

entiate between varieties of mental disorder ; and this should proceed even further when the methods of pathological investigation are more able to reveal subtle changes. The discovery of the ætiological factor in general paralysis of the insane has stimulated therapeutic effort towards counteracting that dire disease. The prophylaxis of insanity is yet in its early stages, but it is reasonable to expect that still more beneficial results may be looked for.

Occasional Note.

Early Treatment of Mental Disorders.

THE question of how best to secure early treatment for sufferers from mental derangement has long engaged the attention of the medical profession. It will not therefore, we premise, be out of place to scrutinise some of the more recent pronouncements on this subject. And we could not probably find a more appropriate text for discussion in this connection than the little volume on *Shell-Shock* by Profs. Elliot-Smith and Pear, a second edition of which has lately appeared, the first having been rapidly exhausted. We welcome this fact as showing that more or less general interest in this most vital and important subject is being aroused, and we hope the demand will continue, although, as will be seen, we have perused its contents with somewhat mingled feelings, especially when taken in connection with an address delivered, since the publication of the book, by Prof. Elliot-Smith at the Royal Institution for Public Health.

The chief aim of the authors is to show that the early treatment of mental disorders is an urgent public need. There can be little doubt that this account of the treatment of shell-shock under stress of war conditions will go far to convince all who read it that similar provision is required by civilians.

In July, 1914, less than a fortnight before the catastrophe of the war, the Report of the Committee *re* Status of British Psychiatry was adopted at the annual meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association at Norwich. The foremost recommendation in this report was the establishment of psychiatric clinics. Therein it is stated : "The evidence of many authorities, who have practical experience of the value of treatment in the incipient stages of the illness, is conclusive that the exercise of scientific care during the early phases of the mental disorder would save many from such a complete breakdown as would necessitate certification and removal to an asylum . . . and therefore the Committee regard it as essential that, in the large centres of the population, at any rate, means should be provided to obviate the delay which now exists in securing adequate treatment for mental disorders."

This book on shell-shock is written in support of this long-needed reform. We read, p. 128: "For the relief of the mentally afflicted amongst us, and especially for the prevention of insanity, it is our bounden duty as a nation to take measures such as most civilised countries have adopted long ago. For this purpose it is necessary that there should be hospitals to which patients in the early stages of mental disturbance can go, without any legal formalities, and receive proper treatment from physicians competent to diagnose their troubles and to give them appropriate advice."

It is interesting to observe that the authors of this volume are neither of them alienists or neurologists. Prof. Elliot-Smith is one of the ablest and best-known anatomists of our time, and Prof. Pear is a distinguished psychologist. But for the war, and the establishment of the military hospital for functional nervous disorders at Maghull, near Liverpool, it is doubtful whether this book would have been written. We note with pleasure that it is dedicated to Major Rows (now Lieut.-Col.), whose work at Maghull has been so strikingly successful.

As our readers are aware, Col. Rows was the indefatigable Secretary of the Status Committee referred to, and it is a source of great satisfaction that in his present important position he has the opportunity for carrying out some of the ideas he has had so long in mind. For there is at last in being a "centre for teaching in which systematic instruction" is given, accompanied by "facilities for post-graduate studies," and where the army medical officer, at any rate, has "the advantage of working in a scientific atmosphere in an institution where he can see treatment on the most modern lines, and where he can be assisted and guided by men who have done and continue to do their share in investigating the obscure questions connected with this science." (We quote from the Report of the Status Committee.)

Although the volume before us says hard things in reference to existing institutions for the insane, we must admit that much of this is, as the authors themselves state, but a paraphrase of the Status Committee's Report. We may instance: "The most depressing aspect of the present state of affairs is the comparative absence of all research" (p. 117). "Nor, as yet, have many of the medical officers in our asylums sufficient up-to-date knowledge of psychiatry to enable them usefully to co-operate with medical schools and the teaching staffs of the general hospitals." Moreover, the implication in the introduction (p. xv) is not pleasant reading: "The war has forced upon this country a rational and humane method of caring for and treating mental disorders among its soldiers. Are these signs of progress merely temporary? Are such successful measures to be limited for the duration of the war and to be restricted to the Army?"

