

PART IV.—NOTES AND NEWS.

THE MEDICO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

The usual Quarterly Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association was held on Wednesday evening, 21st February, 1883, at Bethlem Hospital, Dr. Hack Tuke in the Chair. There were also present:—Drs. J. Adam, J. O. Adams, H. Ashwell, C. Clapham, J. E. M. Finch, H. Gramshaw, C. K. Hitchcock, Victor Horsley, P. Horrocks, W. R. Huggard, O. Jepson, J. B. Lawford, H. C. Major, W. J. Mickle, A. W. F. Mickle, G. Mickley, J. H. Paul, J. A. P. Price, G. N. Pitt, H. Rayner, G. H. Savage, W. J. Seward, H. Sainsbury, D. G. Thomson, C. M. Tuke, E. S. Willett, W. Wood, R. Wood.

The following gentlemen were elected members of the Association, viz. :—

Dr. J. A. Mac Munn, 110, Newtownard's Road, Belfast.

W. Banks, M.B., The Friends' Retreat, York.

A. W. T. F. Mickle, M.B. and C.M., Edin., Kirklington, Ripon.

W. Murdoch, M.B., C.M., Kent County Asylum, Barming Heath.

D. Walsh, M.B., C.M., Kent County Asylum, Barming Heath.

F. J. R. Russell, L.K.Q.C.P., 48, Lupus Street, W.

Dr. Tuke having vacated the chair, it was occupied by Dr. Wood, who called upon him to read a Paper "On the Mental Condition in Hypnotism." (See Original Articles.)

At the conclusion of the paper, Dr. TUKE remarked that they were very fortunate in having Dr. Wood now in the chair, as many years ago that gentleman paid considerable attention to hypnotism—in the time of Dr. Elliotson, when it bore the name of mesmerism.

Dr. WOOD said that many years ago he was clinical clerk to Dr. Elliotson, when the subject of mesmerism was brought up, and it became his duty to observe the practical operation of it, and to see a good many very remarkable cases. The word "hypnotism" had not been used then. As a consequence of what was at that time observed, a leading surgeon at Manchester, Mr. Braid, investigated the subject, and was the first who proposed to adopt that designation. He (Dr. Wood) went to Manchester to see his process, which consisted in fastening a cork on the forehead, or holding a bright object in front of it, and requiring the person to look up continually at it till he was hypnotised. This, undoubtedly, did produce a very remarkable condition, which was perfectly genuine. His (Dr. Wood's) observation on that process led him to confirm what Dr. Tuke said as to its nature and effects. It seemed to him that some portion of the brain was exhausted, and that the consequence of that exhaustion was the disturbance of the due balance between the two portions of the brain, resulting in those peculiar symptoms noticed in hysterical cases. The resulting condition, as far as he saw it, did not go to anything like the extent which it did in what was usually called mesmerism. The same principle, however, was involved—the exhaustion, disturbing the balance of the mind. The personal influence certainly had a great deal to do with the matter; and, if rightly applied, was very important. Personal influence was also one of the greatest aids they could possibly have in the management of the insane. There was, it must be remembered, another side to the question. If they were really able to produce an abnormal condition, which for the time so closely resembled insanity, did they not run some risk of establishing a condition which they might not be entirely able to control, and a risk, moreover, that the repetition of that condition so produced might lead to the establishment of a permanently morbid state? The question, therefore, should be well considered as to how far they should advocate the use of hypnotism as a remedy; although, certainly, as applied to insane

persons, it was not open to the same objection which might exist in the case of sane persons. They could hardly substitute anything worse than the condition existing in insane persons, so that if hypnotism did give them the means of substituting a new condition, one would be inclined to risk it. In that sense, at any rate, the subject seemed to come fairly within the province of the Medico-Psychological Association.

