

is deemed may be physically benefited by some gynæcological operation or treatment are referred to him. The written consent of the patient's guardian is, of course, obtained before any elective surgical procedure can be undertaken. His operations among the insane have been done with the object of improving the physical condition of the patient, and not one has been performed with a direct view of its possibly affecting favourably the mental disease for which the patient has been admitted to the hospital. As a consequence fully three fourths of the patients operated on were the unfortunate sufferers from forms of mental disease recognised by alienists as unfavourable and in whom little permanent progress can be made in ameliorating their mental state, but who, as he rightly observes, had as much claim for physical relief as those of more amenable forms of mental disease.

During two years and a quarter 242 patients have been given some form of gynæcological operation—sixty-two abdominal sections, thirty-one operations for displaced uteri, and 129 minor plastic operations, resulting in 112 patients having been much improved physically, 107 to a less degree, while five died, two deaths being directly attributable to the operation. There are now remaining in the asylum 138 of these patients, 104 having been discharged. Of the latter forty-three are recorded as mentally recovered and twenty of these had their recovery materially hastened as a result of the physical improvement arising from the operations done upon them. He adduces statistics to show the advantage of early operation after the accession of the insanity. Of the twenty patients last mentioned five were cases of chronic and seven of acute melancholia, two of acute and two of depressive mania, while the remaining four were cases of primary dementia.

His experience coincides with that of Manton and Picqué, that in no instance has the mental state of any patient been injured by the operation performed.

A. W. WILCOX.

The Care of the Insane and the Study of Psychiatry in Germany
[*Journ. Ment. and Nerv. Dis.*, April, 1906]. Paton, Stewart.

The favourable conditions under which German alienists are working to-day stamps their written and verbal opinions by a spirit of optimism, and this feeling of hopefulness in the opinion of the writer of this interesting article is accentuated by their appreciation of the fact that in no other department of medicine is a more carefully planned and determined effort being made to solve important scientific problems than in the field of psychiatry. Abundant evidence in confirmation of this statement is afforded when attention is called to the large sums appropriated in Germany for the erection and equipment of clinics, hospitals, asylums, and laboratories, and the liberal provisions made for the prosecution of scientific investigation. He refers to the liberal, not to say lavish, expenditure of money for the construction of psychiatric clinics, and illustrates his article by photographs of the new psychiatric clinic at Munich.

Authorities in Germany are agreed that in order to save expense to the State clinics should be built before complete provision is made for the care of patients in asylums, as an experience of forty years has

shown that the presence of these clinics in a community changes the types of cases that apply for admission to an asylum.

In Germany, he says, there is a marked tendency to facilitate in every possible way the admission of patients to the clinics, and through them into asylums, and that cases of individuals wrongfully deprived of liberty do not occur in spite of occasional mis-statements in the press to the contrary. At the clinics patients may be held at the discretion of the medical director for a sufficient time in which to make a complete examination of their mental status, then should they still continue to object to being confined they can appeal to the court, which appoints an independent committee of investigation, whose decision is final.

With hardly an exception the psychopathic hospitals are all in university towns or cities, and are as closely affiliated with the university as are the medical or surgical clinics.

Another very important feature of the German system is, in the author's opinion, that the vacancies occurring on the staff are not necessarily filled by members of the same clinic, but often by the members of the staff of some other university.

This constant exchange of men and resultant exchange of ideas that is going on all over Germany is, he thinks, of the greatest importance to the maintenance of the high standard of productive work done in German clinics.

A. W. WILCOX.

Special Asylums for Criminal Lunatics and Dangerous Psychopaths [*Les asiles spéciaux pour les condamnés aliénés et les psychopathes dangereux*]. (*Rev. de Psychiat.*, July, 1905.) *Sérieux*.

After a brief review of the existing arrangements for dealing with this question in the chief European countries, and a short discussion of the various tendencies in current opinion as to the best method to be followed, the author sketches his own ideal, addressing himself more particularly, of course, to the needs of France. He would propose the creation of two sorts of institution :

(1) A central State asylum, or preferably four smaller asylums in connection with large prisons near university towns. These establishments would receive criminals becoming insane in prison, and in the future they would be made useful as centres for the clinical teaching of criminology.

(2) Three large asylums specially adapted to secure safe custody. In these would be placed lunatics who showed criminal tendencies (whether before or after certification), lunatic criminals transferred from the prison asylums on completion of their sentences, incurable drunkards, instinctive criminals, and generally lunatics found too dangerous for the ordinary asylums.

In addition to the relief that this would give to the asylums, where patients of this class at present are a pest, and to the greater security which it would insure for society, the author foresees that the recognition of a class of abnormal malefactors, unfit alike for prison and asylum, would have a good educational effect and would get rid of superannuated ideas about responsibility and about the psychology of the criminal.

W. C. SULLIVAN.