

On the other hand, our alienists are endeavouring to enlarge their knowledge of other branches of medical science. For this purpose, courses for the further education of the physicians of asylums in medicine, surgery, hygiene, pathological anatomy, bacteriology, etc., have been arranged at the request of the German Society of Psychiatry. The first course, lasting three weeks, took place at Berlin in autumn, 1906. It was very well attended. The cost was defrayed by the Asylum Boards.

To prevent the feeble-minded, or persons of an insufficient psychological resistance, from being levied for service in the Army, the Ministry of Prussia has decreed that the discharge of any juvenile insane or feeble-minded out of the asylums shall be notified to the recruiting agencies.

Finally, I regret to communicate that in the asylum of Hofheim (Hessen) in December, 1906, a physician and an attendant were shot dead by a patient. The patient (suffering from phthisis) had not shown any delusional or persecutory ideas for a long time, and was about to be discharged. During a leave of absence, he furnished himself with a revolver and brought it secretly into the asylum. His physical health grew worse, also his mental state; he was therefore ordered to be transferred to another ward, and upon the discovery of the revolver, he shot the medical officer and attendant who wished to take it from him.

---

#### ITALY.

By G. E. FERRARI.

DURING the year 1906 the activity of our principal centres of psychiatric science (Torino, Reggio Emilia, Firenze, Roma, Napoli, etc.) has been as remarkable as usual, and the principal reviews of our speciality—we are pleased to mention particularly *Rivista di Patologia Nervosa e Mentale*, edited by Professor Tanzi—bear witness to it. However, among so many excellently written works, no one publication of such exceptional merit, or rather, so representative of the progress of any one school, has been found as to warrant us giving a special account of it in our annual review. Perhaps this is due, to some extent, to the fact that psychiatric centres, both great and small, have concentrated their attention on the asylums, specially in relation to the new Lunacy Law, of which we have already spoken in a previous letter. The question is, in truth, of a law riddled with imperfections, obvious at once when brought into practice, but which has given a new dignity to the asylum doctor in obliging the County Councils to provide for the upkeep and personal safety of every mentally-afflicted individual. The result is that doctors have now the right to demand from the Councils for the well-being of the sick that which only a short while ago had often to be asked as a favour, even if it remained within the limits of the Provincial balance-sheets. As a further result we now see new asylums built on the best lines, and in the existing asylums we find the doctors applying themselves to improve them as much as possible, to train the staff of

attendants, to discuss questions of professional technique, etc. If, then, we owe the silence of so many in the strictly scientific world to this work, which has for its object the improvement of the internal conditions of the asylums for the still greater well-being of the inmates, there is reason, perhaps, to welcome rather than regret it.

A comparative uniformity in the working of the different asylums will be an additional benefit following the adoption of the new Lunacy Laws. The Supreme Council of Health has instituted a code of regulations governing the asylums. Any special rules have to receive the approval of this body, and they then have the force of law for the asylum for which they are designed, but they must conform with the code laid down.

Two International Congresses, which will be long remembered, have been held during the year under review—the Congress of Criminal Anthropology (Turin, in May), and that of the Care of the Insane (Milan, in September). The former marked the jubilee of Professor Lombroso, and resulted in the recognition of criminal anthropology as an ordinary subject of University teaching.

The Congress for the Care and Treatment of the Insane should be a landmark in the history of the subject and of psychiatry. The proposition of Dr. Frank, of Zurich, for the foundation of an International Institute destined to establish exactly the causes of insanity, and the most direct and efficacious means to combat it, is especially memorable. The Congress, when held, would be engaged chiefly in discussing the information gained by such an institution, and would form an international committee, which would seek the sympathetic participation of the various governments and the formation of national committees to work under its supervision and general direction.

The different national committees would meet from time to time according to necessity, and each committee would have to report to the successive international congresses on the progress made, and give their results for deliberation as to the direction subsequent investigations should take. The proposition of Dr. Frank was unanimously accepted by the Congress, and the Congress of Psychiatry, Neurology, Psychology, and Care of the Insane, which will be held in Amsterdam from September 2nd to September 7th, 1907, will decide the future of this institution, so simple in its organisation, but so lofty in its humane purpose.

The leading questions of the day in Italy are, as usual, epilepsy and pellagra. As to the latter disease, we must note with approval the support which the government has at last given to the National Committee for combating Pellagra, which sits at Udine, and of which Dr. Antonini is the moving spirit. The struggle against this formidable plague among the working classes of many of our districts would be doubtless assisted if it were possible to bring into practice the discovery of Professor Gofio and his assistant, Dr. Palludino, a discovery which would serve to make clear the first symptoms of pellagra.

This discovery is that of special conditions in the blood of those predisposed to pellagra.

During the year monographs (edited by Vallardi) will begin to appear, which will constitute a "Treatise on Social Medicine," written by Professors Tamburini and Celli.

