GERMANY.

By Dr. J. BRESLER.

I am able to report satisfactorily, in the first place, on the further evolution of the question of public sanatoriums for nervous disease. It is well known that it was the pamphlet of Dr. P. F. Möbius on *The Treatment of Nervous Patients, and on the Foundation of Sanatoriums for Nervous Diseases*, 1895–6, which stimulated both the medical and lay world to the erection of sanatoriums for nervous cases of the lower classes. The first establishment of this kind was opened in 1899 near Teltow, several miles from Berlin, called "Schönow," by Dr. Laehr, with the co-operation of Drs. Oppenheim and Möbius, the banker Berl, and a number of charitable people. In October, 1903, Professor Cramer succeeded in persuading the Provincial Board of Hanover to erect a nerve sanatorium. It is right to mention that the Governments and Boards are not obliged to provide for this class of patient, making the departure at Hanover all the more significant. The city of Frankfort-on-Main has also commenced building for this purpose, and it is likely that during the coming year the Grand Duchies of Baden, Sachsen-Weimar, and the Rhine Province will follow. The consummation will depend upon the endeavours of alienists and neurologists, the aid of the Governments and Boards, and the assistance of public charity. It is unnecessary here to dilate upon the importance of the early treatment of neurasthenia and similar diseases in the prophylaxis of insanity, or the unsuitability of the general hospitals for this purpose, they being unable to provide suitable occupations and distractions, and also psychical treatment.

It is obvious from my previous reports that in Germany the question of the treatment of the excited insane without isolation in side rooms has been vigorously discussed during the last eight or ten years. In April, 1903, at the annual meeting of the Society of Psychiatry, Dr. Mercklin (Director at Treptow-on-Rega), in a report on the subject, came to the following conclusions, which were accepted by the Society:

(1) The isolation of the insane for therapeutic purposes is to be rejected.

(2) The so-called therapeutic isolation can, without great difficulty, be accomplished by other means, of which bed treatment, continuous baths, and separation are in the first rank.

(3) The use of narcotics cannot, in the meantime, be avoided entirely.

(4) Temporary isolation is only admissible in rare cases, and these are decreasing. The occasions are when the public weal calls for it and other means have failed.

It may prove a matter of some interest that it is proposed to establish a lunacy law in Germany. I reproduce here some excellent deductions made by Vorster (member of the Provincial Board of the Rhine Province, Düsseldorf) at the annual meeting of the German medical officers at Leipzig, September, 1903:—A lunacy law should deal with the efficient care of the insane and kindred classes of the community,

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both within and without the asylums, and not limit itself to the prevention of false imprisonment. Regarding the latter, it is astonishing how strongly public opinion has been influenced by the utterances of well-known members of Parliament and others. It is stated that more than half the insane in the asylums are falsely detained, and that the committal to an asylum is the simplest way of getting rid of anyone whose existence is inconvenient or disagreeable! Legislation should not be influenced by such outrageous statements. In the German Empire there is no imperial lunacy law, and one is to be enacted to take the place of the existing country laws and prescriptions. From a judicial point of view it is necessary; from the psychiatric and hygienic standpoints it is at least desirable.

In framing an imperial lunacy law, Vorster states that the following principles should be insisted upon:

(1) The care of the insane is a public affair, and therefore a duty of the State.

(2) It should include provisions for the insane, idiots, epileptics, and drunkards.

(3) The countries should make the arrangements which are necessary for the execution of the imperial law according to the general maxims laid down by the Imperial Government.

(A) *Prophylaxis.*—The suppression of the excessive use of alcohol, of the abuse of morphine and similar drugs, and of the propagation of syphilis.

(B) *State's provision for the insane.*—The establishment of rules for the general care of the insane within and without the asylums, in families and in hospitals. The private asylums must be taken from under the imperial trades law and placed under the lunacy law. It cannot be recommended to turn the public asylums, which are the property of the provincial Governments and cities, into State institutions, because decentralisation in self-government has proved itself to be useful. The law must ensure that a sufficient number of asylums are provided. In Prussia, for instance, lunatics increased from 18,895 in 1880, to 43,411 in 1895. Idiots, alcoholics, and epileptics need special provision, but the last can, under certain circumstances, be housed in ordinary asylums. Criminals who become insane should be placed in annexes of the larger penitentiaries, and should be under the care of experienced psychiatrists. Feeble-minded people who come in collision with the penal laws should be sent to special State custodial institutions, which must be provided. The direction of the asylums for the insane, idiots, alcoholics, and epileptics should be in the hands exclusively of physicians. There should be regulations regarding the conditions of service of asylum physicians, and their ratio to the number of patients. Under the imperial lunacy law the education, discipline, and social position of asylum attendants must be defined.

(C) *Protection of the insane.*—It must be admitted that the legal basis for the compulsory detention of the insane is not everywhere satisfactory. The lunacy law must therefore contain legal enactments for the reception, detention, and discharge of patients. In the interests of efficient treatment the greatest endeavour must be made to ensure shortness and quickness of admission formalities. As a rule the head

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physician of the asylum should decide whether a patient should be admitted. The decision of any other person is not to be commended. To prevent unjustifiable detention, in addition to rigorous Government control, the most efficient means is the immediate appointment of a guardian for every case admitted against his will. The Solicitor-General should be charged with the official protection of all lunatics. Patients should be discharged as soon as possible, and the law must see that no patient is detained for any reason other than is scientific and psychiatric. Shortness of accommodation or funds should not occasion the premature discharge of patients still needing treatment. There must be a sufficient number of expert members or Inspection Boards.

In conclusion, it is hardly necessary to draw attention to the meeting of the International Congress on Alcoholism, held this year at Bremen, which has already received much public notice. The presidential position was held by Dr. Delbrük, a well-known alienist in Germany, where the question is receiving earnest attention.

ITALY.

By Dr. GIULIO CESARE FERRARI.

One readily sees in Italy, and perhaps also the same may be observed in other countries, that there is a considerable disproportion in the respective development of the two branches of the problem of psychiatry. For, whilst the Italian alienists are not only as advanced as those of other countries in the scientific study of the different questions of psychiatry, and have taken the lead in certain branches (for instance in the work on criminal anthropology by Lombroso, the cerebral histology by Golgi, Marchi, etc.), they have taken but little notice of, at least up till recent years, certain practical questions (which, besides, have been long under discussion) of the special treatment of the insane. Thus, for example, we still lack a universal law regarding the treatment of the insane, whether in asylums or not.

It would take us too long, and would not be of much benefit to the readers of this JOURNAL, to seek the various causes of this fact, which is really a moral advantage to us, because, in the absence of a law for which we clamoured so long, abuses such as arbitrary detention, so often complained of in other places, are rarely met with here. Since our last epitome, however, something of this character has happened, which it seems right to mention here, as it has resulted in real progress in our country.

The provinces of the Veneto (Venezia, Verona, Rovigo, Vicenza, Treviso, Udine, etc.) have for nearly forty years had two asylums on two islands near Venice, one at St. Clement's for women, the other at St. Servolo for men. Following the ancient statute of the Veneto regarding the treatment of the male insane, the latter asylum was entrusted to a brotherhood, the "Fate-bene-fratelli;" but these, with an incredible carelessness, have allowed things to slide in a fashion shameful from a humane and moral point of view, and administratively ridiculous.

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