Dr. SAVAGE said it was as well for each of them to say in a few words what they had thought on the subject. There were very interesting points about the personality of the mesmerised or hypnotised. How rarely they met any one who willingly owned to being mesmerised. At present one might almost as soon belong to the Salvation Army, or the Blue Ribbon Army, as own this. Were the people who were most readily hypnotised of a weaker mental character than those not so easily hypnotised? He, for one, would distinctly say no. It was simply an accident that certain persons were in the hypnotising relationship to certain others—that there was an influence exercised by one person over another—just as one man might have an influence over a dog which another might not have. Therefore the hypnotic relationship was not to be considered as one of weakness. A person might be hypnotised without being a fool. It was a pity, then, that there should be that kind of dread of the thing. One was constantly struck with the effect of attention. A person was thinking of something else. His hand would be shot off. He does not feel it. A person having a sudden shock at a full meal might afterwards vomit an undigested meal. He would prefer to regard the condition of hypnotism as one of inhibition of attention rather than exhaustion. At their recent experiments at Bethlem he himself had tried to be hypnotised, but without success. He longed to know what it was like. Certainly he exhausted his senses as far as possible, but all in vain. He believed rather in the inhibition of the mind—the diversion of the mental force—rather than in its simple exhaustion. They were, doubtless, in the face of a new science, and could not explain it fully yet. Years and years ago, it was said that the savage explains, and the wise man investigates. All they had hitherto done was to investigate, until some scientific charlatan would arise and would explain too much. He thought it was possible they might not hear much more of hypnotism in the sense of finding a satisfactory explanation for some twenty years. He believed they were not yet in the position to explain these things, and he regretted that they had not had in the experiments made at Bethlem some one whom they knew, fall under the hypnotic influence, so that they might have seen what honest hypnotism really was. The unfortunate part of the thing was that everything was satisfactory on the evening referred to, except the people who fell under the influence—they were outsiders. He quite believed they were honest people, but the fact that the hypnotist succeeded on that occasion upon outsiders, and did not succeed in hypnotising those who were there, was a misfortune. He merely said it was a pity that they could not always get cases such as they wanted, and such as Dr. Tuke had succeeded in obtaining information from as to their own feelings when hypnotised. Perhaps when the science had been more carefully investigated they would be able to show that certain persons would affect certain others. A point of great importance was whether the physical state of the hypnotised or hypnotiser affects the power of the influence. A woman A, subject to nerve storms could influence a person B when she was in health. Could she do that when she was suffering from illness? In cases of thought-reading he had heard remarks such as this:—"I cannot influence so-and-so when I have one of my sick headaches. I have tried to do so, but I could not." In another case he had reason to believe that a certain lady when she was menstruating could not exercise the same influence which she could at another time. That repetition led to the facility with which these experiments could be made, he had seen over and over again. Then there was the medico-legal aspect of the subject.

Supposing that hypnotism should become a widely-spread thing, it seemed to him there was a danger of its being made use of for improper purposes. As an instrument, for instance, for the fabrication of wills. As far as they knew it at present it seemed open to such abuses, but when they knew more about it, they might, perhaps, smile at what they had thought before they understood it better.

Dr. HACK TUCKE, in reply, said that there was very considerable force in what Dr. Wood had said with regard to the risks incurred in hypnotising. He had known neurotic cases where it was obvious that frequent repetition was very undesirable. He thought that Dr. Savage was correct in what he said as to the cases which might be subject to hypnotism. It was not necessarily any sign of a weak, nervous, or mental organization; and he might recall the fact that Mr. Hansen said that he found the best rowers and athletes at the Universities the most subject to his process. Then Dr. Savage had said that he inclined to think that it was not explained by simple exhaustion. The position which Dr. Savage took really amounted to very much the same thing, and was in accordance with Laycock and Hughlings Jackson. What Dr. Savage said, "A diversion of the force" was similar to the position described by Dr. Jackson. The fact that the higher centres were in abeyance must, he thought, be admitted, and this was a very important point for consideration in regard to explaining the phenomena. Dr. Savage's remarks as to "outsiders" were much to the point, and he wished that on the evening the experiments took place they had had a myograph and other instruments which would have enabled them to determine several doubtful points. As regards the physical state affecting the influence, there was no question at all. Hansen himself connected his loss of influence, when it occurred, with the loss of vital power—what he would call magnetic force power—when he was "below par." The case of thought-reading was rather different. In the case Dr. Savage referred to it was not, he thought, that the lady was trying to influence another person, but she was trying herself to read his thoughts. In reference to the medico-legal aspect of hypnotism, there was the recent case in Paris of a young man who was taken up on the charge of an outrage upon public decency. He was sentenced to some imprisonment, but the judgment was reversed on appeal, in consequence of M. Mesnet and M. Motet coming forward and giving evidence that the man was a somnambulist—in fact, spontaneously hypnotised. They did more; they offered to induce the same condition in the prisoner as at the time of the alleged misdemeanour, and the President of the Court permitted them to do so. The experiment succeeded, and the Court was convinced the man was not responsible.

Dr. SAVAGE read a Paper "On the Marriage of Neurotic Subjects." (See Original Articles.)

Dr. MICKLE said that he should be personally disposed, under such circumstances, to restrict marriage more than the author of the paper. The marriage was so clearly productive of misery and woe to the offspring, that although the contracting parties might be quite ready to run the risk, they had hardly the right to entail the suffering upon their progeny. A very important point was that if a neurotic person married, the choice of the mate might be judiciously determined by the temperament of the patient. In neurotic persons they had a diathesis, and he did not think they should choose a diathesis which would intensify the other; but a person of the lymphatic temperament would probably be the best person for the patient to consort with.

