

ing developed, or did the old one again enlarge and rupture? Did treatment prolong life any?

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NEUROLOGY.

Moral Insanity.

We have before us two most interesting papers bearing on this subject, one being the translation by Dr. Joseph Workman, of the report of the meeting of the Italian Phreniatric Society of Sept. 1886, and the other by Peter Bryce, M.D., Superintendent of the Alabama State Asylum. Without attempting an abstract in full of these papers, we purpose to select some parts of them of both scientific and social interest; since we take it that on no subject is there greater opportunities for serious thought or greater need for increased knowledge on the part of the practising physician. Psychology, or the science of mind, says Dr. Bryce, is so intimately associated with all questions of moral responsibility, that any attempt to discuss them independently must prove abortive. The old idea that mind is a mysterious entity, independent in its origin and characteristics of the body organism, has been in countless ways utterly discredited. We are compelled in every satisfactory study of it to regard mind as a phenomenon (function) of the nervous organism. "As mankind think of their life or health, so they should learn to think of their mind as a potency, conditioned upon the general well-being of the body. Nor should there be any difficulty in affirming that there are as many varieties of mind as there are varieties of organism; and that there has been in the past, reckoning by ages, and in the present, by generations, a genesis of mind, just as there has been, and is now, a genesis of organisms." Correct views of the nature of mind can be in my opinion, inculcated in no way more forcibly than by reference to the principles of heredity. The art of breeding in this century has engaged talents of a high order, and pecuniary means almost unlimited. And the closely observed facts of this most interesting art, prove that not general characteristics only, but very minute details of organization are transmitted to offspring. We have in these facts some very pregnant truths with reference to moral responsibility. Says Dr. Brazon in the Italian Society: "Moral insanity is usually native, or congenital." He places it amongst the phrenasthenias as if it were a bridge of passage from the congenital insanity to the acquired, and it

is notorious that a more or less protracted period of moral is the prelude to some forms of insanity and especially to paralytic phrenosis (general paresis).

As to its essence, moral insanity presents two species or varieties. There are some individuals who, though conserving free, and even potent, their syllogistic faculties, yet often commit extravagances, obscenities and vile crimes, because they possess not that which is called the moral sense; they do not perceive the impropriety of their acts, so that they feel no remorse or penitence, and they even wonder that other persons see any wrong in them. Others again from a mere trifle rush into excesses and then excuse themselves by asserting they could not help it. Prof. Lombroso finds such to be subject to epilepsy, and that their excesses may be influenced by accesses of *epilepsia larvata*.

Other individuals appear again, in whom both species of moral insanity are combined. While the term is being more largely accepted year by year, yet it is necessary to distinguish the true cases of moral insanity from the false or simulated. The following points help us to decide, 1st by ascertaining whether the parents, living or dead, of the individual submitted to our judgment, were affected with mental or nervous diseases; 2nd, whether the same individual presents degenerative characters, as anomalies of the cranium, asymmetry, depression of general sensibility, hyperaesthesia, convulsions, recurrent nervous *tics*; 3rd, whether the offences committed by him had any relation with their cause, and finally whether he has become incorrigible.

The question arises what must be done with persons morally insane. Remembering how intimately associated acts are with feelings, and how these latter are dependent upon physical conditions, it is therefore as Dr. Bryce says, "most important that the greatest care should be paid to diet, and other sanitary precautions that are well known to qualify the involuntary impulses of the organization." But Brazon goes further and thinks that instead of irritating such with undeserved rigor in common prisons, where they may become worse by contact with real delinquents, they should be declared morally insane and irresponsible, and be detained in asylums until they give signs of amendment, for it is unjust that good society should have to live in constant fear on account of their periodic mental eclipses.