

It seems to be commoner with the Roumanian, though there are scattered cases with persons of other nationalities. Although there is no doubt that there is a close connection between the use of maize bread and pellagra, the authors consider that the ætiological question is not yet solved. Majocchi claims that he has found bacteria in the blood of the pellagrous—forms of penicillium and aspergillus which produced different toxic effects. The disease is observed to be most virulent in the spring. The authors describe three cases of pellagrous insanity, with *post-mortem* examinations. Pellagra is clearly the result of a chronic intoxication, but the symptoms are various, and it is difficult to reduce them to one type. They reject Tuezek's view, that it is mainly a disease of the spinal cord, and consider that the failure of the patellar reflex may be owing to the loss of tone of the muscles. They regard this enormous muscular weakness as the characteristic symptom of pellagra. They, however, admit that tabetic symptoms are very common.

The result of the sections is given at length. The membranes were little changed. The arteries, considering the age of the patients, might be held to be unaffected. In all the three cases, the central canal of the spinal cord was much altered; in two, it was entirely obliterated, and in all of them there was proliferation of the glia of the commissure. While the nerve-fibres of the brain, cerebellum, and medulla were unaffected, there was a grey degeneration of the columns of Goll. The lesions of the spinal cord of the pellagrous cases differ from those in tabes, that in pellagra they are mainly to be found in the cervical portion and the Lissauer zone is unaffected. The cells of Clarke's column are degenerated in a high degree. The nerve-cells of the pyramidal layer were unaffected. In the deeper layer, especially the layer of the polygonal and spindle nerve-cells, the nuclei were discoloured; black granules were sometimes to be seen in the nucleoli. There was also a notable increase of the neuroglia surrounding the cells. The degeneration was most marked in the central gyri. In general, the motor ganglion cells were more affected than the sensory ones. This was also noted by Babes and Marinesco. In the subcortical ganglia the proliferation of the nuclei and the alterations in the nerve-cells were less marked. The cerebellum did not appear to be affected. The dark colour given to the complexion, which marks the pellagrous cachexic may be explained by the complication of the disease of the supra-renal capsules.

Altogether, the alterations in the nerve-centres in pellagrous insanity resemble intoxication with ergot, mercury, or aconite, which may be produced artificially.

WILLIAM W. IRELAND.

Comparison of the Cerebral Surface in General Paralytics and in Normal Persons [*Vergleichung der Hirnoberfläche von Paralytikern mit der von Geistesgesunden*]. (*Allg. Zeit. f. Psychiat.*, Bd. 65.) Nücke, P.

The author here continues his investigations into the question of a congenital degenerative element in general paralysis by bringing forward observations made some years ago on forty-one brains of general paralytics as compared with fifteen brains of sane persons from the hospitals. The average number of anomalies was found to be nearly the same (between nine and ten per brain) in both groups, so that no

point was hereby made for Näcke's doctrine. He remarks that he was evidently unfortunate in his "normal" subjects, whose normality in a town hospital is often a dubious quantity. When, however, the more serious abnormalities are alone taken into consideration, the significant fact is revealed that they decidedly preponderate among the paralytics. The chief interest of the paper lies in its various incidental discussions, all directly or indirectly tending to confirm the author's belief that while syphilis is an almost invariable exciting cause of general paralysis, it can only act on a congenitally invalid brain. He concludes, therefore, with Obersteiner: *Paralyticus nascitur atque fit.*

The author points out, by way of corollary, that the question of prophylaxis thus becomes a very large one. "The alienist must, more than hitherto, occupy himself with sociological matters, and especially with the improvement of the race, for since such improvement is synonymous with the limitation of psychic and nervous diseases, it demands his special attention."

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

5. Treatment of Insanity.

Experimental Observations into the Etiology and Treatment of Paresis.
(*Amer. Journ. of Insanity, July, 1908.*) O'Brien, John D.

In another part of this "Epitome" an abstract is given of a paper by A. Marie in the *Revue de Psychiatrie*, recording some investigations that have led him to conclude that the *Bacillus paralyticans* of Ford-Robertson and MacRae is *not* the specific cause of paralytic dementia. In a paper read at the last annual meeting of the American Medico-Psychological Association, O'Brien, Pathologist to the Masion State Hospital, Ohio, reaffirms his belief in the specificity of the organism in question; he has been able, he says, in a great many instances to confirm Ford-Robertson's observations, and to add considerable evidence in support of his theory.

O'Brien examined the blood, the cerebro-spinal fluid, and the respiratory and alimentary tracts of living paralytic demented. During the congestive seizure, in five cases, from blood taken from the basilic vein, the *B. paralyticans* has been isolated. In three cases, pure cultures were found. The cerebro-spinal fluid was examined in sixty-two paralytic demented; in 70 per cent. of these the *B. paralyticans* was isolated. In several cases, the recovery of the organism was repeated. In four cases the only contaminating organism present was a diplococcus, which grew poorly. In conjunction with the above, and as a control investigation, thirty cases of different types of insanity and various nerve affections were examined, and in none of these cases was the *B. paralyticans* found. From the respiratory tract the *B. paralyticans* was isolated in 95 per cent. of the cases of paralytic dementia and in less than 2 per cent. of the other insanities. The possibility that these exceptional instances (forming the 2 per cent.) were cases of incipient paralytic dementia must not be forgotten. In the stomach-wash from fourteen paralytic demented, who had previously fasted for twenty-four hours, eleven cases contained enormous numbers of micro-organisms, the *B. paralyticans* predominating.