Dr. WOOD said that when their advice was asked upon the question of the marriage of neurotic subjects a good many of them would be naturally disposed to suggest the advice given by "Punch," and say "Don't!" but it would be scarcely doing justice to society if they allowed the fear of a very possible danger to cause as much misery, perhaps, by disappointment, as would be likely to occur from the development of disease in the progeny. It was a peculiarity of man's nature that he did not shrink from danger. The

schoolboy did not neglect his games because they were attended by a certain amount of danger ; and although in the point under consideration there was, undoubtedly, a serious danger of what *might* occur, yet on the other hand there was a danger which was apt to be overlooked which might arise from the disappointment of those who had made up their minds that they ought to marry. Moreover, in the majority of cases, although their advice was asked, it was very rarely taken. Of course they would all say that a patient who was at the time insane would be very likely to have a child who would become insane ; but if the causes of the man's insanity had entirely ceased he would be as unlikely to have a recurrence of his malady as if he had not had it at all. A great many of those who have been insane have been so from causes which have been temporary, and which have been entirely removed, and may never occur again. If the children born were born at a period subsequent to the disease of their progenitor he did not see why the insanity should be perpetuated. They were all familiar with the expression that genius was closely allied to madness. To a certain extent that might be true, but there was a marked difference, and it did not follow that one should degenerate into the other. A person of very distinguished intelligence might come through flights of genius to an eccentricity nearly approaching insanity, but it would be wrong to the State to say that such a person should not marry. He might marry a wife who had no taint whatever, and the admixture might produce a child of fine mental power. He thought that if they took pains to ascertain the whole of the circumstances of the case, and if they were satisfied that there had been a sufficient interval, and that the history did not point to a continuous hereditary taint, there was no reason why marriage should be forbidden. It all depended upon how far the recovery had been confirmed, and how long it had continued.

Dr. HACK TUKE said that one point of importance, which had been somewhat overlooked, was whether the wife had passed the child-bearing period. There were many cases where one could fall in with the proposed marriage of those who had been insane when there was no chance or probability of a family. Unfortunately, however, whatever they might decide on the question of marriages they would not, he feared, prevent the increase of families in the already married in consequence of the return home of the recovered patients and those out on trial ; and it was a very melancholy aspect of the question that in proportion to the greater number of recoveries obtained, so there was the probability of a greater number of cases of insanity through hereditary transmission. He had been consulted as to whether it would be honourable or desirable to give up an engagement under such a condition of things as the following. A young medical man had called upon him saying that he had become engaged to a young lady whose mother had been insane for many years ; in fact was of unsound mind when she married, and the young lady herself was very neurotic and easily excited. The question in these cases had to be decided whether a man was justified in giving up an engagement, especially when such a course would very likely induce an attack of insanity in the lady who is rejected. Again, he knew the case of a gentleman who made an offer of marriage to a lady. She refused him, and in consequence of that he became insane. He recovered, and she then accepted him. They married and had a family. He was not aware that any had shown mental symptoms. The wife died, and in consequence of her death he again became insane. He again recovered, was again married, and had now another family, and was, he believed, mentally well. In relation to another class of cases—those of great ovarian irritation and erotic tendencies—a mother would ask, "Is it not really most desirable that my daughter should marry?" In such cases he had no hesitation in declining to give any encouragement to the idea of such persons marrying. The husband ought also to be considered.

Dr. CROCHLEY CLAPHAM—What advice did you give to the young man?

Dr. TUKE—I told him that I thought it was a very serious thing to marry,

and that he would not be acting dishonourably, under the circumstances, in giving up the engagement (hear, hear).

Owing to the lateness of the hour Dr. SAVAGE replied very briefly, saying that the paper was meant simply to be a suggestive one. Nearly all the speakers had quoted facts, and if the facts could only be put together much good would accrue. He, therefore, hoped that the members would accept his paper as merely a suggestive one, and fill up the details for themselves.

Correspondence of the Parliamentary and Pensions Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association with the First Lord of the Treasury, the Commissioners in Lunacy, and the President of the Local Government Board, in December, 1882, and January, 1883.

[The Sub-Committee appointed at the Meeting of the Parliamentary and Pensions Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association, held in London on the 29th November, 1882, submit, for the information of the Members, the following Correspondence.]

1.—*Letter Addressed by the Chairman of the Parliamentary and Pensions Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association to the First Lord of the Treasury.*

TO THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P., FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, &c., &c., &c.

SIR,

The Parliamentary Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association desire with reference to the County Government Bill, one of the measures said to be in preparation for the coming Session, respectfully to direct your attention to the financial relations existing since the Parliamentary grant of 1874 between the Government and the County and Borough Pauper Lunatic Asylums.

Last year this grant from the Treasury for England and Wales alone towards the maintenance of the lunatics in these asylums amounted to £418,632. A great opportunity appears to us to occur in the establishment of County Financial Boards for placing the expenditure of this grant on a surer and more satisfactory footing. At present, as you are aware, the Treasury pay 4s. a week to the several Unions for every pauper lunatic maintained in asylums.

There is a general concurrence of opinion with the Committee of Visitors and their Medical Officers (as shewn in their several annual reports to the Quarter Sessions) that the present distribution of this grant leads directly to a needless increase in the admissions to the asylums of aged lunatics, harmless imbeciles, chronic cases, and idiot children, who formerly were and can, with great economy and equal benefit, be kept under proper arrangements in the workhouse wards.

In their last Report for 1882, the English Commissioners in Lunacy, in the following remarks confirm the opinion we entertain of