

There was no paralysis of the arms, legs, face, or ocular muscles. His pupils were unequal at times, the right being the larger; both reacted to light. His reflexes were normal, and his control of sphincters unimpaired. Kernig's sign was present for a short time, about a week after admission. On ophthalmoscopic examination hyperæmia of the retina was found, more marked in the left eye. Five days later neuro-retinitis was present, and there was general hyperæmia around the disc in both eyes. The left eye in addition showed a retinal hæmorrhage in the periphery in the lower temporal region. Six days after this examination his mind was clear and he talked better. A further examination seven weeks later showed the typical appearance following a marked neuro-retinitis, and he was discharged next day as much improved.

He had a right homonymous hemianopsia, but the date when this fact was discovered is not stated in the notes. When examined by Burr this was the one prominent symptom. Slight slowness of thought was the only mental symptom shown by patient. The author believes that there was probably a gumma or specific arteritis (the man had a clear history of infection and bore treatment well) somewhere in the occipital lobe, the presence of optic neuritis pointing rather to its being a massive gumma. He thinks that the higher visual centre, on the convex surface of the occipital lobe, was either itself, or the white matter underlying it, slightly diseased or else merely pressed upon.

A. W. WILCOX.

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#### 4. Sociology.

*The Question of Responsibility.* (*Rev. Neurol.*, August, 1907.) Ballet, etc.

At the recent Congress of French Alienists and Neurologists held at Geneva and Lausanne, the much-debated question of the proper attitude of medical science towards the metaphysico-legal idea of "responsibility" received full and interesting discussion. Professor G. Ballet had been appointed to prepare a report on "The Question of Responsibility." In accordance with the opinions which he has always consistently maintained, Ballet concluded that the question is outside the medical domain. A number of speakers, notably Joffroy, supported Ballet. Grasset, of Montpellier, disagreed, but he admitted his dislike of the use of the word "responsibility." By a large majority the Congress affirmed its agreement with Ballet's proposition that, since questions of responsibility are of a metaphysical and juridical order and outside the physician's competence, a judge is not entitled to demand the physician's opinion concerning them. This decision marks a real progress of opinion, and seems to indicate that the clear-headed genius of France is taking the lead in putting an end to that illegitimate subserviency of medicine to antiquated legal metaphysics, which has often proved so disastrous in weakening the authority of medical science.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

*Sexual Hygiene in France [L'Abstinence Sexuelle].* (*Prog. Méd.*, August-September, 1907.) Léal, Foveau de Courmelles, etc.

The various problems connected with sexual hygiene in relation to

mental and general health have recently begun to be agitated in France, though their discussion has so far revealed wide discrepancies of opinion as well as a considerable amount of prejudice against any discussion at all. This has been well brought out lately in various communications to the *Progrès Médical*. Guy Léal, a pronounced advocate of the necessity of the sexual education of youth, introduces the question afresh by giving a summary of a recent collection of opinions from prominent German physicians regarding the results of sexual abstinence. He recalls that though Pflüger refused to reply because youth is not amenable to arguments in favour of complete sexual abstinence, a large number emphasised the harmlessness of abstinence. Many counselled a wise limitation of sexual commerce, and Strümpell advised early marriage, and in its absence regarded masturbation as a less harmful alternative than prostitution. In this connection Léal mentions that recently when the question arose of a course of lectures on sexual hygiene to the students of the Paris University, the medical professor ("well known for his plain speech") who was asked to deliver the course told the Rector that he should call a spade a spade, and would advise his young hearers rather to resort to masturbation than to run the risk of contracting syphilis or even gonorrhœa. The Rector was shocked and the proposal fell to the ground. Léal himself, though not out of sympathy with the plain-spoken professor, considers that the physician is going outside his social rôle in preaching either sexual intercourse or sexual abstinence. "What he has to do in this matter, and it is sufficient, is to teach sexual hygiene and the sexual education of youth with perseverance and without ambiguity."

