

In the summer of 1909, the scientific world was surprised by the publication of a new reaction of the blood peculiar to certain classes of the insane. Drs. Much and Holtzmann stated that they had found that the blood in cases of dementia præcox or those whose ancestry showed this disease, and in epilepsy associated with circular mental disease, gave a special reaction. Washed human blood-corpuscles were not dissolved by cobra poison when the blood-serum of a patient affected as described was added. If, however, the serum of healthy or unaffected persons was added this solution takes place (see "Psycho-reaction" in *Munch. med. Wochens.*, No. 20, 1909). Unfortunately experiments by a large number of asylum physicians did not confirm these results (see Abstracts in *Psychiat. Neurol. Wochenschrift*, vol. xi, 1909-10, Nos. 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20).

(1) *Vide proposals in extenso, Psychiat. Neurol. Wochens.*, No. 14, 1909-10.

ITALY.

By Dr. LUIGI BARONCINI.

THE psychiatric works published in Italy during the year just ended have been numerous and in some cases very voluminous. Some are well compiled, some arrive also at interesting conclusions, but nearly all either deal with questions too special or too minute, or leave the latter aside and occupy themselves with neurological questions only. The former, the clinical works, concern themselves in general with special symptoms which have no importance in assisting the knowledge of the nosography and psycho-pathology of the different diseases, or else illustrate clinical cases which are remarkable by their rarity. In any case they represent rather contributions to current ideas amongst the leading men. It is, then, impossible to give a *resumé* of these works; we should only be able to quote their titles, which would be objectless. I have no better news to give regarding the progress of pathological anatomy. Dr. Perusini, of the Psychiatric Clinic of Rome, proclaims, in a powerful article, the necessity of propagating the anatomico-pathological ideas of the school of Kraepelin; but up to now the histo-pathological study of the nervous system has been pursued without uniformity of method, as also without precision of aim. Only in Rome, thanks especially to Drs. Cerletti and Perusini, they have organised an anatomico-pathological section in the Clinic of Tamburini, and there they are trying to put new life into this highly important branch of psychiatry. But the greater portion of Italian psychiatric works relates to neurology, a branch which promises easier and more brilliant success. In my last contribution I drew attention to the tendency amongst Italian psychiatrists to direct themselves rather to neurological studies. This tendency had its culminating point and its official sanction in the foundation of the Society of Neurology, which gathers around it all the *personnel* of the psychiatric clinics. This Society held in 1909 its Second Congress at Genoa, at which the following general subjects were discussed:

(1) The serum diagnosis of nervous and mental diseases (Rossi).

(2) Acute myelitis from the clinical and the experimental points of view (Catola).

(3) The physiological pathology of the optic thalamus (D'Abundo).

A rather important meeting from the scientific and practical point of view was held at Milan to organise the struggle against endemic cretinism with the object of combating this scourge, which infests some of the most beautiful and most populated regions of our country. There sprang into existence a committee which organised a meeting in Milan to discuss a programme of work which would have to be developed in an organised form throughout the nation. The report on this organisation was entrusted to Professor Tamburini, who presented the very remarkable work accomplished by Doctors Cerletti and Perusini in his clinic. These authors in their report took up the scientific as well as the practical side of the question. They presented a scheme of all the researches to be made in order to bring to light the ætiology and pathogenesis of the disease, and the application of prophylactic and therapeutic measures, of which science and practice had demonstrated the utility. In order to carry out this programme the meeting in Milan decided also to make an appeal to as many of the leading men of the profession as possible in order to interest them in the humanitarian work, and for the financial part to have recourse to the State administration and to provincial organisations. If the leading men and the other organisations to which the appeal was made respond as it is wished, there is reason to hope that soon the plague-spot of endemic cretinism will disappear from our country, in the same way as those other scourges of pellagra and malaria, which were formerly so widespread, and are yielding more and more to the combined efforts of the scientists and the administrations.

The special nature and rarity of the cause which occasioned them prompt me to recall to mind the treatises which appeared on the occasion of the terrible earthquake which destroyed the towns of Messina and Reggio in Calabria. Certain of these works are simple as well as very interesting introspective analyses of those who escaped (such as those of Parmeggiani and Provenzal, published in the *Rivista di Psicologia Applicata* of Bologna), and others are simple psychological analyses of the phenomena observed (Cesare and Paola Lombroso, G. C. Ferrari). Others study the neuropathic phenomena observed in the case of those who suffered in the disaster (D'Abundo and Neri).

Towards the end of the year there was established at Florence an association of doctors belonging to the asylums in Italy, having as its object the protection of the professional interests of the medical men engaged in asylum work. It was hoped to accomplish this task by the ancient Società Freniatria Italiana, but after many efforts the doctors decided to provide for their moral and material advantage by a special society. During the first congress one of the questions which aroused the greatest interest was that of the autonomy of the medical officers in their departments after a probationary period of two years' duration. As all were not in agreement on this subject it was decided to submit the question to a special commission, which was to present its conclusions at the next Congress.

The regulation of 1905 dealing with the Lunacy Law, which had many faults at first, has been modified this year by the Government in accordance with numerous criticisms which had been addressed to them.

The more important modifications relate to the chronic harmless insane and the feeble-minded. Under the old regulations these patients had to remain under care in the asylums; now, on the contrary, the provincial authorities have power to classify the patients and place them in special houses, either outside or within the asylum boundaries, thus giving the asylums their true functions as hospitals for mental diseases.

The new regulation encourages home treatment and also family care, which is extending more and more around the asylums to the advantage of the patients and of the provincial authorities. Discharges are also made more easy.

Unfortunately there has not been any modification of the judicial procedure relative to the admission of patients, a procedure which is intended to protect the liberty of the subject, but which, unhappily, prevents proper treatment from being given at a period when such treatment would be most likely to prove helpful to the patients.

Italian science has sustained a sad and irreparable loss in the death of Cesare Lombroso, whose name was so well known. His work dealt with many and varied aspects of insanity—criminality, genius, prostitution, political crimes, pellagra, cretinism, hypnotism. Lombroso's treatment of these vital questions was sometimes superficial, but ever genial. Evidence of the great esteem in which he was held was given four years ago by the cordial demonstration on the part of the most eminent anthropologists and criminologists of the entire world who assembled at Turin to celebrate his scientific jubilee.

SPAIN.

By Dr. W. COROLEU.

THE Minister of War has done for psychiatry what no Secretary for Public Instruction has ever done. In the Spanish universities psychiatry is not taught at all. Now it has become compulsory for army doctors to take up some special branch of medical work, and psychiatry is included. It is sad that such an important subject should be optional, but it is better than being ignored altogether. Dr. Fernandez Victorio, a well-known military alienist, who has distinguished himself by publishing a book on *Insanity in the Spanish Army*, has been appointed to give a psychiatric course at St. Bandilius Lunatic Asylum at Barcelona, where he is instructing some military students. As in former years a few students of forensic medicine, during their ordinary medical curriculum, have attended some lectures at the same asylum. This is all the psychiatric equipment they are provided with for their practice. No remedy for this reprehensible state of things is being suggested.

The Government has again interfered injudiciously with the asylums.