

field—now so large and increasing. The abstracts are well done by the editor, the American sub-editor, Dr. Macfie Campbell, the English sub-editor, Dr. S. A. Kinnear Wilson, and a large number of young contributors to this field. The late Dr. Alexander Bruce, of Edinburgh, who founded this review purely to advance the knowledge of neurology and at great personal sacrifice to himself, was an enthusiast in the subject, an original worker who made his name well known in Europe and America, and whose premature death left a great blank in Edinburgh teaching and research. His son carries on his father's work in editing this journal admirably.

Part III.—Epitome of Current Literature.

1. Physiological Psychology.

The Psycho-physiological Effects of Light [Ueber die Psycho-physiologische Bedeutung der atmosphärischen Verhältnisse insbesondere des Lichts]. (Zt. f. Psychother., Heft 4, 1911.) Gaedeken, P.

The author here further amplifies and illustrates his views as to the effects of light (the optical effects he would now include as well as the chemical effects) in causing the seasonal periodicity of various psychic phenomena. As in the previous study, the value of the investigation is increased by the accumulation of little-known data from the statistics of the smaller and more remote countries. Gaedeken also supports his views by the interesting observations of Hasselbalch and others on the exciting effects of baths of ultra-violet light on the nervous system, respiration and circulation—effects which in predisposed subjects are doubtlessly produced by very much smaller doses.

After bringing forward data concerning the periodicity of drunkenness and suicide, Gaedeken proceeds to discuss the influence of light on mortality in insanity. He regards delirium tremens as specially favourable for such investigations, and he finds that in the psychiatric department of the Copenhagen City Hospital the percentage of mortality in cases of delirium tremens is constantly higher during the months April to July. When the cases complicated with pneumonia are left out of account this periodicity is still more marked.

Gaedeken holds that the predominant influence of the chemical rays on the nervous influence is shown by the variations between the annual suicide curve in Denmark and in Norway. In Denmark, May is the driest month, in Norway, June. In Denmark, the maximum of suicide is maintained through May and June, in Norway it is only reached in June. The increased heat in June is unable in Denmark to raise the suicide-rate beyond the level attained in May, while in Norway, the greater dryness of the air in June again indicates the influence of chemical rays.

The author also deals with the seasonal periodicity of conceptions,

especially outside marriage, the tendency of twins to be conceived in spring, the periodicity of sexual offences, etc. He displays a wide knowledge of the literature of his subject, but he unduly minimises or ignores the evidence indicating an autumnal perturbation in many annual curves of the kind he is dealing with ; this autumnal rise could not easily be accounted for by the chemical action of light.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

The Problem of Sexual Abstinence [Zur Frage der Sexuellen Abstinenz].
(*Deutsch. med. Woch.*, 1911, No. 43.) Näcke, P.

At the Dresden Congress on the methods of combating venereal disease last year the chief theme was sexual abstinence. Näcke, who was present, here deals generally with the question in its neurological and psychiatric relations. The diametrical opposition of opinion at the Congress on this question—even among authorities of great experience—was, he observes, very remarkable. An element of fanaticism comes in, he believes, to explain this divergence, while the data are always limited, and often open to criticism. Place, time, race, etc., also affect the results. It is therefore desirable that everyone should present his own experiences and results as a personal contribution to the subject and not at present attempt unduly to generalise. As regards religious and moral prepossessions, however, Näcke takes the optimistic view that these belong to the past, and that we have all nowadays reconciled ourselves to a scientific outlook in medicine.

It is necessary at the outset to define "sexual abstinence." Even this point is debated, some hereby meaning only abstinence from actual intercourse, while others mean abstinence from all auto-erotic manifestations, including masturbation and erotic day-dreams. Näcke seeks a golden mean by defining sexual abstinence as abstinence from either heterosexual or homosexual intercourse, and all their substitutes in so far as they lead up to the orgasm.

Formerly it was often asserted that sexual abstinence has no bad effects at all. That opinion, Näcke states, is not to-day held by a single authority on questions of sex. The fight is as to the quantity and quality of the bad results. On the one hand we have a number of authors—Löwenfeld, Touton, and Näcke himself—maintain that these evil results are few and slight. Another series of authors—Eulenbourg, Mareuse, Nyström, etc.—hold that they are serious, complex, and frequent. Näcke proceeds to combat the views of the second group. On the physical side he sees no clear evidence that sexual abstinence can produce organic disease in either man or woman ; congestion in the genital sphere is the utmost usually found. On the nervous and psychic side there may be slight neurasthenia, headache, irritability, insomnia, etc. Further, there may be slight depression, states of anxiety, obsessions, hypochondrical and hysterical symptoms—conditions, that is to say, on the borderland of the psychoses. But even here Näcke believes sexual abstinence is only a co-operative cause. The authors who attribute importance to sexual abstinence in the ætiology of insanity are themselves, Näcke remarks, not alienists but neurologists. Näcke is impressed by the apparent absence of any evil