In a subsequent number Foveau de Courmelles is aroused to a vigorous assault on the evils of masturbation. He thinks that Tissot's famous book on onanism is far from exaggerated (which suggests doubts as to his acquaintance with that manifestation of exuberant rhetoric), and he declares that he "does not fear to affirm that onanism is worse than gonorrhœa or even syphilis." He is entirely at one with Léal as to the necessity of teaching sexual hygiene, and mentions that he was one of the authors of papers on this question prepared for the recent Congress of Educational Hygiene in London, where English "pudibonderie" was careful to place the question in the background. "Sexual education is, however, necessary in all countries, but one must know how to carry it out."

The difficulties and prejudice on the part of the lay mind which such education still meets with in France are well illustrated in the same number of the *Progrès Médical*, in an article discussing the enlightened recommendations of the Commission Extraparlementaire du Régime des Mœurs in favour of giving instruction in sexual hygiene by medical lecturers to the higher classes in all lycées, colleges, and popular universities under Government control. Various examples are brought forward of the reception given by the French middle-class authorities to the unofficial attempts at present made to impart instruction in sexual hygiene by the Société Française de Prophylaxie Sanitaire et Morale (with the support of leading medical authorities), and of the lofty moral indignation with which even the mayors of large Paris *arrondissements* sometimes receive a request to lend a municipal building for a lecture

on the perils of prostitution and of venereal disease. The veteran Fournier is devoting his immense energies in old age to popular propaganda in this direction, and the distinguished medical dramatist, Brioux, has written a famous play, *Les Avariés*, which is as remarkable for its salutary lessons as for its poignant dramatic art. But it is evident that, on the whole, France, though ahead of England on this question, is still far behind Germany, where the principle of instruction in sexual hygiene is not only widely accepted, but is now beginning to be carried out systematically in many great urban and educational centres.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

### Asylum Reports issued in 1907.

#### *Some English County and Borough Asylums.*

*Curmarthen.*—We read with considerable surprise some very trenchant remarks made by the visiting Commissioners in their report. They regret to find that many matters requiring attention have remained neglected for years because of the dispute that rages between the authorities contributing to the asylum. Among these is mentioned the absence of any proper system of drainage. The Commissioners record their opinion that by this neglect of the above and other things the interests of the asylum and the patients suffer to a considerable extent, and that the condition of things is not creditable to those responsible. But far more serious, in our opinion, is the record, "It does not appear from the entries of visits that two or more members of the committee have visited the institution on any one occasion during this year." Some of us think that the best chance of solving lunacy difficulties lies in relaxing some of the cast-iron precision of the lunacy law in favour of increased liberty of experiment and exploitation on local initiative. How this can be conceded when the Commissioners have to whip up committees to carry out the very first essential of their being it is impossible to see. The actual facts, however, suggest that the cast-iron precision of the lunacy law, inconvenient in many important matters, is not of much value where it is particularly wanted. We note that considerable use has been made of electric baths, but no report of the results is given.

*Cumberland and Westmorland.*—We entirely endorse the following remarks of Dr. Farquharson :

In the case of patients who have been known at one time to be suicidal, it is always a grave responsibility to decide when to withdraw the special supervision, but the decision has to be made for two reasons; the number of suicidal cases is constantly being added to by fresh admissions, and if this class is allowed to increase in number indefinitely, the special precautions for suicidal cases lose their value; on the other hand, infinite harm may be done to curable cases, and their chances of recovery lessened if the idea that they are the object of constant distrust is kept too prominently before them, and if their personal liberty is too much restricted when improvement has set in. Risks have to be run sooner or later, and our immunity from accidents of this kind for several years is proof that they are not run unduly. Better many recoveries with an occasional accident than few recoveries with even then the possibility of accident.

*Derby Borough.*—Dr. Macphail finds that out of 660 cases discharged