

experience, such reports are instructive and useful as guides to medical men likely to be consulted about cases of insanity, real or simulated. It would, however, serve no purpose to try to present to our readers a condensed form of these descriptions.

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*Les États neurasthéniques (The Forms of Neurasthenia)*. By GILLES DE LA TOURETTE. Paris: J. B. Baillière et Fils, 1898. Pp. 100. Price 1 fr. 50.

This little book contains an admirable epitome of the clinical forms, diagnosis, and treatment of neurasthenia. There was a real danger that the confusion of views of various writers and the extension of the term "neurasthenia" to cover obscure maladies with which it has no connection would ultimately lead to the general discredit of the condition, or rather the group of conditions differentiated under that name. The author of this book has cleared up many of the legendary misapprehensions which have grown as accretions round the literature of the subject, and he has to a considerable extent limited and defined those states which may justly be included in the meaning of the term.

Following Charcot, he divides neurasthenia into two kinds: 1, the true neurasthenia, an acquired condition brought on by overwork, exhausting diseases, malnutrition, or worry; and 2, hereditary or constitutional neurasthenia. The predicate "hereditary" used in this sense denotes a special or more intense nervous heredity, and by no means implies that underlying true neurasthenia there is no heredity to the neuroses. In other words, the word hereditary is used in the same sense as when applied to insanity, to indicate a special hereditary tendency.

The true neurasthenia is distinguished by occurring after the action of an evident cause, by the absence of vesanic complications, such as fixed ideas, fixed hypochondriacal delusions, and chronic mental enfeeblement; by its curability under suitable treatment, and by the intensity of the physical symptoms. The constitutional form, on the other hand, is chronic; the symptoms may arise in early life in the absence of definite determining causes; may continue constantly or occur periodically, with a gradual tendency to become worse, until ultimately many of the subjects spend their time passing from hospital to hospital, and from one physician to another. The mental condition gradually becomes involved, hypo-

chondriacal delusions develop, and without actually becoming insane the patients touch the border-land of many of the well-known forms of mental aberration, such as melancholia, general paralysis, systematised insanity, &c. Into the differential diagnosis between chronic neurasthenia and these forms the author enters at considerable length. A division of the book is assigned to the description of the association of neurasthenia with hysteria—a condition which, judging from the author's description, is by no means common in this country, unless it corresponds to the British form of railway spine, for we are told that it is frequently caused by shock, especially in railway accidents.

The chapter on treatment is particularly minute, and considering the space into which it is compressed, appears to be very comprehensive. Great stress is laid upon the efficacy of hydrotherapeutics, especially the cold douche. Static electricity, applied at intervals of two days, is said to be an infallible cure for the distressing headache. Bromide of potassium in small doses (30 to 40 grs.) is given once a day (in the evening) for sleeplessness. Very little reliance is placed upon medicinal treatment. The dietetic regimen may be summed up in one sentence: the most nourishing and most easily digestible foods are to be administered, frequently and in small quantities at a time; and alcoholic stimulants are to be avoided. On the whole the prognosis is not encouraging, except in the true form; and even then, unless the patient has plenty of money, or abundant leisure and an easy life, the chances are that he will sink into a hospital chronic, or end in moral and physical degradation, or become insane.

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*Névrosés.* Par ARVÈDE BARINE. Paris: Hachette, 1898.  
Pp. 391. Price 3 fr. 50.

THIS volume is an interesting and carefully documented series of studies of certain highly neurotic, and in some cases insane, men of genius—Hoffmann, Poe, De Quincey, Gérard de Nerval. The studies are all well written and instructive. It is sufficient, however, to refer here to the essay on Gérard de Nerval, and that for various reasons: this writer is little known, his importance has only recently been recognised, and owing to the kindness of the successor of Dr. Blanche, in whose private establishment Gérard de Nerval was frequently placed, M. Barine has been able to throw new light on the life of his subject.