

PART III.—PSYCHOLOGICAL RETROSPECT.

1. *Russian Retrospect.*

The following Address* was given at the opening of the first session of the Russian Medico-Psychological Association in Moscow (5th of January, 1887), by the President of the session, Professor Mierzejewsky, the subject being "Mental and Nervous Diseases in Russia : Conditions Favourable to their Development and Measures towards their Decrease" :—

All measures tending towards the prevention of mental and nervous morbidness ought to occupy one of the foremost ranks as regards the question of the protection of public health, taking into consideration the following facts :—(1) Cases of insanity and nervous diseases increase enormously in our days ; (2) they pertain mostly to a serious chronic and protracted character ; and (3) individuals suffering from certain nervous and mental diseases are incapable of fulfilling the duties of citizens, that is to say, they are devoid of the power of adding to the treasury of public welfare and of helping to forward social progress ; therefore the increase of nervous and mental diseases unavoidably creates an immense detriment to the substantial powers of a nation, viz., to its intellectual and moral progress, as also to its material prosperity.

In looking more attentively at the circumstances favourable to the development of mental and nervous diseases it is very easy to observe that they are generally the result of an abnormal social condition ; thus the abuse of alcoholic liquors and the influence of social surroundings, excluding hereditary transmission, occupy the foremost rank in the propagation of the above-mentioned diseases. Consequently the question as to the decrease of nervous and mental diseases is nearly related to the treatment of these social calamities ; the measures, therefore, taken towards the diminishing of these last will serve at the same time in the light of important measures towards the decrease of nervous diseases and psychoses.

To what an extent social calamities influence the development of mental and nervous affections and at the same time become the cause of degeneracy of generation, degeneracy of its strength and energy—these essential factors of social duties and responsibilities of citizens—will be seen by the following items :—

Heredity.—The number of cases of mental and nervous diseases brought on chiefly by hereditary transmission in direct or collateral lines of relationship or by atavism is very considerable ; thus out of

* We prefer giving this Address in the distinguished Professor's own English translation without any material alteration.—[Eds.]

three or four individuals mentally affected, the illness of one of them can be traced to the above cause. As regards disorders of the nervous system, hereditary transmission is one of the principal factors in the development of hysteria (50 to 70 per cent.), epilepsy (20 per cent.), St. Vitus's dance, progressive atrophy of the muscles, Friedreich's disease, as also of systematic and combined affections of the spinal cord.

However, not all individuals predisposed to psychoses become a prey to insanity. Many of them escape this affection, whereas a considerable number of individuals of this category present some symptoms of physical and moral degeneration. The latter, though not tending towards any mental disease, still manifests itself by peculiar traits in the character of individuals, such as absence of psychical equilibrium, psychical stability, and psychical reaction, traits which distinguish such individuals from others endowed with a healthy constitution. Such individuals are very often deprived of the adaptedness indispensable for carrying out social functions, and, owing to the peculiar stamp of their character, are apt to afford a considerable contingent of infringers of criminal law.

Marriages contracted between individuals subject to mental and serious nervous diseases, are very dangerous on account of the following circumstances:—(1) Such marriages very often occur because of the sympathy and impulses frequently existing between degenerate individuals of both sexes; (2) besides, such marriages are for the most part very abundant in posterity, and therefore contribute greatly to the contingent of degenerated individuals. These unpropitious conditions of hereditary transmission, which manifests itself in several generations, engender a deformed posterity incapable of further prolongation of race. Owing to such conditions many great families, amongst whose ancestors the names of some are inscribed on the annals of history, have become entirely extinct. Generally speaking, thousands of individuals exist who, utterly against their volition and their wish, bear on themselves the heavy brand of hereditary predisposition to mental disorders. Such step-sons of nature in time become step-sons of fate; in other words, owing to the slightest cause, they fall a prey to insanity or other nervous affections. Lastly, the origin of many mental diseases and nervous disorders, being intimately related to each other, can be traced to one common source, and are, therefore, alike subject to the law of metamorphosis. Thus, the nervous disorders of one generation, combined with unpropitious circumstances, are transformed in the following generation into a psychosis, which last in its turn changes from a debile to a dangerous state, until, after having undergone a range of gradual transformation, a whole race entirely degenerates or becomes wholly extinct.