This treatise will have for its subject, on the one hand, the different problems of the treatment of the insane, epileptics, drunkards, weak-minded, and sufferers from pellagra, etc., of criminal anthropology, of general anthropology, and medical jurisprudence; on the other hand, the hygiene of schools, public buildings, streets, etc.

I have alluded in one of my preceding letters to the "Institute of Experimental Pedagogy," which has been founded by Pizzoli, and is working very well under the auspices of the municipality of Milan. Now the Italian Minister of Public Instruction, with the object of instituting something of the same kind in Rome, has authorised de Sanctis, Professor of Experimental Psychology at the University of Rome, to organise a two months' course of lectures to instruct the masters and mistresses of the primary schools in the elements necessary to judge of the mental capacity of the children of their schools as well as to train the staff of the "Hilfschulen," which it is always a question of instituting for the children who are not actually weak-minded, but who are not able to keep pace with the others because of an arrest (from no matter what cause) in the development of their intelligence. The instruction given in this course consists of lessons in pedagogic psychology, and on the function and education of the organs of sense, etc.

We have already alluded to the school, directed by Montesano, for those masters and mistresses of schools who are intended for institutes for the generally weak-minded children.

Finally, I wish to draw attention to the subject of the sensational publications of Professors Lombroso and Marcelli on so-called "spiritism," although these two eminent professors have only so far published their ideas in the literary or political journals.

Lombroso has been for some time an ardent observer of all metaphysical phenomena, to which he has even dedicated a special portion of his journal *Archivio di Psichiatria*, but during 1906 he has openly taken up his position against the official world which still denies the existence of "spiritualistic phenomena," both physical and intellectual. Up to this time, however, he has not yet brought forward a theory of his own to explain them, although he is busy preparing one.

Morselli, on the contrary, maintains a critical position. He has been making experiments for a long time, and under the best conditions, with Eusapia Paladino, and has convinced himself, to his complete satisfaction, that all the physical phenomena evoked by this celebrated medium are objective.

He has published, in a very important political journal, a critical article on the history and explanatory theories of spiritualism. For his part he does not give any theory, but he shows an inclination to explain the "physical phenomena of Eustacia Paladino" (he clearly limits his judgment to that) by a psychical process analogous to that which gives rise to actual hallucinations.

They would depend on an objectivation of the thought of the medium Eusapia, haunted by auto-suggestions, or suggested by her surroundings in the *séances*.

Morselli is going to publish a volume on this subject. The work of so brilliant and conscientious a savant will, doubtless, be extremely

useful to the progress of science, which will always have uses for all serious contributions.

Italian psychiatry, during 1906, has suffered sad losses. Two young men, especially, who would have done honour to science and the speciality—Obici and Angiolella—died at the age of 35, when they were nearing the end of their zealous work. And among many others we must regret the death of Professor Roncati, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Bologna, who bequeathed his fortune, of nearly a million francs, to the provincial administration for enlarging and completing the urban asylum which he directed for more than thirty years.

---

## Epitome of Current Literature.

### I. Neurology.

*On the Pyramidal Tracts of Man [Sulle vie Piramidali Dell'uomo]. (Riv. Speriment di Freniat., vol. xxxii, fasc. iii-iv.) Ugolotti, F.*

This article refers to the much debated anatomy of the direct pyramidal and so-called "homolateral" tracts.

In two previous communications Ugolotti fully expressed his view on this subject; but further investigation has caused him to alter his opinion as to the origin of the homolateral bundle of fibres.

*The direct pyramidal tract.*—Marie and Guillain in 1903 asserted that the difference in extent of the degenerations met with in this column depended on the seat of the primary lesion. If this was situated in the brain proper the degeneration was confined to the inner and posterior margin of Türck's column. While, on the other hand, if the lesion occurred in the cerebral peduncles or in the pons they maintained that the resulting degeneration extended in the shape of an arc, "en croissant," round the anterior margin of the tract. Thus they divided the degenerations found in the direct pyramidal into two distinct types, the cerebral and the mesencephalic, depending on the seat of the original lesion.

The degenerated fibres termed by them "en croissant," and alleged to be characteristic of the mesencephalic type of lesion, took their origin, they believed, from numerous masses of cells in the peduncles, sub-optic region, and the pons in the vicinity of the pyramidal paths, and joined the pyramidal tracts on their way from the cortex.

Ugolotti, in one of the papers previously referred to, strongly combated these conclusions, and claimed that the different forms which the degeneration assumed in this tract varied according to the level at which the cord is examined, and followed the anatomical distribution of the fibres characteristic of each region. Whether the lesion were cerebral or mesencephalic the anterior pyramidal tract preserved the same appearance in degeneration, namely, triangular or rectangular in the cervical, and arc-shaped in the dorsal region. The degeneration as a rule did not extend to the lumbar region, but when it did, it was