

## BELGIUM.

By Dr. JULES MOREL.

M. Lentz has dealt with the statistical and clinical study of criminal lunatics, a subject hitherto entirely untouched in Belgium. He shows that no serious attention has been paid to these criminal lunatics or insane criminals, who may be classed as insane, abnormal, and vicious. If the limits of these different classes are hard to define, criminological science must nevertheless distinguish them, even artificially. Seeking a criterion to characterise criminal lunatics, properly so called, M. Lentz finds it in their pathogeny, manifest in the two elements cause and effect. But amongst these lunatics occur pretty often offenders who only become insane in the course of their detention. They generally pass unnoticed, and go from the prison to the asylum.

In the twenty-five years 1875-99, 485 criminal lunatics passed through Tournai asylum. M. Lentz has remarked a considerable progression in their numbers, and this progression has no connection with the general increase of insanity. During a period of twenty-two years (1875-96) the proportion of criminal lunatics to the total insane has varied from 1.6 to 10 per thousand, giving an average of 5.5 per thousand.

The growth of insane criminality has been thus distributed :—Offences against morals have increased 60 *per cent.*, vagrancy 55 *per cent.*, rape 54 *per cent.*, threats, etc., 40 *per cent.*, murder 29 *per cent.*, wounding, assaults 15 *per cent.*, arson 3 *per cent.*

The forms of mental disease in the order of their importance in relation to crime are as follows :—Mental debility 20.8 *per cent.*, delirious insanities 15.5 *per cent.*, alcoholic insanities 12.5 *per cent.*, degenerative insanities 11.9 *per cent.*, parietic dementia 11.8 *per cent.*, affective insanities 10.7 *per cent.*, neuropathic insanities 9.2 *per cent.*, acute psychoses 5.6 *per cent.*

Adding together the cases of mental debility, alcoholism, and degenerative insanity, it is found that 45.2 *per cent.*, or nearly half the total, may be regarded as hereditary, and the proportion would be considerably higher—probably over 80 *per cent.*—if full information were obtainable on the point. The lunatics who commit arson, theft, and offences against morals are almost entirely recruited amongst the degenerates. It is impossible to follow the author through his numerous classifications and statistical details.

A very interesting discussion took place in the Royal Academy of Medicine of Belgium regarding the service of mental medicine in the Belgian prisons. The late Minister of Justice, M. Lejeune, in establishing this service, referred to the alienist experts, not only the prisoners who had attracted attention by mental disorder or by the eccentricity of their conduct, but also all recidivists, and all prisoners convicted of offences against morals. M. Lejeune's successor has suppressed the expert examination of the latter categories of offenders. MM. Heger and Lentz vehemently condemned the abolition of this examination, which, beyond all doubt, embraced matters of the highest importance from an anthropological point of view. Dr. Morel not only joined in

the protest of these alienists, but further proved by a series of statistical researches, referring to over 400 recidivists whom he had personally examined, that such examinations were of the utmost scientific value. Dr. Morel was led to intervene in the debate by the fact that he was engaged at the moment in preparing a paper for the Congress of Criminal Anthropology held, this year, at Amsterdam.

In that paper, *La Prophylaxie et le Traitement du criminel Récidiviste*, Dr. Morel, having passed in review previous discussions of this question in the Congresses of Criminal Anthropology, referred to his own earlier works, and particularly to the paper published in the *Journal of Mental Science* in 1894, "On the Need of Founding Special Institutions for Degenerates." Unfortunately, his efforts had not the practical result desired, probably because his project was regarded as Utopian. The figures which he now brought forward were a striking proof that the State does not understand its mission in the prophylaxis and treatment of the criminal. In support of his views Dr. Morel quoted several cases, amongst them one borrowed from Prof. Pelman, of Bonn, who traced the mischief that degeneration and alcoholism can produce in a single family, and the cost thereof to society. A woman named Aida Jurke, born in 1740, and dying in the beginning of the next century, had 834 descendants, of whom 709 could be followed. Of these latter, 106 were bastards, 142 became beggars, 64 were otherwise dependent on public charity, 161 were prostitutes, and 76 were criminals, 7 of them being homicides. In seventy-five years, this single family, according to official calculations, cost in maintenance, prison expenses, etc., a sum of *six million two hundred and fifty thousand francs*.

