

be pursued in dealing with them. The general practitioner will find it a book most useful to him. If he attends carefully to the full and explicit directions which Mr. Millar gives in the clearest language, he can hardly go wrong. If he does go wrong, then it is difficult to believe that instruction will avail to make him go right.

The Care and Cure of the Insane. Being the Reports of the "Lancet" Commission on Lunatic Asylums, 1875-6-7.
By J. MORTIMER GRANVILLE, M.D., F.L.S. 2 vols.

The "Lancet" instituted an enquiry, or "commission," in 1875; 1. To ascertain the general character and efficiency of the provisions made for the insane in asylums, and the conditions of their daily life; 2. To discover the measures, and, as far as may be possible, to formulate the system of treatment adopted for the cure of remediable or recent, and the relief of incurable or chronic cases; and thirdly, to collect and collate statistics of cases occurring within the last ten years at the asylums visited, with a view to estimate the results. The two bulky volumes we have to notice are the results of this enquiry. We shall not say a word as to the necessity for such an enquiry conducted by an irresponsible newspaper in regard to great public institutions, with a Government Commission for their inspection long in existence, and which are already so inspected, suspected, and watched, that their medical officers, if they possess any sensibility at all, are kept in perpetual worry, their minds diverted from their proper duties through the work entailed by such enquiries, and their courage and nerve broken long before they arrive at old age through such things combined with the harassing nature of their professional employment. We are convinced that vigour of administration and honesty of management are often sacrificed now-a-days through such nagging, while the concentration of mind needed for studying and treating individual cases of the most obscure of all diseases cannot be attained. The life of an asylum doctor is not a bed of roses at the best, and the profession generally has been singularly unmindful of the status and interests of the men engaged in this branch of medicine; while the general medical press has often been flagrantly unjust towards it, combining real ignorance and popular prejudice with a lofty affectation of knowledge in its hostile criticism in a way that we never remember to have seen exhibited towards any other department of the profession. Such a state of matters tends

to limit and lower the class of men who take to practical medical psychology, while the great hope for asylum management as well as the elucidation of the problems of diseased mental phenomena lies in attracting the best thinkers and workers into this speciality. To aggravate, if possible, still further the evils of which we complain, the teaching of mental diseases is most scandalously neglected in our medical schools, and in no way encouraged by the majority of our licensing corporations.

But what are the results achieved by the "Lancet" Commission? It is somewhat difficult to get at them on account of the extreme prolixity of the book. To show this, take the account of Brookwood Asylum, Surrey, with which the first volume begins. It occupies seventy pages, most of them of close print. It is full of information, mixed up with all sorts of admirable but commonplace and second-hand opinions and reflections as to the right treatment of the insane. There is scarcely an opinion expressed that any intelligent asylum medical officer would differ from. It bears the impress of a mind of small grasp anxious to get at the truth, much concerned about the right treatment of the insane in asylums, and with most benevolent intentions towards them, but evidently new to the questions to be discussed, and inexperienced in practical insight. The consequence is that we have the account of the asylum mixed up with the author's thoughts in a confusing way; as the problems he had to treat of came before him in a practical shape in the asylum wards, he is led on to page after page of general principles, which, no doubt, were quite new to him, but which are simply Conolly's teachings and spirit in a diluted form, tintured by the sound and judicious practical sense of Dr. Brushfield, evidently instilled into the Commissioner without stint in conversation. That Brookwood Asylum is an admirably managed institution, and most successful, practically, was the result of the visit. There is nothing new in the account of it to asylum physicians who had read the reports of the institution, while no general physician would care to read so long a statement in regard to any special hospital. In regard to the statistical tables, we think that "deemed curable" is an utterly unreliable basis on which to found statistics. It is a fact that may be merely a fancy—a kind of fact always to be avoided in statistics.

