

## HOLLAND.

By Dr. F. M. COWAN.

Long as the teaching of psychological medicine may have been neglected, there are signs of a tendency at the present period to make up for lost time. The Universities of Leyden and Amsterdam have their chairs, and now it is proposed to create a professorship at Utrecht. It has been sad to see how many physicians looked upon mental diseases as a class which stood entirely outside the pale of medicine. And sadder still to see how in some criminal cases matters were bungled by incompetent medical experts.

A very striking instance may be mentioned in a "cause célèbre." In June, 1898, a retired captain of artillery, V—, shot his wife and a friend of hers in the street. After firing his revolver he took a bottle out of his pocket, and swallowed the contents. Having been arrested, he was taken to the nearest police station, where he told the officers he had swallowed strychnine, and as spasms set in he was removed to the town hospital. After a stay of five days the head physician certified to his insanity and wished to have him sent to an asylum. The tribunal refused the necessary authorisation, and he was conveyed to prison. Two medical experts were appointed, Dr. A. Long and Dr. L. Rùth. These gentlemen drew the following conclusions :

"The accused has symptoms of nervous disease, which place him under the normal level. Disturbances exist in the psychical sphere as a consequence of degeneracy. The accused is only partially responsible for the deed."

Whether a free will does or does not exist is not a problem for a medico-legal expert to solve, nor does the judge require him to give his opinion on that knotty point. What is wanted is a clear and distinct answer to the question, is the plaintiff diseased, or is he not? Whatever the answer may be, the judge has to pass sentence. What makes matters worse is that some physicians seem to be believers in a fraction of a will, and found a medical verdict upon this preposterous hypothesis.

The tribunal appointed two other experts. These first made an attempt to have the culprit removed to an asylum for observation. They urged that a prison was the very worst place for observing a person suspected of insanity. This request was refused, but their second demand, to have an experienced nurse to observe the prisoner, was granted. As this was the first time that such an important measure was taken, viz. that a nurse was appointed to observe and attend upon a doubtful case in jail, it is only fair to remark that this humane and practical step was carried out chiefly by the influence of W. van Neusch, LL.D., the President of the Criminal Chamber.

The new experts collected a large number of facts from witnesses, physicians, and last, but not least, from an extensive diary which the unfortunate man had been keeping for the last two years.

Their conclusion was that V— was insane, but that they hesitated to classify his insanity.

I here wish to observe that V— had suffered from epileptic fits till his fourteenth year, and considering his impulsive and detestable temper it is very likely that he was an insane epileptic.

The report was put into the hands of the first experts, and it was asked what they had to say to it. And then appeared an answer so full of strange assertions and foolish arguments that Carlyle would have styled it an instance of hide-bound stupidity.

It was argued that a diagnosis of "insanity" without specifying the form of disease was no diagnosis at all. This may be called a proper answer for a drill corporal—what is not in the regulations does not exist. The gentlemen seem not to be aware that a faultless classification in mental medicine has not yet been obtained; and that existing classifications have been made by mere mortals and are liable to endless modifications; and that hundreds of forms of insanity are still to be classed.

Next it was said that the culprit had shammed; this pitiable argument was adduced as in their superficial examination they had omitted properly to test the plaintiff's memory, and probably they were entirely ignorant of all that had been written about epilepsy and allied diseases during the last thirty years.

It is a pity that space will not allow a thorough criticism of this medico-legal report, which may be called a model of how such a paper should not be made. If it were not for the highly important interests concerned in the case, it might be called a medical comedy.

Dr. L. Rùth indicated that the patient should be placed in a criminal asylum. However, as such an asylum does not exist in Holland, it is rather difficult to see where he should have been cared for until it was built.

A new asylum has been opened at the small town of Grave. It is meant to make it the nucleus for a colony like Gheel. To begin with, one hundred quiet women were admitted. It is a pity that the experiment was not made with some fifty quiet patients who had been resident at Gheel, and who were accustomed to live in family. If the plan succeeds, as it certainly must, a great advance in the care of the demented may be said to have been made. As population increases, so does the number of those who are unable to fight the battle of life, and who have to be kept from being trampled upon in the struggle. In proportion as their number increases larger demands are made upon the public funds for the building of asylums. Asylums might be largely relieved of the care of the demented and harmless patients. Besides, the Gheel system might be improved, and a closer relation might be maintained between the asylum and the patients sojourning in the town.

Not only physicians, but many leading lawyers are beginning to urge the necessity of an entire revision of our penal code. Punishment should not be a sort of codified revenge, but should be therapeutic in its effects. Society has a right to be protected from the ferocious actions of the insane, but the insane person should be treated as a patient,

and not be plagued or annoyed. However, as Maudsley says, "the gentle advent of truth takes a long time."

Arrangements are being made for the Congress of Criminal Anthropology, which is to meet next year at Amsterdam, and to which leading men in medicine and law from all countries are to be invited.

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#### DENMARK.

By Dr. FRIIS.

In this country during the past year there have been no changes or events specially calling for notice in the institutions for the insane. Psychological literature has also been very scarce, and there has been published but one work, which is, however, of the first order, viz. :

*Contributions to the Physiology of Enjoyment as a Basis for a Rational Aesthetic*, by C. Lange, Copenhagen. (225 pages.) This work of the well-known Danish specialist in nervous diseases attempts to found conditions and phenomena, which hitherto have been regarded as purely intellectual, completely mental, on the basis of natural science, and to explain them in a complete physiological manner, following the common laws of physiology. It is so full of original thoughts and views, its remarks are so appropriate, and the whole style is so brilliant, that the mere reading is an intellectual pleasure. Of course much of its contents are as yet hypothetical, and much can perhaps also be seen from other points of view ; but the author himself asks that it may only be regarded as an attempt, and that his intention has been rather to give indications than to draw definite conclusions. A complete translation in the principal European languages would be well deserved ; but I shall at present be content to give a short *résumé* of its contents.

This work is, in some degree, a continuation of the same author's book on emotion, as it specially treats of the causes of emotions and sentiments, in so far as they can be elucidated by the mode of action of the means of enjoyment. The book is in two grand divisions—the means of enjoyment in general, and the arts as a special means of enjoyment. The latter part is far the more extensive, and gives the book its essential character.

The author defines enjoyment as the emotion one seeks to obtain ; and as a criterion that a sentiment is an enjoyment to any one is the fact that he seeks it. Our endeavour to obtain enjoyments arises from the want of an emotion or a sentiment, which the enjoyment tends to produce. But as emotions, as shown in his previous work, are vaso-motor phenomena due to constrictions or dilatations of the blood-vessels, it is, of course, those we try to produce which give us pleasurable sensations ; the factors which can cause them are, therefore, means of enjoyment. But as not every emotion is a delight to us, every means which can induce these is not of itself a means of enjoyment ; and the