Taking, therefore, into consideration the facts, which are the result of the latest scientific investigations, that mental diseases and many nervous disorders take their source from one and the same root; that

alienation, as also idiocy, are, so to say, the products of an unpropitious culture of several stages of generations, the starting point of such culture having been neurasthenia, linked together with other nervous diseases, we will now proceed principally to discuss the measures to be taken towards the decrease of mental diseases, in which are concentrated the highest stages of nervous disorders, accepting on a wide range the solidarity of psychoses and nervous diseases.

The abuse of alcoholic liquors greatly tends towards the development principally of mental diseases and some of the nervous disorders, viz., neuritis and cerebral hæmorrhagia. Cases of insanity caused by the vice of drunkenness amount in the hospitals of St. Petersburg to 7·42 per cent. Intemperance in the use of alcoholic liquors leads towards chronic alcoholism—a state of morbidness which presents so vast a soil favourable to the growth of afflicting social phenomena so intimately related to each other, such as on the one hand pauperism and crime, and on the other lunacy. Indeed, individuals suffering from alcoholism present all the symptoms of physical and psychical degeneracy, and this last to such an intense degree, that under the influence of very insignificant causes these individuals lose the power of displaying the regulatory functions of their psychical centres, and alienation sets in either in an acute or protracted form. Besides, the degeneracy of individuals affected with alcoholism is transmitted to posterity, which often manifests psychoses, epilepsy, and hydrocephalism; the tendency towards the abuse of alcoholic liquors is also at times transmitted from parents to their children.

The propagation of alcoholism in Russia is due to the easy access to the purchase of alcoholic drinks, to their cheapness, and also to the special kinds of liquor which are in demand in our country. Thus the abolition of the brandy-monopoly and the lowered prices of brandy produced a marked influence on the propagation of alcoholism and on its consequences—nervous diseases. The number of individuals affected with alcoholism in the year succeeding the suppression of the brandy-monopoly in five hospitals of St. Petersburg increased four-fold, comparatively to the number of such individuals in the year preceding the suppression of the monopoly. Further, it is proved that the number of individuals subject to alcoholism is in direct proportion to the quantity of public-houses of certain localities where they propagate their corrupting influence on the inhabitants.

The peculiar species of spirituous drinks which produce drunkenness and, as its result, nervous diseases has also a decided influence on the statistics of lunacy and those of morality in general. Thus Lunier has proved that in those departments of France where the consumption of brandy is comparatively more widely-spread than that of grape-wine, the percentage of cases of insanity, as also the number of accidental deaths, self-murder, and crime, characterized by public infringement of the laws against drunkenness, is much more considerable than in other districts where the consumption of brandy is com-

paratively not so considerable as that of the grape-wine; in a word, the frequent occurrence of each of the above-mentioned afflicting phenomena of social life is in direct relation to the consumption of brandy, and in opposite to the consumption of grape-wine. In comparing these facts there can hardly be any doubt that the above-mentioned phenomena are no chance coincidences, but that on the contrary they are connected with each other as cause and consequence. It is obvious also that these facts are in direct dependency to each other, this dependency being proved by numerous evidences. Lunier has grouped them together and exposed the above-mentioned conclusion, based on returns taken principally from official sources.