The second case was borrowed from Dr. Grossman's work, *Wie wird ein Kind zum Verbrecher*. The descendants of five sisters numbered 540 persons, of whom 76 *per cent.* were criminals, and 20 *per cent.* paupers; only 4 *per cent.* were not burdens on society. Another criminal woman had 623 descendants, among whom were 200 criminals, the rest being for the most part idiots, drunkards, paupers, and prostitutes. At the Michigan Industrial Home for Girls an inquiry into the family history of the inmates showed that "insanity was hereditary in about one seventh, one third had criminal parents, and two thirds inebriate parents."

Dr. Morel quotes further the opinion of the leading alienists of Germany (Näcke, Mendel, Langreuter, Sommer, Cramer, Monkemüller) and of Italy (Marro, Penta), and arrives at the confirmation of the views which he put forward in 1894, and which are gaining the adhesion of the principal jurists who are interested in criminal anthropology, and who desire to prevent and cure crime by active measures. Already, in 1896, Prof. von Litzl at the Munich Congress of Psychology proposed to replace the term "*freie Willensbestimmung*" by "*normale Willensbestimmung*." At the Congress of Geneva Prof. von Hamel, of the University of Amsterdam said, "If we wish to defend society with pure consciences let us unceasingly devote all our efforts to reform." The eminent alienist of Paris, Dr. Magnan, speaking of his studies of the degenerate, declares, "Society having its share of responsibility in individual crime, and having only one law, that of self-preservation, is entitled, while protecting the criminal against himself, and protecting

its own interests against the criminal, to use every measure for the prophylaxis of crime."

A glance at Dr. Morel's statistics shows not only that delinquency is most frequent between the ages of eighteen and thirty years, but also that the majority of the criminals examined by him had got little or no primary instruction, that more than half of them were of alcoholic parentage, that more than half were themselves addicted to alcoholic excesses, that more than a third were the children of criminal parents, that a quarter of them had degenerative taint, hereditary or acquired, and, lastly, that amongst the 10 to 22 *per cent.* who were apparently free from hereditary taint, a large number were vitiated by injurious conditions of life (*e. g.*, in reformatories), diseases in childhood, such as typhoid fever, etc.

It follows, therefore, according to Dr. Morel, that the treatment of the degenerate, the future candidates for crime, should begin in their youth. He formulates these conclusions :

1. As a measure of social hygiene, the authorities should supervise backward children and children living in corrupt environments, in order to withdraw them from the control of their parents and remove them to healthy and honest surroundings.

2. In the case of backward or degenerate subjects who, through the irregularity or eccentricity of their conduct, come under the notice of the authorities, an administrative report should be made, and if required, a medico-psychological examination, the result of which should be communicated to the administrative and, if necessary, to the judicial authorities.

3. In case of necessity, in the interests both of society and of the backward and degenerate individuals themselves, they should be sent to a medico-pedagogic institution fulfilling all the conditions which can contribute to the regeneration of those presenting unquestionable signs of degeneracy.

4. Parents whose children, by their conduct or intelligence, inspire fears for the future, should have the right to ask for their committal to a medico-pedagogic institution, or to some special asylum until they have attained an age to be subsequently determined.

5. The motive of retaliation, being inapplicable in the case of the degenerate, should be replaced by the idea of reformation and education. The penal responsibility of degenerates being suppressed, they will be committed to the care of the State for an indefinite period.

It is obvious from Dr. Morel's statistics that the recognition of the right of detaining juvenile criminals until they can be regarded as *seriously* qualified to fill a useful place in society, would in a few years reduce crime to a half or even a quarter of its present amount.

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#### DENMARK.

By Dr. A. FRIIS.

During the past year there has been a change in the directorship at three of the State Asylums. Dr. Helweg at Oringe died, and Dr. Pontoppidan at Aarhus was appointed to the University of Copen

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