

PART III.—PSYCHOLOGICAL RETROSPECT.

1. *German Retrospect.*

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Arterial Disease in Insanity.—Dr. Ludwig Meyer ("Archiv., vi. Band, 1 Heft) has for five years been making observations on the aneurismal alterations of the internal carotid of the insane. He gives cases where arterial degenerations following chronic endoarteritis were observed. Hardening and calcareous degeneration of the arterial wall are very common. They are observed in the form of a ring encircling the artery for a length of eight millimètres to one centimètre, metres commencing and ending abruptly. Often indications of disease were found in the other arteries.

Thinning of the walls of the internal carotid was also observed, a condition obviously favouring aneurism or dilatation. In eight cases an aneurismal condition of the carotid was observed, dilatation commencing immediately above the separation of the carotid from the common trunk. This dilatation in its turn becomes a cause of retardation of the circulation of blood in the brain. It is not easy to diagnose it during life, though Dr. Meyer states that it is occasionally accompanied by a systolic murmur near the larynx, rather of a rushing than of a blowing character.

Dr. Laufenauer, of Vienna, gives a case ("Centralblatt," Nr. 10, 1876) where insanity is combined with aneurism of the common carotid.

Dr. Schäfer ("Zeitschrift," xxxiv Band, 4 Heft) pursues the subject of the dilatation of the internal carotid in the insane. In addition to the observations of Meyer he cites those of Dr. Manson Patrik, who found a dilatation of the artery at its origin from the common trunk in twelve out of seventeen bodies of the insane examined by him, and in five out of six paralytics.

From a consideration of the development and anatomy of the artery he thinks this part naturally disposed to abnormal enlargement. A hyperplastic process is very common, which might readily take a morbid action and pass into atheromatous degeneration. By carefully measuring the girths and diameter of the internal carotid artery in the sane and insane he found the average size much the same, rather more in the sane than the insane.

Dr. Schäfer observes that the internal carotid artery in the left side is normally bigger than the right, owing probably to the greater activity of the left hemisphere.

Remedies for Epilepsy.—Dr. Erlenmeyer, in the “*Correspondenz Blatt*,” collects a number of testimonies from different German physicians to the benefits derived from the treatment of epilepsy in asylums and institutions for idiots.

Dr. Bertelsmann, physician to the Institution for Epileptics at Bielefeld, remarks that though he does not believe bromide of potassium to be a specific against epilepsy, he is persuaded that it occasionally effects a cure. At the same time he quotes the opinion of Dr. Auguste Voisin that though oxide of zinc acts more slowly than the bromide of potassium its effects are more certain; and after having used both these two medicines for more than twenty years he habitually gives the preference to the oxide of zinc used after the method of Herpin of Geneva. Dr. Erlenmeyer has tried bromide of lithium, which was recommended by Dr. Levi, of Paris, as more efficacious than the bromide of potassium, and as having no action upon the heart.

From his own experiments he is disposed to believe that it is inferior to bromide of potassium as a remedy against epilepsy. He has also tried bromide of quinine, and found it had a more hypnotic action than bromide of potassium; he finds it useful in treating periodic fits of insanity and hypochondria, but is not inclined on the whole to give it the preference to the more commonly used drug.

On the Odour of the Insane.—Laehr (“*Zeitschrift*,” xxxiv. Band, 3 Heft) treats of the perspiration of the insane. He says that formerly it was believed that a peculiar smell came from the skin of the insane, but that owing to the greater attention paid to cleanliness this odour is no longer met with. This is held by some physicians of experience in Great Britain, Dr. Blandford, for example; while others persist that there is an odour peculiar to the insane which is not met with in ordinary hospitals for the sick, however dirty they may be.

Dr. Laehr gives several cases which confirm the view he somewhat inconsistently treats as obsolete.

There was a doctor at Halle afflicted with insanity, accompanied by delusions, during which he emitted from the skin a very penetrating odour, which he thought particularly pleasant, though no one else was of that opinion.

Dr. Laehr gives several other instances where puerperal mania, or mania accompanied by disorders of menstruation was attended with a peculiar smell from the skin. Two cases are given of circular insanity, where the period of disquiet was attended by an exhalation from the skin having a characteristic smell.

Dr. Laehr believes that in these instances the secretion of sweat was greater than usual, and that the peculiar exhalation must have been due to a special action of the nerves upon the sudoriparous glands.