The ruinous effect of brandy, according to numerous undeniable proofs, is owing mostly to its being imperfectly distilled. It is a known fact that the brandy on sale contains, besides the ethyle-alcohol, a greater or lesser quantity of amyle, butyle, and propyle alcohol, and other ingredients, the poisonous effect of which on the human organism is confirmed by a considerable number of experiments and investigations. These ingredients can be derived from brandy and investigated separately in relation to their chemical nature, as also to their toxic influence on the human constitution. Possessing trustworthy chemical reactions for their discovery, we can only await the approach of that ideal period when, in accordance with the opinion expressed in the Parisian Congress of 1878, each Government, with the view of preserving public health, will restrict the distillation of all alcoholic drinks except those which contain ethyle-alcohol without any other injurious ingredients. However, it is indispensable to possess more weighty evidence to prove the opinion of some writers that the morbid processes of chronic alcoholism are produced by the use of imperfectly-distilled alcohol, which therefore contains poisonous ingredients, and that pure ethyle-alcohol is not to be considered as a poison in the strict sense of the word. It is, nevertheless, an incontestable fact that spirituous liquors containing the above-mentioned ingredients ought to be placed amongst the prominent factors which produce a most disastrous and pernicious effect on the physical and moral state of mankind and on the increase of insanity.

If, however, alcoholism and heredity are the most important factors in the development of nervous and mental diseases, there can be little doubt that the development of these diseases is also greatly due, not only to psychical organization, which is inherited by an individual from his progenitors, but also to that sphere of society where he lives and in which he has been brought up. Indeed, a certain sphere of society has a great influence on the development of psychoses in individuals already predisposed through hereditary propensities to insanity, and on the development of nervous debility or neurasthenia (the source of the majority of nervous and mental diseases) in other individuals entirely exempt from pernicious hereditary propensities. The contemporaneous social conditions of life, therefore, not only con-

duce towards the extension of nervous and mental diseases, but may justly be accused of abounding in a whole series of circumstances which tend towards the development of alienation. The emancipation from serfdom in Russia of a population of millions of people, the rousing of them from their mental lethargy and passiveness, the summoning of them to vital activity and independency, all these beneficial reforms introduced in the reign of the late Emperor Alexander II. were the means of bringing about a great demand for intellectual culture. This increased competition produced acute excitement of the intellect, and a great reaction on the surrounding circumstances of social life shortly demanded more labour for the psychical mechanism, and also conduced towards its greater deterioration. For since all these reforms were introduced suddenly, almost instantaneously, without any preliminary cultivation of the mind for the reception of such beneficial reforms, therefore the excitement of the intellect and mind of individuals brought about by these reforms most certainly produced too great a reaction comparatively to the habitual functions of the brain, and even in some cases upset its regularity.

Besides the development of commerce and industry the inauguration of new financial and commercial institutions gave birth to a tendency towards gain, to eager pursuit of wealth, and, as their result, to many financial crises, bankruptcy, disenchantment, and severe moral shocks, which all in their turn served to develop mental and nervous diseases.

Disastrous and protracted wars, for instance, the recent war for the freeing of the Slavonians, the thousands of its victims and the disasters which followed it, kept public opinion in a state of continued morbid excitement and tedious expectancy, serving to create a state of general nervousness, and giving birth to various nervous and mental diseases.

The superfluous requirements of our schools, the high intellectual standard of our days, the overburdening of the brain by impressions, serving only to strain the memory and thereby diminishing the power of combination and of general logical operations, could only produce an unfavourable effect on the nervous system of our youth in its state of early development.

Further, the local conditions of life in Russia present an important peculiarity comparatively to those of other nations. Owing to the immense dimensions of Russia, a great number of persons are often reduced to the necessity of gaining their living at a distance of hundreds and thousands of miles from their birthplace, amidst uncongenial climatic and social conditions. A great fallacy also in an extensive country is the comparatively small number of universities and other intellectual institutions. It is a common fact that a person, having received a higher education and being accustomed to move amongst men of moral and intellectual culture, is forced by circumstances to live in a circle wholly alien to his intellectual level, where

his yearnings after higher aims find no sympathy, and where he is consequently prone to disenchantment and to its frequent result—insanity.

