

only one principle which can be applied—the necessity of reaction against anti-social facts. That is what he means by “réactivité.” The metaphysical notion of “responsibility” and punishment must give place to the physiological notion that every organism, including society, must make use of its reactions of defence. It must defend itself against the insane fully as much as against the sane, and a serious danger is involved in the tendency to let the “irresponsible” go free. Institutions must, of course, be varied to suit the various classes of anti-social persons, with officials, teachers, and doctors appropriate to each type. “‘Prison’ is only a word, ‘asylum’ is only a word; in practice prisons may take on the functions of asylums and asylums those of prisons.” The question of the special grade of institution in which a prisoner should be “condemned to treatment” ought to be decided, Lauppts considers, by a special mixed court of trained magistrates and doctors.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

The “Responsibility” of the Insane and Criminal [*Sur la “Responsabilité” des Fous et des Criminels*]. (Rev. Phil., Sept., 1908.)
Chaslin, P.

Among the minority which, at the Congress of French Alienists in 1907, refused to accept Ballet's declaration that the question of responsibility is not a medical question, Professor Grasset, of Montpellier, took a prominent position. He has since published a book (*La Responsabilité des Criminels*) in which he reaffirms his position. Responsibility in the moral or the metaphysical sense, Grasset admits, is outside the medical field. But he claims that there is such a thing as “medical responsibility.” Whenever the psychic neurons retain their integrity, there, Grasset claims, we have “medical responsibility.”

Dr. Chaslin takes advantage of the appearance of Grasset's book to set forth his own views as a practical alienist with a large experience of the cases that oscillate between the asylum and the prison, and, therefore, constantly called on to face this question of “responsibility” from its “asylum side.” He brushes aside Grasset's contention as an unjustifiable perversion of a term already having a recognised meaning in order to invent a new and unsatisfactory way of saying that an individual is psychically normal, the sole object being apparently to drag in the word “responsibility” where it is not required. The question thus becomes, as Joffroy remarked, merely a verbal quibble.

Chaslin is in complete agreement with Ballet that the medical expert must remain medical and confine himself to the use of medical language. But he realises at the same time that the alienist cannot fail to be practically interested in this question. What is really needed, he believes, is an entire re-moulding of the penal system, abolishing the ancient tariff of punishments, but enabling the influence of fear to be brought to bear on all those, including the insane, who are susceptible of being thus ameliorated. Individualisation of treatment is required, and this involves a very wide latitude of decision in the magistrate. It is therefore necessary that an alienist should be associated with the magistrates as an indispensable collaborator. But the part of the medical expert must not be misunderstood. He can seldom furnish scientific certainties. “Medicine is not a science but an art”; this is

especially true in mental medicine ; it is, above all, a knowledge of men and of life which makes the skilful clinician of the mind.

It will be seen that Chaslin believes, with Ballet, that punishment may be of therapeutic utility in the case of some semi-insane subjects. Such subjects, he remarks, often drift to-and-fro between the prison and the asylum, and are fitted for neither. They require an institution of intermediate character.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

Castration on Social Grounds [*Die ersten Kastrationen aus Sozialen Gründen auf Europäischen Boden*]. (*Neur. Cbl.*, 1909, No. 5.)
Näcke, P.

It is rare, in Dr. Näcke's experience, to find anything of scientific interest in an asylum report, and he joyfully calls attention to the Report for 1907 of the Swiss Cantonal Asylum at Wil. In this report are recorded four castrations performed on patients in the asylum on social grounds, the first cases of the kind, Näcke believes, that have ever occurred in Europe. The first case was a girl, æt. 25, epileptic and nymphomaniacal, who had had two epileptic and imbecile children. The nymphomaniacal tendency made necessary her retention in the asylum, though she was capable of work. She and her friends agreed to the operation, and she is now free, and working "satisfied with her condition." The second case was a woman, æt. 36, weak-minded and liable to attacks of excitement and over-mastering sexual desire. She was a skilful worker, but had had two children who were a charge on the community, which was, on this ground, opposed to her liberation. After the operation she was allowed to leave. In both these cases there was found to be cystic degeneration of ovaries. The third case was a man, æt. 31, physically vigorous, but psychically abnormal, and with morbid excess of sexual desire. He was placed in the asylum for observation on account of indecent assaults on minors. His general condition improved in the asylum, but the sexual excitement continued, and at his own urgent desire, and with the consent of his relations and the authorities, castration was performed. He has been guilty of no sexual offences since. The last case was a sexual invert, æt. 32, of a high grade of intelligence, but very strong sexual impulses ; on account of indecent conduct with boys he was sent to the asylum as irresponsible. For some eight years he was in and out of the asylum, always yielding, when out, to his abnormal sexual tendencies ; at last he urgently demanded castration. Since the operation he has so far felt no return of his abnormal impulses. There are no particulars concerning the exact nature of the operations.

Näcke, who has long regarded legal castration, with due precautions, as "one of the most beneficial institutions of the future," draws the moral of these cases, and points out the ease with which all concerned—patients, relatives, and the law—agreed to a step which was by no means demanded merely for the benefit of the patient, but primarily and chiefly for the benefit of society. Näcke is, however, in favour of confining castration on social grounds, for the present, to men, preferably by the method of vasectomy. He also wisely enters a warning against the belief that castration can permanently cure congenital