

GYNÆCOLOGY AMONG THE INSANE.*

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UTERO-OVARIAN disease and its relations to insanity is a subject that has aroused much controversy and no small amount of bitterness in some sections of the great country south of us. Some State Boards of Control have thought fit in their wisdom to interfere in the scientific management of the insane, especially in the prosecution of operative procedure for the relief of pelvic disease in the same, and have characterized special work of this nature as "brutal and inhuman." It is very evident that those who took exception in such violent terms to a distinct advance made in the modern methods for the cure of insanity have been carried away by false theory and misplaced sympathy, and could not have had any practical experience of the undoubted benefit which, in the majority of instances, accrues from necessary surgical interference for the bettering of the condition of these "wards of the State."

Being still in the experimental stage in this matter, I am somewhat diffident about opening up a subject so extensive; but I desire to put on record the result obtained after a year's experience and observation in gynæcological work on the insane in London Asylum, and the conclusions reached as to the result of treatment of pelvic disease in insanity. That disease of those organs does produce mental alienation in many instances, I have not the slightest doubt. Exception may be taken to this opinion by putting forward the plea that derangement of other just as important organs rarely produces psychic disorders; then, why should changes in the genitalia cause this profound mental disturbance? The reason, I believe, is that the brain is intimately connected with the uterus and its appendages through the great sympathetic system, and that disturbances of the latter are reflected upon the former in pathological, just as we know they are in physiological, conditions. To illustrate this, one has but to note the marked influence that puberty has upon the female mind. The girl in the transition stages to womanhood not only develops physically, but certain mental qualities hitherto well marked in her are very much altered, and from being a rollicking tom-boy she becomes retiring,

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