The complex circumstances of contemporaneous social life, the eager pursuit after pleasure, combined with the extreme debility of the present generation, give rise to satiety with those very pleasures or a disgust of them. Such an aptitude to satiety in its turn, favoured by a tendency towards general degeneracy and depravity of the sexual instincts and towards unnatural gratification of the passions, gives birth to moral corruption and to vice, either acquired or inborn. The propagation of syphilis and the modern system of its treatment are in all probability the cause of the frequent occurrence in our days of syphilis of the brain, tabes dorsalis, and progressive paralysis of the insane. Individuals suffering from syphilis, after an ambulatory treatment to which they were subjected, without being obliged to leave off their usual occupations or change their previous mode of life as soon as they perceive the disappearance of all outward symptoms of the illness, and are apt to be indifferent to their serious and very often incurable disease. The outward symptoms of the disease having disappeared without being radically cured, the patient begins to be confident of having undergone an entire treatment; nevertheless the syphilis-poison continues its disastrous work, though in a lingering, secret manner, preparing the whole constitution for unavoidable ruin, and manifesting itself at last—perhaps, only after a considerable lapse of time—by morbidness of the supreme cerebral centres of the psychical or motor functions.

The above-mentioned unfavourable circumstances affecting the weaker range of mankind have engendered that portion of our generation which is characterized by its utter physical and moral debility, by its proneness to morbid nervous irritability, to excitability brought on by the slightest external impressions, and which is characterized by its incapability from excessive weakness to undergo protracted labour or discipline, and owing to the insufficient development of its logical functions is prone to give way to corrupting doctrines and to pessimism. No wonder, then, that on a soil so uncongenial to the ideal of moral hygiene pessimistical philosophy has spread such deep roots, being aided by circumstances favourable to its growth.

Nihilism, no doubt, is an outcome of the doctrine of pessimism. As in the Nirvana of the Buddhists, also the teaching of Hegesias and his modern representatives, Schopenhauer, Leopardi, and Hartmann, the ultimate aim of pessimism tends towards suicide—self-destruction. To live, to exist is a misfortune, and death is preferred to life as a calm sleep, devoid of dreams. By means of dialectical theories and speculative combinations, nihilism tends towards moral self-destruction, that is to say, towards the annulment of ideals, ethical notions, truths—the appendage of several ages—all these being the propensities inherited by the brain to react in a determined way

on the influences of the external medium of a certain social structure. The effort to renounce an historical era celebrated by a whole range of glorious events, to renounce a culture of several succeeding ages, the tendency to curb the liberty of individuals, and their efforts towards intellectual development for the sake of attaining a vaporous and fantastical aim, for the sake of unexampled experiments, which produce only new victims and general disasters, all these unfortunate, shallow fictions of the feeble human mind are to be looked upon as the symptoms of degenerated creative faculties. These tendencies could only come to light and ripen on a soil favourable to the product of minds characterized by degenerate structure, and could only influence the unsettled consciousness of youth and its ardent imagination, so prone to be allured by vaporous or even monstrous phantoms.

The sect of scoptsy (castrato) can likewise be looked upon as an outcome of the doctrine of pessimism, though of a widely different kind comparatively to nihilism. The doctrine of their rude fanatical faith, somewhat similar in its steadfastness to obtrusive ideas, in its ultimate consequence leads towards the extirpation of mankind. While on the one hand nihilism can be likened to a tempestuous river running its course through the soil and carrying in its current beautiful flowers, useful plants, as well as weeds, all caught in the same stream, castration on the other hand resembles turbid, stagnant water, which at times overflows its borders and drowns the neighbouring swamp. Though not a mental affection in the strict sense of the word, nihilism is a psychical factor very liable to devolve into insanity. On the other hand the sect of the scoptsy does not exhibit a tendency towards the development of psychoses, owing to the fact that the annihilation of an important organ and the psychical functions which are connected with this organ, the shunning of moral duties and exigencies, impart to this sect a similitude, to a certain extent, to idiocy, in which state individuals prone to be affected only by cares of their personal physical welfare, are wholly exempt from the higher social interests and wider aims of life, which can never expand in the defective consciousness of such degenerated individuals.

