this, now that; ever receding from their purpose. All that they see in their dreams are funerals and shadows of departed friends. Thus are they wracked both in mind and body, even as if life were a purgatory wherein they expiated and paid the penalty of crimes committed in a previous state." (Shades of Jung!)

He maintains the possibility of what our legal friends would call the doctrine of partial insanity:

"Saving and excepting the hallucinations aforesaid, those who thus suffer are persons of prudent judgment, persons who in the profundity of their meditations, and the wisdom of their speech, far surpass those whose minds have never been excited by such stimuli. Hence it is not without reason that Aristotle has observed, that melancholy men are the men of greatest genius."

He describes the treatment that he found to be beneficial in cases of acute mania in young patients. He recommended the withdrawal of blood from the arm to the extent of nine ounces on two occasions with an interval of three days; this to be followed by further bleeding from the jugular vein. Moreover, he recommended that an aperient be given at intervals of three or four days, on eight or ten occasions; a favourite prescription for such cases as these would be a compound of gamboge, black-cherry-water and syrup

of cloves. One may well imagine, that, after treatment so drastic, a maniacal patient would have little strength left with which to show his mania.

In essentials, Sydenham seems to have had a fair knowledge of insanity, and his descriptions are remarkable when one considers the state of medical knowledge two hundred and fifty years ago. They do not, however, equal his writings on smallpox and measles, the latter even now being the best available description for a modern text-book (Osler).\*

NORMAN MOULSON.

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#### “HEUROPATHOLOGY.”

THE *Clinical Archives of Talent and Genius* is a Russian journal established in 1925, which formulates for the first time “Heuropathology” (“Heuro” from *εὑρίσκω* meaning to find, to learn, etc.) as a separate and independent study. This journal, unique of its kind, devotes itself to the study of the problems of talent and genius from the clinical, psychological and pathological points of view. It collects and publishes data, hitherto widely scattered, regarding the physical diseases, mental characteristics, heredity, mode of life, achievements, personality, etc., of persons of talent and genius.

The object of “Heuropathology” is to study the precise relationships of pathological states of mind and body to the creative type of mind.

The journal, published quarterly, is edited by Dr. G. V. Segalin with the collaboration of Drs. G. Rossolimo, Galant, Rudneff, Urman, W. Lange, Kiese and Tramer.

So far twenty-five articles have appeared concerning such Russians as Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gorki, Pushkin, Vrubel, Lermontov.

Further particulars of this journal can be obtained from Marianna Chrapovitzkaja - Gutman, Kusnechnaja 57, Swerdlowsk (Ural), Russia.

\* The extracts quoted above have been taken from Dr. Latham's English translation of Greenhill's text, as published for the Sydenham Society in 1848.

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