

alcohol is so frequently a cause of this disease as some writers make out; but he insists on distinguishing the epileptiform convulsions of chronic alcoholism from the "true epilepsy," a disease *sui generis*, the cause of which is unknown to us. He, however, believes that drunkenness in the parents is often the beginning of a neurosis descending to the children, which ends in epilepsy. Dr. Wildermuth has arrived at the conclusion that true epilepsy is seldom the result of injuries to the head, though these may act as exciting causes where there is already a previous predisposition.

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*Kliniske og Aetiologiske Studier over Psykiske Udviklingsmangler hos Børn, af CARL LOOFT.* Bergen: John Griega. 1897. Octavo, pp. 184. (Clinical and Etiological Studies on Deficient Mental Development in Children, by Dr. Carl Looft.)

It gives us much pleasure to receive from Norway such a well-written and careful monograph upon idiocy and imbecility. The author, who practises as a physician in Bergen, has made most of his observations upon the cases in Soethre's Institution at Ekelund and his school for the weak-minded children at Bergen. The book bears indubitable marks of close and careful clinical study, and the author's acquaintance with the literature of the subject in French, German, and English is very remarkable. The author has also given much attention to the growth of the mind in normal children. In his careful enquiries into the etiology of idiocy, Dr. Looft has found that out of 328 boys and 249 girls 20·6 per cent. of the former and 12·7 of the latter were epileptic. Epilepsy may be a cause of imbecility as well as a complication. There are no endemic cretins in Norway. Dr. Looft was the first to use the thyroid treatment for sporadic cretinism. He has also tried it in cases of Mongolian idiocy, but with little benefit. The chapters on cretinoid idiocy show special care and research and are illustrated with eight woodcuts. He quotes Bourneville's dissections, who found absence or deficiency both of the thyroid and thymus glands in many cases of idiocy. Enquiring into the cases of 539 imbeciles and idiots, Dr. Looft found that amongst the parents there were abnormal mental conditions in 17 per cent., in 3·7 there was alcoholism and in 9·1 tuberculosis. As might be supposed the congenital forms of idiocy were most frequent with such a parentage. The

small share given to drunkenness as a cause of idiocy is noteworthy as compared with Dr. Langdon Down's incorrect statistics in his book on *The Mental Affections of Childhood* which gave some offence in Norway.

Twins and multiple births were common amongst the families who had imbecile or idiotic children, and from 4 to 5 per cent. of such children were twins. He has found that rickets play a great part in the etiology of imbecility in cases at Hamar, Bergen, and Christiania, and he found 14·9 per cent. were affected with rickets. Infectious diseases, especially scarlet fever and whooping cough, occasionally become causes of imbecility and idiocy.

In the course of some enquiries which Dr. Looft has made upon mirror writing he found that out of 103 weak-minded children (55 boys and 48 girls) 5 boys = 9·1 per cent., and 25 girls = 12 per cent., wrote in mirror writing; but in Soethre's Institution, composed of cases of more decided imbecility and idiocy, out of 88 boys and 30 girls, 15·7 per cent. of the boys and 40 per cent. of the girls showed this peculiarity. On trying an equal number of normal boys and girls he found that the mirror writers were 2 with the boys and 4 with the girls = 5·7 per cent. and 11·1 per cent. Thus mirror writing was proved to be much commoner with imbecile children and commoner with girls than with boys. Amongst the normal children those who wrote mirror writing seemed to be less attentive, more irritable, or in weak health. Dr. Looft does not explain how these investigations were conducted, nor does he allude to the connection of mirror writing with left-handedness.

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*Staat und Kirche in der praktischen Irrenpflege.* Von Professor SOMMER. Jena, 1896. Verlag Von Gustav Fischer. Pp. 40.

*Psychiatrie als Examensfach.* Von Professor SOMMER.

*Soemmerings Lehre vom Sitz der Seele.* Inaugural Dissertation. Von ROBERT SOMMER. Würzburg. 1891. Druck der Stahel'schen K. Hof-Buchdruckerei. Pp. 20.

*Eine Methode zur Untersuchung feinner Ausdrucksbewegungen* (reprint). Wiesbaden.

In the first of these papers Professor Sommer makes a vigorous protest upon the interference of the pastors of the Evangelical Church who make claims for the treatment of the insane on the ground that the care of the mind belongs