Taking into consideration, therefore, that hereditary propensities, alcoholism, and other unfavourable conditions, form the most important factors which predispose towards mental and nervous morbidness, there arises this question: What are the means by which we can battle with these disastrous phenomena of social life?

(1) In regard to heredity we must pay particular attention to the harm of marriages between persons who possess a predisposition to mental morbidness, inasmuch as the posterity of such individuals by a fatal propensity, is destined to psychical degeneration. It is a known fact that the marriages most injurious to posterity are those which are contracted between individuals with symptoms of the so-called concentric heredity, when husband and wife are both predisposed to insanity, and that the propensity to mental diseases of one of the

married couple is counterbalanced by the healthy condition of the other exhibiting no signs of degeneration, the influence of the healthy mother being in such cases of more consequence to the posterity than that of the father.

Such are the truths obtained by scientific investigations, and which we should always adhere to and propagate in the bulk of society until they become its appendage. True it is that in questions of marriages, individuals cannot always be guided by prudence, even though they possess a thorough knowledge of the principles brought to light by science. It would be undoubtedly also an utter impossibility to demand the check of such evils by strict legislative or repressive means. Only the development of social self-consciousness and a thorough understanding of social duties, and the responsibility of each individual towards his own conscience, can serve as a faithful and mighty support for the prevention of such evil consequences. No repressive means, but the will of the individual, governed by a knowledge of truth and by consciousness of social duties, can be of any help in such matter.

(2) Measures against alcoholism, being a question pertaining to the community at large, ought to be issued from the Government, as with this question are connected, not only the common interests of social health and moral hygiene, but also other interests indirectly connected with the above.

The principal measures to be taken against alcoholism are those which pertain to the region of legislation, administration and finance; they serve to regulate the sale of alcohol and tend towards restricting, or even forbidding, the sale of alcoholic drinks containing the poisonous ingredients before-mentioned. The practical application of such measures is, undoubtedly, a most difficult one, principally owing to the fact that, in general, healthy alcoholic drinks are at the same time comparatively more expensive ones, and that it is highly improbable that science should ever easily find out cheaper means of distilling spirituous liquors of good quality. Although the possibility of applying the protective laws to the utmost is restricted by a feeling of respect due to the freedom of citizens, as also to the freedom of commerce and industry, still, however, it stands for granted, that sole respect due to these honourable principles ought not to deprive Government of the right, and even the duty, to protect the bulk of unenlightened members of the community from the propagation, through sale, of known poisons. In the small kingdom of Belgium, with its population of five millions, the number of public-houses amounts to 80,000; these last have been recently taxed by a duty amounting to 1,600,000 francs. This sum goes towards the maintenance of a sanitary police, whose duty it is to superintend the sale of liquors of a good quality. The strict legislations of Sweden against the abuse of alcoholic liquors and the control over the quality of various liquors on sale have greatly diminished the propagation of certain kinds of drunkenness in that country.

The measures which ought to be introduced in Russia as a preventative against the propagation of alcoholism, and, consequently, that of insanity brought on by inebriation, can be expressed in the following items :—

(a) Perfect freedom ought to be given to the sale of those alcoholic liquors which are less injurious to health, as for instance, beer and grape-wine, but on conditions that such alcoholic liquors should be of good quality and not adulterated.

(b) The distillation of brandy obtained from wheat and potatoes ought to undergo a strict inspection ; competition ought to be stimulated between distillers of brandy by rewarding with prizes improvements made in the modes of distilling brandy, the rectifying of it from injurious matter, or the transformation of such matter to a less injurious kind, and the rendering of such brandy, in its qualities, approximate to spirits of wine.

