Dr. Kiernan quotes an interesting case in which he gave evidence. An old man who had made a fortune during a life of hard work began to decline mentally and physically. He gave up business, and became slovenly and childish, and would appear semi-nude in public. His literary tastes, religious habits, and family affection all changed. He became restless and wandering, and determined to go to Europe. During his tour in Europe he spent his money lavishly on useless trash. Soon after his return his wife died, on which occasion he sent for a fiddler to play merry tunes. He then proposed to an old servant, who pronounced him mad. He showed physical signs of senility. No conservator was appointed, because publicity was feared. He then married again. His second wife, previous to her first marriage, had had an illegitimate child and had been immoral for gain, which facts were unknown to the old man. The marriage was partly brought about by undue influence used over the groom by the uncle of the bride, and by his misrepresentation of the character of the bride. On finding that the bride was of bad character the old man left her, and she entered suit for maintenance and to set aside certain trust deeds. A decree of nullity of the marriage was, however, obtained for the following reasons:—(1) One of the contracting parties was insane. (2) Undue influence had been used to effect the contract. (3) Fraud was also used, in as far as the uncle of the bride represented her as being a suitable wife.

Judge Fully was of opinion that what applied to contracts in general applied also to the marriage contract, and that consequently the above marriage was no contract at all. W. J. PENFOLD.

Mental Dissolution. (*Lancet, Feb. 10th,* 1900.) *Savage, G. H.*

Dr. Savage points out that dissolution is not exactly the reversal of evolution—that it simply means separation into constituent parts. In speaking of the duration of mental dissolutions, he states that a permanent mental dissolution, following on repeated transient mental disturbance, will have as its characteristics those of the transient states. The signs of dissolution enumerated in the paper are simply the commoner mental symptoms. The dissolution of mind occurs in different cases on different lines; single faculties may be picked out and may decay—*e. g.* memory or the inhibitory faculties,—and the nature of the dissolution is determined by the inherited and acquired peculiarities of the whole nervous system.

Individual symptoms are discussed, but the subject is dealt with in exceedingly general terms. W. J. PENFOLD.

Pellagrous Insanity. (*Arch. di Psichiat., vol. xx, fasc.* 4.)

This number contains a report of the deliberations of the National Congress of the Provincial Commission on Pellagra, held in April, 1899. Since this formidable disease is known to be owing to intoxication from a fungus, it would seem to be easy to prevent it. Nevertheless it is still common in Northern Italy. Professor Seppilli calculates that there are about 2320 persons affected with pellagra, of whom about 5 per cent. become insane. The difficulty evidently is to get the poor people to give up the use of damaged maize. Some members of the Congress

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.46.194.572 Published online by Cambridge University Press