

the Seine so long ago as 1896, the matter seems still to remain in abeyance.

The second part of the book is devoted to clinical observations, therapeutics, and pathological anatomy. Lengthened trials seem to have been made of *eosinate of sodium* as a remedy for epilepsy, but with no encouraging results; *Sedum acre* was also disappointing. A large number of cases are described in full clinical detail; and the clinical and social history of an epileptic who became the father of eight children (three at least of whom present marked neurotic symptoms) suggests some judicious reflections as to the marriage of epileptics. Ten full-sized plates of brains of idiots and epileptics, reproduced from remarkably clear photographs, form a valuable appendix to the volume, which, with its predecessors, ought to form a portion of every asylum library.

Part III.—Epitome.

Progress of Psychiatry in 1900.

AMERICA.

By Dr. H. M. BANNISTER.

WITH a territory to cover which, if Canada be included, is larger than the whole of Europe, a comprehensive review of progress in American psychiatry is not very practicable. The best one can do is to notice a few points of more or less interest, and briefly attempt generalities. Nearly every one of the forty-five states of the Union has its state hospital or asylum, and I think it can safely be said that nearly everywhere there are honest efforts to keep up to the latest and best acquisitions of medical science in the treatment and care of the insane. Of course, all attempts are not equally successful, and there are public and private institutions that are by no means what they ought to be through the ignorance and incapacity of those in charge. The great curse of American asylums is the political spoils system, which necessitates, wherever it is in force, the more or less complete changing of asylum officials with every change in the political control of the State. There is nothing new in this fact, but if its publication will aid in mending matters, it cannot be too well known. Generally speaking, it is true that even political appointees are able men, and respectable from a professional point of view, and we seldom have under the system any greater scandals than are liable to occur under better systems, but it does not insure the services of experienced alienists, or encourage the best work. One thing can be said, however, that each year limits this evil, and I have to report a better tenure of office, under recently enacted laws, in at least one more State, and pledges of a better system, from both of the great parties, in at least one other. I only

write what is certainly known to me, but it can safely be assumed that this is not all the progress in this direction during the past year.

The meeting of the American Medico-Psychological Association last May was held in a southern city, and the annual address, by Dr. Allison Hodges, was tempered by the locality. The speaker took a most discouraging view of the future of the American negro under the conditions of freedom, and while his facts, so far as stated from personal knowledge, are probably undeniable, his deduction—that the only future of the race is political disfranchisement and general subordination—rather jars one, to use a popular slang of the day. Undoubtedly, the South has a difficult problem before it, but whether it can best meet it with pessimistic preconception and low ideal is a question to be considered. The southern negro is of an inferior type, but anthropological students of degeneracy, like Talbot, have found proofs of race development to a very marked degree in the coloured population of the northern cities. The mental, moral, and physical degeneracy of the southern black may well be in part the result of environment, and not altogether an inevitable besetment of the race.

Another paper of general interest read at the meeting was Dr. Wise's statement on the New York State Laboratory controversy. The work done by Dr. Van Gieson and his associates was admittedly of the highest value, and was fully appreciated not only by physicians, but also by biologists, many of whom signed a protest against what they feared was a step to its abolition. Dr. Wise's article shows the position of the State Commission in Lunacy with regard to it; it was felt that it was not near enough to the working alienist, and that it did not sufficiently meet the needs which called it into existence, or carry out the idea of those who founded it. What will be the final outcome cannot, as yet, be told, but it is probable that the changes suggested by Dr. Wise and others will be carried out.

The Michigan State Laboratory, under Dr. Klingman, appears to be doing good work. A statement of its methods was given in the July issue of the *Journal of Insanity*. The latest production is the publication of an interesting and very suggestive research, in which Dr. Klingman, following up a line suggested some years ago by Carl V. Naegeli, finds that certain lower organisms, algæ and protozoa, furnish a reliable and very delicate test for the toxicity of the blood, not only in infectious disorders, but also in the so-called functional nervous affections, and the simple insanities. This appears to open up a new line of investigation of auto-toxæmias, and suggests very many possibilities of advancing our knowledge in this direction in the future. In this connection, I may refer to the monographic article on 'Exhaustive Paralysis in Epilepsy,' by Dr. L. Pierce Clark, and the other papers published in the last issue of the *Archives of Neurology and Psychopathology*, the publication of the New York Pathological Institution. If this ceases to appear, it will be a misfortune, whatever may be the outcome of the dispute with regard to the future course of the Institute.

Dr. Berkeley's text-book on mental diseases is the one extensive psychiatric work of the year. It is hardly necessary to say here that it is a scientific and fully up-to-date production, and one that will receive the favour of the profession generally, as well as of specialists.

While there have not been as many suits for damages, and verdicts against physicians, for certifying insanity, in America as in England, still the possibility of such proceedings is an unpleasant fact in many parts of the country, where jury methods of commitment do not exist. The Supreme Court of Massachusetts, however, has recently decided that a physician is not liable for erroneously certifying to the insanity of an individual, even though the examination was an imperfect one, provided there is no proof of malice or bad faith. The testimony of the physician, it holds, is not the proximate cause of the commitment, since a judge must, under the Statutes, determine that ; and the physician must, moreover, in accordance with public policy, be like other witnesses considered privileged and protected against liability, so long as he acts in good faith, and without malice. The decision was by a majority of the court in full bench, and it appears to protect Massachusetts physicians from vindictive prosecution, as well as to afford a valuable precedent elsewhere.

BELGIUM.

By DR. JULES MOREL.

All the alienist physicians in Belgium, anxious for the improvement of our asylums for the insane, are calling for a revision of the lunacy laws, such as will bring them into harmony with the actual state of psychiatry, and the condition of the lunatic asylums of the majority of civilised countries throughout the whole world.

Dr. Peeters, in his inaugural presidential address, has authoritatively laid down a number of points which call for the attention of the law-giver. He refers to the last official report of the Minister of Justice, published in 1900, in which are mentioned a number of faults which require a remedy. He insists on one vital point, the necessity for creating a special diploma in mental medicine, to obtain which would be an indispensable condition for appointment to the medical staff of an asylum.

He emphatically states that the terms of Article 17 of the General Regulations, setting forth that at least one physician shall be attached to each asylum, and that the physician shall have the direction of the management of the patients from the medical, the hygienic, and the disciplinary points of view, is not carried out. He would wish to see a provision added to this article whereby asylums for paying patients containing 150 persons and asylums for the poor containing 300 should have a special physician, who would be forbidden to take private practice. He rightly considers that the revenues of the establishments are sufficient to afford proper remuneration to the physician. He adds, without hesitation, that the observance of the law and the interests of the insane are worth a few banknotes. This is, indeed, the only way to promote the study of science in asylums. At present, in Belgium there is no inviting prospect for a physician who entertains the desire of pursuing the work of mental medicine.