

THE CANADA LANCET.

A Monthly Journal of Medical and Surgical Science

Issued Promptly on the First of each Month.

Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancet," Toronto.

AGENTS.—DAWSON BROS., Montreal; J. & A. McMILLAN, St. John. N.B.; GEO. STREET & Co., 39 Cornhill, London, Eng.; M. H. MAILLON, 10 Rue de la Grange Bateliere, Paris.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 1, 1880.

SYPHILIS AND MENTAL ALIENATION.

In the October number of the *Journal of Mental Science*, our talented fellow countryman, W. Julius Mickle, M.D., M.R.C.P., an honour graduate of Toronto University, and now medical superintendent of Grove Hall Asylum, Bow, London, has furnished a very instructive detail of cases of insanity, clearly traceable to syphilitic constitutional empoisonment. These cases all presented the peculiar mental phenomena so generally recognised as the distinguishing and special psychical symptoms of that intractable malady first described by French alienists under the designation of *paralysie generale*, but which is now, in Germany and America, usually called paresis.

The most valuable fact connected with Dr. Mickle's cases of mental alienation associated with syphilitic empoisonment, is that this form of paresis is not, as are its others, insusceptible of curative treatment; for Dr. Mickle's notes very convincingly prove, that under the specific line of treatment which is found successful in secondary or tertiary syphilis, the mental aberration recedes *pari passu*, with the physical disease. This is a most important fact, for though we are not aware that in this Province paresis has yet been often met with in association with syphilitic sequelæ, it is more than probable that its increasing incidence in our large American cities, and to some extent even in our own small ones, might, on closer scrutiny, be found traceable to this cause; and should this discovery be made, our asylum physicians will not fail to derive some ray of comfort from the knowledge that their therapeutic resources are not doomed to eternal failure, as they certainly heretofore have been; and they will regard with

warm gratitude the promulgator of so important a fact in the domain of psychiatry. On Dr. Mickle's professional acumen, and unswerving veracity, we are well aware implicit reliance may be placed. We regret that our space will not permit us to transcribe in full the illustrative cases presented by him. As regards the mental manifestations, let it suffice to say that they all perfectly harmonised with those usually met with in the spontaneous form of paresis, which have been so exactly depicted by all the late writers on insanity.

Dr. Mickle, having under his care about 400 invalided soldiers, has certainly an ample field for observation; and those who have had the pleasure of reading his valuable contributions to the literature of alienism during the last few years, will admit that he has been a most industrious and efficient worker. We may summarise his present observations by simply stating the medicinal treatment successfully pursued by him in these typical cases:

1st. An artillery soldier, age 29, of 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ years service. He said, "he was the Everlasting Son of the Most High," &c., &c. The fact of syphilitic complication having been discovered, the treatment adopted was as follows: R. Potassii iodidi grs. viii, Hydrarg. per-chloridi gr $\frac{1}{10}$, Ammon. carb. grs. iv. ter in die. This course was continued from his admission, 14th Jan. till 13th Feb., 1879, without any distrust of mercurialism. He gradually lost all his delusions, and was discharged recovered on 17th May. Dr. M. remarks—"That this was a case of syphilitic insanity was quite clear. *Intense syphilitic cranial pain*, ending in insomnia, stupor, and delirium, and this in mania gradually undergoing transformation into a form of monomania, and steady recovery under specific treatment—these were the chief phenomena."

We would call particular attention to the words above, placed by us in italics, as of most valuable diagnostic significance, for it has been our observation that ordinary, spontaneous paresis is seldom, if ever, characterised by *cranial*, or indeed by any other, pain. Its subjects are almost always gay, restless, and painless; and they invariably assert that their health never was better, or, to use their own stereotyped phrase, they are "first rate." Dr. M.'s two other cases were, with trivial deviations, treated similarly to the preceding, and with