

Miscellaneous.

Borderland Cases of Insanity.

Of course it is so obvious as to require but little emphasis to state that insanity is treated now with far greater intelligence than was formerly the case. As a matter of fact, mental disorders were treated not only with an absolute lack of intelligence, but with a considerable amount of brutality. A new era in the treatment of the insane was inaugurated by Pinel in France, Elizabeth Fry in England, and Rush and Miss Dorothy Dix in this country. To Miss Dix is chiefly due the honor of first organizing institutions for the insane and of releasing many patients from madhouses and from the strong rooms of poor-houses and from private homes. Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald is mainly responsible for the State Care Act of 1889, and was a pioneer in the most modern methods of treating insanity. There is little doubt that progress has been made in recent years in regarding insanity from a more rational standpoint, although it must still be confessed that even the most advanced psychiatrists of the present day are to a great extent groping in the dark. That is to say that there are many obscure points which require illuminating. Light is breaking in slowly but surely, and it would seem as if the day is coming when our conceptions of insanity will be established upon a thoroughly sound and comprehensible basis. Of the present time it might not be mis-stating the case, perhaps, if it were said that it is a transition period. Ideas exist in abundance, but as yet they have not been really grasped. The German school is in the front rank from the psychological point of view, and Kraepelin is its chief prophet. As Adolph Meyer points out in the New York State Hospital's Bulletin, published in September, Kraepelin has shaken the very foundations of the old structures, and, in the opinion of Meyer, the director of the psychiatric clinic of Munich is to be thanked for the fundamental shaking up of tradition, and for the declaration of independence and of the right of seeing things according to their medical importance. American alienists are following in his wake, so far as grouping insanity under headings which commend themselves to their good sense and best judgment is concerned, rather than by classing cases under a set form.

Throughout the civilized world there is a tendency on the part of the medical profession to pay far more attention than