(c) To lay a high duty on brandy, and grant the sale of it only to persons whose morality and honesty is known to the administration ; and, lastly,

(d) Persons who have given way to intoxication in public places ought to undergo a certain punishment, depriving them for a time of their liberty by placing them in houses specially adapted for drunkards. These last being unable to free themselves from the vice of drunkenness under the usual mode of treatment, should they be allowed to retain their liberty, would infringe public peace and morality.

Having mentioned only some of the measures which serve to diminish the various injurious influences of our social sphere on the manifestation of psychoses, and being unable to discuss these measures more fully, we will limit ourselves only to the remark that material welfare, morality, and also the propagation of those noble yearnings of the mind which serve to elevate the tonus of sensorium, and impart a moral support against temptations in the struggle of existence, should be looked upon as a counterbalance to the above-mentioned oppressive conditions of social life. These noble aims consist in a realization of the ideal conception of true happiness—a conception based on practical philosophy.

There are three conceptions of happiness ; the first of them is commonly founded on the belief in a life of eternal happiness in the world to come, in a life beyond the grave. This is the sole hope of all the afflicted and the sufferers in this life, the sole refuge, pointed out by all religions, and in particular by Christianity, for all misery and unhappiness which no healing balm can allay. The second conception of happiness consists in the yearnings of mankind to profit by life in an ordinary practical sense of the word, in the unrestrained gratification of the senses, in cultivation of the mental faculties, in the studying of science and art, in profiting by that noble disposition of mind which can be attained by the fulfilment of exalted aims, in the love of study, the thirst for gaining power and honours. The third

conception of happiness is the belief in a happy futurity on earth, towards the realization of which each generation conduces with its labour and self-abnegation, the happiness of each separate individual being sacrificed to the welfare and happiness of the coming race. The following words out of Broca's speech in Moscow (1879) may serve to characterize these ideal conceptions: "Prehistoric man, the contemporary of the mammoth and cavern-bear, endowed with two miraculous organs, his brain and his hands, not only conquered these giants by the force of his dexterity and intellect, but became the monarch of the whole universe; what, therefore, ought not we in the future to expect from a contemporaneous generation at its present stage of culture, of science, its perfected materials for the investigation of the laws of nature and the subordination of nature to the aims and wishes of our generation!" This ideal scheme of future happiness of mankind wrought out by the unveiling of scientific truths constitutes the philosophy of progress.

The product of these various conceptions of happiness and yearnings towards its grasp is—existence, labour and useful activity. These yearnings after the ideal, ennoble and elevate the mind and serve as a counterbalance to oppressive impressions, imparting to man that moral power and energy which is so essential to support him through the hardships of life in his struggle for existence. This elevation of the tonus of the mind serves at the same time as a mighty shield against the injurious influence of oppressive circumstances, which, acting on the mental organism, weakens the intensity of those influences and thus protects the organism from morbidity. Therefore, the paramount duty of a community is to instil these ideal yearnings in the intellectual faculties of its members, bearing in mind that for the attainment of this aim it is essential to instil these conceptions in the mind of our youth; this solemn responsibility devolves upon our schools, though it is an incontestable fact that a pedagogical training can only be successfully achieved if it acts upon a healthy brain—a brain which is not overworked by the excessive exigencies of our contemporaneous schools.

(*To be continued.*)

2. *Italian Retrospect.*

BY J. R. GASQUET, M.B.

A great part of the activity of Italian psychologists has been devoted during the last two years to the study of hypnotism. It may be generally remarked that their results have been rather confirmatory of what was previously known than in discovering new phenomena, though some of importance will presently be mentioned.

The following are the principal articles in the "Archivio":—Drs. Capelli and Brugia have made a very careful study of the effects of various drugs on the general and intracranial circulation, of which the