A very interesting historical account of Hanwell and of Conolly's immortal work there follows the account of

Brookwood, and the other asylum for the county is thus introduced to the notice of the reader—"The Middlesex County Asylum at Colney Hatch is a colossal mistake"—an opinion in which, to a certain extent, most asylum physicians will concur. The author strongly advocates the separate treatment of the curable and incurable cases, and most readers will, therefore, turn with great interest to the chapter on the Metropolitan District Asylums of Leavesden, Caterham, and Hampstead, those first great experiments in this country in massing together the mentally afflicted of the mildly incurable type. It is clear that the practical realisations of his views as to the advantage of separately treating the incurables did not bear out his theoretical opinions on the subject. He was not satisfied, and his report is not an enthusiastic one. Bethlem, we think, though it gets an admirable report, is scarcely done justice to as a hospital for the curable insane. It deserves more commendation than it gets. The historical account of this hospital and St. Luke's will be found well worthy of perusal.

The second volume is by far the most interesting. After the special reports on some of the London private licensed houses, all of a somewhat favourable character, the author goes on to give summaries and general results, with a short treatise embodying his own opinions at the end. Our opinion of him and of his work, of his fairness, intelligence, and breadth rises, on the whole, as we go on. His visitation of asylums and his experience of the treatment of the insane, its difficulties and peculiar characteristics, had not been without effect on his own education. He clearly did his best to think out some of the problems before him. The recoveries at the five asylums visited for the ten years 1865-74 were at the rate of 30·5 per cent. on the admissions, and the deaths 36·9 per cent. of the total admissions, 27·8 per cent. of those under treatment, and 9·3 per cent. of the average number resident. "It is an important and weighty fact that the percentages of recoveries obtained in the ten years 1865-74, which formed the subject of the enquiry, do not show any notable advance on those reached in the years 1845-54, while the deaths are relatively more numerous now than then." The explanation of this, we believe, to be entirely due to the character of the cases sent into asylums which have altered of late years. The standard of what constitutes lunacy suitable for asylum treatment has changed and immensely widened. All who have experience are agreed on this point. Far more mild

cases, far more congenital imbeciles, far more eccentrically-behaved monomaniacs and contorted harmless specimens of humanity, and—as explaining the death-rate—very many more senile dotards and hemiplegic wrecks are now sent to asylums than formerly. The trouble taken by the author in the manipulation of his figures compels respect; an interesting fact is thus brought out: “The probability of life at 38·4, the average age of 12,539 patients admitted at Colney Hatch in twenty-five years being 27·8, 4,407 or 35·15 per cent. died at an average age of 45·6. The proportional loss of probable life, or the measure of failure to reach the standard of expected life at the age estimated was equal to 26·0 per cent. on the total years likely to be lived by the aggregate number of patients admitted. In other words, 26·0 per cent. of expected life was lost at Colney Hatch.”

Dr. Granville thinks in regard to the clinical observation and study of mental disease that “this department of study has first been neglected, then investigated with preconceived opinions which misled observers, and now it is the scene of wild intellectual excitement in which the undermining of faiths and the uprooting of moral principles engross a larger share of attention than the calm elucidation of disease and the patient search for remedies.” His remarks about the evil effects of nearly all narcotics are far too sweeping, and the result of practical inexperience. He desires in some places to be so very knowing and judicious that he blows hot and cold in the same breath, discouraging the experimenters, and saying that research is very much needed. The tables showing the real scientific value in calorific and work equivalents of the dietaries are novel, most valuable, and should be imitated in all Asylum Reports. They show that most asylum dietaries are too meagre. At times the author seems to forget himself completely, and gives way to a, psychologically, very curious state of mind, closely resembling that of certain pragmatical monomaniacs, as when he says, “I am only strengthened in the persuasion that the received methods of asylum management, so far as treatment is concerned, rest on an entire misconception of the nature and indications of mental disease, the possibilities of remedy, and the aids most likely to further and expedite recovery.” If we are thus all wrong on every line, God help us; the sooner those of us who are asylum medical officers leave the field, and betake ourselves to such other pursuits as we are capable of, the better for ourselves and our patients.