Part III.—Epitome.

Progress of Psychiatry in 1903.

UNITED STATES.

By Dr. BANNISTER.

THE progress of psychiatry in the United States is not a uniform one in all sections. It is notable mostly in spots. This is not a disparaging remark as regards the conditions in other sections, for they fairly hold their own. Considering the circumstances the conditions are in almost every region of the country fairly creditable. The asylums are well managed; the officers, while often appointed from political influence, are nevertheless able and competent physicians and executive officials. The assistants are usually selected from young men of promise, who desire experience in the subject of psychiatry. The great trouble is the lack of permanency of the position; hence the difficulty of building up a corps of highly accomplished specialists. To some extent I think this must be the case in Great Britain also, where I understand the assistants are not permitted to marry, and therefore can hardly, at least in many cases, consider their occupation as a permanent one. While I have no very striking investigations or epoch-making papers to notice, there have been many valuable scientific papers read before the American Medico-Psychological Association at its last annual meeting, or published in various medical periodicals throughout the country. Among these might be mentioned Dr. Spratling's work on brain surgery, the work of Coriat on general paralysis, and Dr. Lawrence's elaborate investigations on paretic dementia, which are only two or three out of a very considerable number of meritorious articles. Besides these there have been many valuable practical papers read before local societies by the officers of insane asylums, which, while usually containing nothing new, are nevertheless valuable summaries of information well adapted to the audiences to which they were presented.

Perhaps the most important publication bearing on questions relating to mental disease is the report of the Committee of Fifty on the Physiological Aspects of the Liquor Problem, an elaborate work of two volumes, covering the subject perhaps more comprehensively and fully than any other one that has been published. For a considerable time past the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, a very useful and respectable organisation, has been endeavouring to obtain legislation—and to a large extent successfully—requiring instruction in the public schools as to the deleterious effects of alcoholic drinks. The text-books prepared for this purpose have been severely criticised by various medical men, and, to a certain extent, probably deservedly, though their wholesale condemnation is hardly justifiable considering the fact that some of them were written by such well-known physiologists as Martin, Hewes, and Hall. The first part of the work of the Committee

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of Fifty gives a review of this question of instruction in regard to alcohol, and it is somewhat to be regretted that this chapter, written as it is by such able men as Professors Bowditch and Hodge, should not have been a little more judicial in its treatment of the subject. The condemnation is an absolute one, and the opinions of various physiologists, both in this country and Europe, are quoted as condemning the methods. There is no doubt that the work has been rather overdone in some cases, but the motive is a good one, and the question whether it is inadvisable to try to influence young children against alcohol in the early primary stages of their education is perhaps an open one. It is a little noticeable, too, that the opinions of certain prominent physiologists, English among others, were apparently not sought, or at least not obtained on this subject. The question of alcohol in this country is perhaps a more vital one than it is in Europe, and it enters largely into our politics, both State and municipal. While the advocates of prohibition and total abstinence are often extreme, their opinions are at least to be respected, and they have certainly done much good. At the present time it is probable that there are more total abstainers in the United States in proportion to the population than in any other civilised country, and this is largely, if not entirely, due to the efforts that have been made.

One or two interesting articles have been published of late in regard to the geographical distribution of insanity in the United States. One of these, by Dr. Wm. A. White,(1) was read before the National Geographical Society at the beginning of the year, and was based on the study of data authorised by the statistics of the tenth census. Dr. White finds that the proportion of insanity decreases rapidly from the New England States, west and south, until one reaches the Pacific coast, where there is a very marked increase, especially in California. The reason for this is given, as might perhaps be expected, in the stress of modern life, which is greatest in the more thickly populated districts; and it might be added that there is in the New England States, which have sent their best blood for a hundred years to other sections of the country, at the present time a concentration of heredity, which is especially favourable to the evolution of mental disorders. This is not specially noticed by Dr. White, but it is a fact to which I can testify from personal studies. The excessive incidence of insanity in California has been demonstrated by Dr. J. W. Robertson, who finds that at the present time the insane number 1 to 260 of the general population—certainly an excessive ratio. The great excess here as well as elsewhere is largely due to the foreign population, which, as Dr. Foster Pratt pointed out many years ago, while furnishing only a small percentage of the population, furnishes a very large percentage of the insane. The mild climate of California is also given by Robertson as a factor, as it favours long hours of working, and the stress of civilisation is certainly as strong in this State as in any other in the Union. Vacations are not the rule, the hours are long; and another cause which he considers to a certain extent responsible, and which has not been noticed elsewhere so far as I am aware, is excessive beer drinking. He asserts that neither whisky nor wine, though they may be more stimulating, are more damaging in this respect. It may be that, like the

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cigarette habit, beer drinking is more dangerous because it encourages the habit of taking in very large quantities in dilute doses, than do the more obviously dangerous methods of imbibition.

