

To all interested in Howard, and especially those who on any ground may be prejudiced against him, we strongly commend this book by Dr. Guy, who, if a fervent admirer of his hero, is always fair in letting the reader know what has been said by his detractors.

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*Die Medicamentöse Behandlung der Psychosen*, von Dr. Brosius, Director der Heilanstalten, Bendorf-Sayn.

This is a reprint of a short article in the "Deutsche Medicinische Wochenschrift." Dr. Brosius here appears defending some sceptical utterances which he had previously made, holding that the course of insanity is scarcely ever arrested or shortened by medicines, and that "the view that mental derangements recover without drugs is already old," older, we daresay, than medicine itself. "The increased fineness of our diagnosis," he observes, "has not increased the number of our recoveries." The learned doctor seeks to prove this by giving us selected statistics of different asylums. In some few or no drugs are given; in others the apothecary's bill is a large one; and the percentage of recovery is as good in the one set as in the other.

We do not deny that this statistical line of argument, if faithfully conducted, can furnish us with important lessons; but for a controversy of this nature a lengthened and exhaustive inquiry is needed, and this cannot be completed in half a page. Dr. Brosius tells us that during the 25 years his asylum has been in existence out of 160 patients thought to be curable 82, = 50 per cent., recovered without the use of medical agents save in two cases. It is clearly open for an adversary to reply that as Dr. Brosius' experience is mainly confined to treatment by the expectant method, he could only be trusted to classify as recoverable, cases likely to get well without medical treatment, and that if he had made greater use of therapeutic methods for the rest, he might have had more recoveries. As Dr. Brosius' asylum is a private one, he can, we suppose, choose his own patients, or at least reject those he does not like. His division into curable or incurable may be correct, but until the principles are clearly known to us, it is not likely that it will be quietly accepted as a basis for a statistical argument. Dr. Brosius quotes with applause the axiom of Dr. Stark that the most important and efficacious means of treatment and cure is in

most cases the asylum, as well as the observation of Guislain that the most powerful means of combating mania is deprivation of liberty. To the question in what the curative influence of mere confinement in an asylum consists we have no distinct reply. We gather that Dr. Brosius has much faith in the curative powers of beer and wine, "mild alcoholization of the brain," and good diet. The arrangements and appliances (Einrichtungen and Räumlichkeiten) of an asylum are alluded to as useful in treatment.

It is likely enough that in some asylums in Germany, Dr. Brosius' warnings against the abuse of opium and chloral may be needed. I once visited an asylum where there were about forty patients, and the physician, after explaining to me his methods of treatment, some of which were pretty energetic, apologised for one solitary lunatic who at the time was receiving no medicine. As a counterpart to this, the medical superintendent of a large asylum in Great Britain once assured me that for some years he had wholly given up any medicinal treatment for his patients, and did not find that the percentage of his recoveries was diminished. In an inquiry, of which we read in a New Zealand newspaper, as to the manner in which an asylum there was conducted, the visiting physician was severely blamed by a committee of laymen because, though he carefully treated all the incidental diseases of the lunatics, he had no regular medical treatment for the mental disorders on account of which they were deprived of their liberty.

In Great Britain, Dr. Brosius will no doubt find supporters; but we are not sure that if he knew more about the asylums in our island, that he would think it worth while to write against medical treatment for lunatics. It may look very eccentric as things go, but we have a serious misgiving that behind the parade of upholstery and gimcrackery there is sometimes a dearth of individual consideration, special treatment, and medical care. *Ubi stimulus, ibi fluxus*. The shortest cuts are ever the best-worn paths, and a hard-worked man soon learns what it is safest to neglect.

Even should the views of our distinguished German colleague be admitted as correct, it would only incline us all the more earnestly to exhort and encourage the rising generation of physicians who study insanity in this country to devote much of their energies to therapeutics rather than to pathology.

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