Most of us say things about ourselves and our shortcomings that we

are apt to resent if said by anyone else. It is, therefore, not surprising that criticism has been directed to this book in that it seems to do less than justice to the devoted service of asylum workers throughout the country, work frequently carried out under the most difficult conditions. A careful study of the text makes it clear that the authors are not criticising the treatment of declared insanity so much as the system which provides little or no treatment for persons on the verge of a mental breakdown. They sum up the defects as follows: "First and foremost is the serious waste of time which almost invariably occurs before the mental sufferer comes under medical care. This is due to a variety of causes—all of them preventable. The chief is that, lying in the path of patients who would *voluntarily* seek help, there is the insurmountable obstacle of the asylum service and its restrictions. The men in the asylum service, who have the opportunity of acquiring an intimate knowledge of mental diseases, are *forbidden* to carry that knowledge into the outside world for the benefit of the mental sufferer. If a patient, suffering from a mental disorder in its earliest and easily curable stage, should voluntarily go to an asylum and ask advice, all that can be done for him is to suggest that he should consult a medical man outside or to recommend him to call and see the relieving officer. . . . In short, all that the officials under our present system can say to such a man is: 'Go away and get very much worse, and then we shall be allowed to look after you!'" This criticism cannot be said to be unfair, though the assumption that the early stages of mental disorder are easily curable is, perhaps, over sanguine.

Although there is little in the book to which exception can be taken, the public addresses of one of the authors appear to go further, and may injure a good cause by over-statement.

The *Manchester Guardian* has reported an address delivered recently by Prof. Elliot-Smith at the Royal Institute for Public Health which contains statements that seem to us exaggerated and deplorable. After speaking of Conolly removing the iron fetters of Hanwell, the report proceeds: "To-day the forces of ignorance and apathy were responsible for the perpetuation of the vicious system which unnecessarily inflicted upon thousands of English men and women every year the more galling fetters of the asylum label and the stigma of madness. Probably 50 *per cent.* of the patients admitted to British asylums to-day would have been spared this ignominy . . . if we had done as many other nations had done long ago—*i.e.*, provided facilities for the skilled treatment of mental disorders in their early and curable stage, and so spared nearly 50 *per cent.* of such patients the fate of being branded as madmen and being sent to an asylum."

Making allowance for the condensation of a newspaper report, we must take serious exception to two of the statements made. First, the

implication that it is ignominious to be sent to a hospital for the insane for treatment. Second, that 50 *per cent.* of the patients would be saved from the stigma of madness by treatment in a special hospital.

Surely Prof. Elliot-Smith must know that however successful the special hospitals may be, a large number of patients cannot be treated to recovery in them, and will have to be transferred to a hospital for the insane. And surely, it is cruel and reactionary in the extreme to reproach the more grave cases with the "stigma of madness," and to imply that they are something essentially different from those who happen to recover quickly. The Medico-Psychological Association has striven, since its foundation, to remove the reproach of lunacy, and we cannot but regret to see it being emphasised in order to help forward a needful reform in treatment. The assertion that 50 *per cent.*, or nearly 50 *per cent.*, will escape the fate of "being branded as madmen," when considered in relation to the context, evidently means that declared insanity will be prevented in half the cases. This is surely too sanguine a view, and there are certainly no statistics available to justify so sweeping a statement. We must not forget that it is the disease itself which is serious, not what it is called, nor where it happens to be treated.

The cause we have at heart cannot be advanced by statements which must tend to create prejudice against institutions doing necessary and most valuable work for the community, or by exaggerating the benefits likely to be secured by reform. We are glad, however, that men eminent in other branches of knowledge are joining hands with us in the endeavour to promote improved methods of treating mental illness in its early stages.

While we recognise the limitations of some of the supporters of this good cause, who have not specially devoted themselves to the treatment of mental disorders, we venture to plead that future advocacy may be free from reprehensible terms which betray a sad lack of sympathetic appreciation of the feelings of the sufferers and of their friends.

Part II.—Reviews.

Automatisme et Suggestion. Par H. BERNHEIM. Paris: Alcan, 1917.
Pp. 168. Price 2 frs. 50.

The problems of hypnotism will seem to many to-day to be ancient history. Forty years ago, however, exactly the same storm raged around hypnotism as now rages round psycho-analysis. On the one hand were the enthusiastic champions of what seemed to them a newly-discovered force full of immense possibilities; on the other hand were the adversaries who could find no language strong enough to express