

OPINIONS OF VARIOUS ALIENISTS.

In order to secure something like a consensus of opinion in regard to the relation of gynæcology to psychiatry I submitted a list of questions to one hundred and twenty of the principal alienists in America with the following result :

Question 1.—What percentage of female cases admitted to your institution is due to disease of the genital organs ?

Answers.—With the exception of three superintendents, the percentage is said by all to be less than five, and several assert that in not more than two per cent. could disease of the uterus or its appendages be considered a factor in the causation of insanity.

Question 2.—Have you any experience of surgical procedure for the relief of this condition as a curative agent in insanity, and what are the results ?

Answers.—The large majority of those having had any experience do not claim that any permanent benefit has resulted from operation as a curative agent. In some cases there was temporary arrest of insanity, but this was followed in nearly every instance by a recurrence of the nervous phenomena, so that the mental condition of patient was unimproved.

Question 3.—In what proportion of cases operated upon could recovery be attributed to the operation ?

Answers.—Only six assert that recovery could be attributed to the operation. Several claim that the mental condition was made worse.

Question 4.—Do you advocate surgical interference in these cases for the relief of insanity ?

Answers.—In nearly every instance the gist of the replies to this inquiry is that surgical interference should be resorted to with the insane as with the sane, only where there is evident physical indication for operation, but seldom or never as an experimental procedure for the relief of insanity.

Question 5.—In cases where temporary or permanent relief is secured, what proportion of the success is due in your judgment to extra nursing and special individual attention ?

Answers.—The answers to this inquiry indicate that the opinion is almost unanimous that more is due to the special nursing, rest, etc., than to the operation.

Dr. P. M. Wise, Chairman of the State Commission in Lunacy for the State of New York, concludes his answers to my inquiries in these words :—"In general I may say that I do not believe that