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ON PARESIS.

Read before the Toronto Medical Society

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Continued.

I have examined carefully over 130 reports of U. States and Canadian asylums for the last 3 years. In more than one-half this number I have found that paresis is either totally unmentioned, or but very exceptionally noted in the obituary tables. I believe it is a recognized fact that in the Southern, and the farthest Western States, the disease is unknown; or at least it has been unnoticed. A year or two ago a very intelligent superintendent of a Southern asylum stated at the annual meeting that he had never met with a case of paresis in his institution, and several others made similar statements. To an English superintendent, who numbers his paretics by the score, and shows a paretic death proportion of 1 in 3, or 4, this fact could not fail to appear marvellous; but even in Philadelphia, only 18 years ago, I was shown in the Insane department of Blocksley Alms House, which then lodged over 1,000 pauper lunatics, one case of reputed paresis—the only one said to be in the house;—and it was not one at all—or at all events it was not like any I had seen: for the only symptom adduced in support of the diagnosis, was one I had never met with in the Toronto Asylum—and that was, intense and constant pain in the head. Never yet have I met with a Paretic who would say he had pain in the head, nor indeed, in the vast majority, any pain, whatever, in any part. I do not say that this exemption from head-pain is an invariable fact, in the earliest stage of this disease: it has, however, as far as I can recall, been the rule in all cases

after admission into the asylum; and I have regarded it as one of the pathognomonic indications of the disease.

As illustrative of the great disparity between the numbers of male and female paretics, in the largest city in America, I present the following figures from the reports for 1876 and 1877, of two large asylums, representing the lower classes of the insane of the city of New York.

Ward's Island, 1876,—male asylum 44 deaths of Paretics, in a total of 131 deaths, or 1 in 3; 1877, do. 55, in a total of 126, or 7 in 16.

1876, Blackwell's Island—Female Asylum, 2 deaths, in a total of 97, or 1 in $48\frac{1}{2}$; 1877, do. 2 deaths, in a total of 98, or 1 in 49.

These figures astonish even me, for in the first place the New York city male mortality from paresis, comes fully up to the highest English paretic rate, and in the next place, the female rate is far below that of either the English asylums, or any others from which I have had reports showing the comparative mortality of male and female paretics. But the reports of the Ward's Island asylum are from the pen of our talented fellow-countryman, Dr. A. E. MacDonald, whose veracity and correctness of diagnosis, I regard as thoroughly reliable. I do not venture to say so much for the other reports, as I am not personally acquainted with the author. I am disposed to believe that the female returns of Blackwell's Island asylum are quite erroneous, and that the under-rating has arisen from the dissimilarity of the mental symptoms in the two sexes. I also believe, that the paresis of females is of much longer average duration than that of males, and may therefore be ranked as mere dementia. Why a New York city asylum should show a lower proportion than an English asylum, I fail to understand.

In striking contrast with the preceding reports, is that for the year 1876, of a third New York city asylum at Flatbush, where, in a total under treatment, in the year, of 1080, (459 males and 621 females), only 4 deaths from paresis are given in a total of 62 deaths. Distinction of sex is not given. I must observe, however, that 7 deaths are ascribed to apoplexy, 7 to exhaustion of chronic mania, and 3 to mollities cerebri. I question if two-thirds of these were not paresis.

I find from the records of the New York State Lunatic Asylum at Utica, which are perfectly