

tinue to be favourable. It has been given in animals up to a dosage of 11 gr. per kilo. of body-weight without toxic effects, and in man 135 gr. have been given in a single dose without serious symptoms. The blood does not suffer in its composition, neither is the blood-pressure lowered, the respirations are unaffected, the kidneys not irritated. Because of this relative harmlessness it has been administered without hesitation in serious heart failure and also in phthisis, and renal disease does not appear to contra-indicate it. It does not disturb the alimentary tract, and may be given even when this tract is deranged. According to some observers the albuminous waste of the tissues is lessened by veronal. In simple nervous agrypnia and in all forms of the insomnia of mental disease it is prescribed with benefit. In the sleeplessness of affections of the stomach, heart, lungs, kidneys it is serviceable, and the fact that, in combination with a *small* hypodermic injection of morphia the effect of both drugs is enhanced, encourages the hope that in the morphia habit veronal will be valuable during the withdrawal of the morphia.

In the insomnia of convalescence from acute infections, such as influenza and typhoid, it is a good remedy. It has been given largely to children, and it has even been administered to infants. For adults the dose is 8-12 gr. ; in the case of women and girls smaller doses may be tried, *viz.*, 4-5 gr. For infants the dose is $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 $\frac{1}{4}$ gr. Hot peppermint-water is a good vehicle. In aqueous solution it may be given as an enema, and in this way is said to be equally effective. The infusion of camomile is a good vehicle when thus administered.

HARRINGTON SAINSBURY.

6. Sociology.

Insanity in Prisons [La Folie dans les Prisons]. (Rev. Psychiat., April, 1905.) Pactet.

In this article the author calls attention to the occurrence, in his opinion very frequent, of cases of unrecognised insanity in French prisons. He points out that the records of the insane criminal section at Gaillon show that the greater part of the prisoners sent there come from a very small group of prisons—those, namely, with a special medical staff trained in psychiatry ; while the prisons which are in the medical charge of local doctors furnish only a quite insignificant proportion of cases. He further instances his own experiences at Villejuif, where he has repeatedly received insane patients who had just been discharged from prisons.

The remedy which the author advocates for this state of things is the adoption in France of the system of alienist inspection of prisons established in 1891 in Belgium. As a demonstration of the advantages of that system—which has not been generally regarded as a success—Dr. Pactet has, with the co-operation of Dr. Collin, started on an amateur tour of inspection in the French prisons in quest of insane, or at all events abnormal, criminals. The results so far obtained are not stated in the paper.

W. C. SULLIVAN.

The Increase of Lunacy (Glasgow Med. Journ., March, 1905). Parker, W. A.

In this paper the author discusses the causes of the increase of lunacy

in Scotland. He points out the well-recognised fact that this increase is, in part, apparent and not real. Thus the disappearance of prejudice against asylums, the eagerness of parishes to obtain the State grant, the increasing reluctance of the poor to look after aged or insane relatives, or their inability to do so owing to migration towards the large towns, are all causes of increase in the number of registered lunatics. This does not mean, however, a true increase in lunacy, although costing as much as if it were. On the other hand, there is a true and regrettable increase represented by the increased numbers of general paralytics and other incurable wrecks found in Scotch urban asylums. Decreased infant mortality and improved public health administration outside asylums, with what is in reality a lessened death rate within these institutions, are also causes, he thinks, of a true increase by interfering with the law of the survival of the fittest. He then deals with the difficult subject of the prevention of insanity, and is of opinion that sterilisation of lunatics and habitual criminals, although impracticable at present, would be quite justifiable for the preservation of society. He also advocates a law automatically dissolving marriages in all cases of insanity, and making it illegal for anyone to marry who has suffered from epilepsy or has been insane. Over-pressure at school he strongly condemns. Alcohol he believes to be a prime factor in the causation of a large number of cases of insanity, and that many alcoholics who do not themselves become insane beget insane offspring.

The stamping out of tuberculosis, legislation to prevent the marriage of epileptics and other degenerates, and a more thorough control of the drink traffic would do much, he thinks, in the prevention of insanity, but he fears that it will be long before any such measure can begin to tell on our steadily increasing asylum population. A. W. WILCOX.

Idiocy. (Monatss. f. Psychiat., Jan., 1905.) Weygandt.

At the meeting of the German Union for Psychiatry, at Dresden, in April, 1905, Dr. Weygandt delivered a long discourse upon idiocy. In Germany there are 108 institutions for the care of this class, of which half are under the control of the clergy. Only 21 of these are supported by the State; few of them have medical superintendents. Of the 150,000 idiots and imbeciles in Germany, 23,000 are in institutions, 5000 are receiving instruction, and 8000 are able to do some work. The advice of physicians for their proper care and treatment is in many cases neglected, and many of their wants are unsatisfied. One institution which has 2000 inmates is attended to by a medical officer who lives several miles away. In one establishment, the deaths from tubercular diseases numbered 39 out of 40. Swellings of the ear and bed-sores are common, and the smells from wet beds are disgusting. Strait-jackets and strapped chairs are in use, and harsh punishments, such as deprivation of food, blows, and confinement, are inflicted upon the imbeciles. Dr. Weygandt observed that the care of idiots in France was almost wholly in medical hands. The Bicêtre, under Bourneville, is a model institution, both for education, scientific observation, and pathological collections. The best institutions in England are also under medical superintendence, and are well managed.

WILLIAM W. IRELAND.