Dr. Rollin H. Burr has also studied the question of the geographical distribution of insanity in his paper on the fluctuation of insanity in Connecticut, in which he finds that the ratio of the insane to the general population is larger than has been estimated, but the increase seems to be somewhat checked. In Connecticut the Irish seem to be the special victims of insanity, a fact which was pointed out by Sanborn for Massachusetts many years ago, and which, I think, agrees with the conditions on their native soil. It is a little curious, however, that the Irish immigrants to this country should show so large a percentage, being, as they must be, the more active and healthy of the race. We should look for more insanity to be left behind in the old country, where intermarriage and the culling out of the more vigorous would have had its effect; but it is a fact that in this country the Irish are notably numerous amongst the asylum population. What America has to stand from the influx of foreign defectives is perhaps not appreciated abroad. Some years ago I remember reading in the Commissioners of Lunacy's report of a specially disturbing patient, an American, in one of the Lancashire asylums. It was stated that an attempt would be made to send him back and relieve the country of his support. If reciprocity could be established in this direction we could overwhelm certain portions of the British Isles, to say nothing of Germany and Switzerland and other countries. I personally know men who have been repeatedly committed for insanity in Europe before coming to this country. Here they spent most of their time in the asylums. I also knew another case who was twice sent back to his own home, Germany, where his family was of the official class and well-to-do, and each time he was promptly returned.

The increase of insanity amongst the negroes of the South has also been a notable fact of late years, but this is not surprising considering the responsibilities of freedom which have been forced upon them, and their inability to meet the special strain which has thus devolved upon them. Perhaps it is remarkable that there are not more insane, especially paretic insane, in the coloured race than there are. I cannot recall a single case of paresis in a full-blooded or approximately full-blooded negro, though I have seen it in mulattoes; and the same rarity of tabes has been remarked upon by competent observers.

What may perhaps be a curiosity to British readers is the existence of a trades union affiliated with outside unions among the attendants of an asylum. Such at present exists in an institution in Cook County, Illinois, and active movements are made to increase the pay and privileges. How it will work is yet to be seen. There is a certain kind of civil service regulation of this institution, which is supposed to eliminate it from political "pull," but a union of the employés affiliated with outside unions is another kind of "pull," and may have unfortunate results. If there is any occupation which needs to be free from the objectionable features of trades-unionism, one would think it would be the care of the insane.

For lack of space, I can only mention here the work that is being

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done in special institutions, such as the very ably manned New York Pathological Institute, the Shepherd-Pratt Asylum, and others; but space forbids. There is more intelligent psychiatric work, I believe, being done by asylum officers at the present time than at any former period, though their contributions are often widely scattered through various publications.

(1) See digest by Dr. Wilcox, vol. xlix, p. 727.

DENMARK.

By Dr. A. Friis.

At the general census in 1901, in Denmark, there was also taken the number of insane and feeble-minded. The result has been recently published, and shows that the total number of insane has increased from 3794 to 4197, or 10·6 *per cent.*, during the past eleven years, whilst the number of feeble-minded has increased from 2712 to 3203, or 18·1 *per cent.* Since the increase of total population during this period has been 12·8 *per cent.*, the relative increase of insanity has been somewhat less; this, however, is made up by the great increase in feeble-minded. As regards the insane, the number of females was much greater than the males; four fifths of the whole number were living in asylums, and only a small number could support themselves outside. The male predominated somewhat in the feeble-minded; two thirds of the whole number were housed in asylums, and about 400 could support themselves by private employment, especially in agricultural work.

The need for more accommodation for the insane continues to be felt. To meet it the asylum at Oringe has been enlarged by the addition of an agricultural colony for twenty-five male patients. At Aarhus some of the chronic insane have been sent to the workhouse, which is near enough to allow of their supervision by the asylum superintendent. There is also a scheme to enlarge the St. Hans Hospital near Copenhagen.

The same need for accommodation is felt as regards the feeble-minded, and the directors have to refuse admission to a great many cases.

The care of the criminal lunatic and the criminal feeble-minded has again been the subject of discussion at the meeting of the Danish Association of Criminologists in Copenhagen, April, 1903, and also at the fifth meeting for the Care of the Abnormal in the Northern Countries in Stockholm, 1903, where I read a paper on the latter subject. The discussion has not so far led to any practical results.

In Denmark there are now three asylums for epileptics, all private institutions. The chief is at Terslose, which has been enlarged several times, and has now accommodation for about 100 patients. The two others are only intended for children—the Nyborg Asylum for twenty boys, and the Rudo-Vedby Asylum for twelve girls.

Literature has almost been confined to papers in the journals discussing the accommodation and care of the insane, to some extent in

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