journal is worthy of support. It is intended to promote the welfare of attendants by instruction, advice, and encouragement, and it specially deals with freedom of treatment in colonies and private care. As each craft has its own special journal, it is apparent that the attendants on the insane should find a periodical devoted to their best interests. I have now before me the first ten numbers, complete to this date, and there can be no doubt that the *Irrenpflege* has so far accomplished its intention as declared in the opening statement of the editor.

In mentioning that there is a proposal on the part of the provincial authorities to increase the salaries of asylum officials, I am at the end of this letter, for most of the important literary works have been already noticed in the *Journal of Mental Science*, with the exception of the "Atlas of the Brain," by C. Wernicke. It consists of a series of photographic plates of sections of the brain, which have been stained by Pal's modification of Weigert's method, and which are intended to demonstrate the normal anatomy and the pathology of the brain. This standard work is the result of much care and perseverance, and should commend itself to all those desirous of furthering their study in this direction.

In the region of research, Nissl, in an article in *Allg. Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie* entitled "The Hypothesis of the Specific Functions of the Nerve-cells, and Studies in the Anatomy and Histo-pathology of the Nerve-cells," gives the result of his experiments on the effect of toxins on the cortical nerve-cells of animals poisoned with lead, arsenic, phosphorus, silver, morphia, nicotine, trional, strychnine, toxins of tetanus, alcohol, and veratria. He used his own method of fixation and staining of sections, and found that the cells are altered in a determined specific manner by the action of the poison. His experiments have the value of a physiological reaction. He does not compare the pathological with the normal cell, but has introduced a new definition, "the equivalent figure," of the nerve-cell. This is the microscopic figure of the nerve-cell of an animal killed in a certain manner, which regularly takes place under certain conditions. These equivalent figures serve to control the figures of the poisoned cells. Explanatory tables and photographs accompany the paper.

The progress of clinical knowledge has not kept pace with the great labour bestowed upon anatomical studies. It would seem that the favourite problem at present is the anatomical substratum of mental diseases, which is so vigorously searched for in the nerve-cells.

HOLLAND.

By Dr. F. M. Cowan.

Asylums are not popular institutions, and every now and then a virulent article appears in the newspapers, inveighing against gross

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abuses and shameful practices by which men of perfectly healthy minds are designated insane by doctors, and may even be shut up for life. Such a case occurred a short time ago. A merchant suffering from delusions of persecution was admitted into the Meerenberg asylum. He kept complaining and insisting upon being discharged. An acquaintance of his wrote to the patient's wife, and did what he could to prevail upon her to take her husband home. Finding all his endeavours vain in that quarter, he wrote to a member of the second Chamber. The consequence was that the matter was brought under the notice of the Government. The honourable member, without seeing the patient, made the diagnosis of his perfect mental health after reading a couple of letters which had been sent him, and after seeing that the case-book recorded that Mr. K. was not violent, and took daily walks Addressing the minister, he said, "Can there be stronger evidence that here we have a man detained in an asylum who should be at large?"

The discussions which followed were absurd, and clearly showed what an amount of nonsense honourable members may utter when they flounder out of their depth, and discuss matters which they know nothing about. The conclusion they arrived at was that the formalities required for admission into asylums were not stringent enough. Now, although it was generally thought by alienists that a great deal of precious time was lost owing to the different formalities already required, it may be expected that one day or other new measures will be introduced which, in the long run, will no more satisfy the malcontents than those which now exist, and which may seriously damage the mentally diseased. *Deliberante senatu perit Saguntum* was true in a certain sense here; the patient died of consumption, and put a temporary stop to the matter. As one of the supporters of the motion has since come into office as a Cabinet minister, it is unfortunately probable that we shall hear more of this. One of the most grossly mismanaged asylums has fortunately been suppressed,—at least, it will be so some months hence ,viz. the asylum at Dordrecht. The governors of this institution had made it a veritable Black Hole. By their stupid management not only were two patients sadly burnt in a single room, built according to their own ideas, but it was found that to make the asylum a profitable business the patients were stinted in their food. The senior physician, disgusted by these shameful proceedings, resigned his position, but did not attain his *otium cum dignitate* without any further tribulations. When he complained that orders given by him were countermanded by the governors, the chairman of this honourable board called upon him and dastardly attacked him with a stick, badly cutting the doctor across the face, and giving him a number of bruises. Most fortunately the criminal bungling of a lot of pettifogging creatures will now be stopped. In fact, so thoroughly are the authorities convinced that the asylum has a bad reputation that the burgo-

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master, when he proposed to suppress it, gave as a reason that after what had occurred no physician of self-respect would take the place of superintendent. An endeavour to obtain an inquiry into the state of matters was resisted by one of the aldermen, the architect of the single room I mentioned above, formerly one of the governors, who thought an inquiry would be a proof of distrust in these worthy persons. It is a sad thing that the law which was considered too stringent by several people should be impotent to stop such proceedings, and sad it is that the Psychological Society did not raise a single protest against a state of things which it must disapprove of. As it is, the society now appears to agree with the governors, and to approve their line of action.

A new asylum has been built near Leyden; it is built on the cottage system; the grounds were formerly a country seat, and are finely wooded.

DENMARK.

By Dr. A. Friis.

During the last year there has been no change of importance in the care of the insane of Denmark. In this country there are five large asylums, viz. the St. Hans' Hospital for the city of Copenhagen, and the four State asylums at Vordingborg, Middelfart, Aarhus, and Viborg. The last mentioned is only for incurables; the others both for curable and incurable patients. Besides these there are a few small provincial asylums designed only for provisional care and for the incurable. At the beginning of the year there were, according to the Asylum Reports for 1896, 2939 lunatics under care in the large asylums, viz. in St. Hans' Hospital, 1019; in the asylums at Vordingborg, Middelfart, and Aarhus respectively 470, 572, and 539; in the Viborg Asylum, 339. During 1896, 802 cases were admitted, 653 discharged or died. Of those admitted, 25 per cent. were suffering from melancholia, 20 per cent. from mania, 17 per cent. from paranoia, 36 per cent. from dementia, and 2 per cent. from idiocy. In the State asylums there has for some time been need for room, especially for incurables; and the Department of Justice, which has the supervision of the lunatic asylums, has therefore appointed a commission, consisting of the medical superintendents of the above-named asylums and the Dean of the Royal College of Health, to inquire into this and other questions concerning the insane.

The low number of idiots in the lunatic asylums of the State is owing to the fact that these patients are not admitted. In Denmark there are, therefore, two special asylums for idiots and imbeciles of all kinds, adults and children, viz. the Keller Asylums

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