FRANCE.

By Dr. RENÉ SEMELAIGNE.

A Woman sequestrated.—A few months ago the public papers reported that a sane woman had been sequestrated by her family; some days after they reported that she was a genuine lunatic, but that insanity was the result of her long detention in a closed and dark apartment. The true history is as follows:

The Procureur de la République of the town of P— was advised that a lady, Miss Blanche M—, had been sequestrated for years. The magistrates visited the apartment in which she had been confined, and found that the windows were closed and locked; the smell was so offensive that they had to retire for a time until the air had been renewed. They found the woman quite naked in bed and covered with every kind of vermin; under the bed were sweepings and remains of food, such as crusts, bones, oyster-shells, etc. The patient was transferred to the hospital, and her mother and brother were taken into custody. The mother vehemently protested against the charge, swearing she was greatly attached to her daughter. A few days after she died in prison, and her testament proved that she had been kind to the patient. The brother alone remained to be prosecuted, but it was not possible to charge him with having sequestrated his sister as he did not live at home. He had remained throughout life absolutely under maternal control. The magistrate indicted him for being an accomplice in cruelty and assault, so he had to be tried by the *Tribunal Correctionnel*, and without a jury. The case could not be gone into during the summer because of the vacation, so Mr. M— remained for about five months in prison, awaiting his trial. In the meantime, the newspapers conducted a violent campaign, and raised public opinion against him; the political passion soon interfered, for the family was Conservative. During the trial the prisoner was daily insulted by the crowd, and stones were thrown at the carriage which removed him from the prison to the court of justice. All the evidence proved that he was a degenerate. He was extremely myopic, the sense of smell was very defective, and that of taste absent, so that he was markedly incapable of recognising the food of which he partook. Almost incapable of managing his own affairs throughout life, he never dared oppose his mother, who was as obstinate as her son was deficient of will. Mrs. M— herself was most singular in her habits, and she would never have consented to the admission of her daughter, a perfect lunatic from puberty, to any asylum. The window had been closed because the patient used to walk quite naked through the apartment, and the mother, who had bad health, and never had any ideas of cleanliness, furnished her daughter with oysters and every kind of dish, but allowed her to lie in filthiness. The brother very often entered his sister's room; there he used to sit down and read to her to amuse her. He never saw the dreadful dirtiness of her apartment, and never perceived its fœtid smell. Mr. M— is a degenerate without any will, without sight, taste, or smell, and accordingly he is irresponsible, and ought not to have been charged; but the judges, following public opinion, sentenced him to four months' imprisonment.

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The lawyer, the family, and friends induced him to appeal from that sentence, and the case will be called at the *Cour d'Appel* in November.

And as a *moral* of that *immoral* history, the newspapers which generally censure parents and relatives for incarcerating people in madhouses instead of taking care of them at home, have unanimously and correctly declared that such a patient with such surroundings ought to have been sent to an asylum many years ago.

Criminal Assault to secure Morphia.—Some weeks ago a chemist was called up at night. A man came in and presented a prescription for morphia. As the paper seemed to be rather suspicious the chemist refused to dispense it. The man then seized a scalpel from the table and tried to stab the chemist, but the latter rightly ejected him. The police had been advised that several chemists had recently received a visit from a man who always presented a prescription for morphia. The police discovered his domicile, and when they entered the room, they found the man and two women lying on beds pale and nearly unable to move. Mr. N— related how he contracted his sad habit. Some years ago he was suffering from a painful illness, and a doctor induced him to have recourse to morphia. At that time he was a merchant in Brussels, and Mrs. L— and her daughter helped him in his trade. His praises of the drug induced the latter to try it, and they soon became intoxicated. Mr. N— neglected his business, his customers fell away, and he soon came to distress. They all took refuge in Paris, where began a life of misery and want. They were suffering from an ungovernable impulse, *i. e.*, to obtain the desired drug by any means. So Mr. N— visited the shops of many chemists, and lately that of Mr. C—, whom he assaulted for the purpose of securing the refused narcotic. An action for assault and battery is directed against him and Mrs. L—, who is being prosecuted as an accomplice. She is very weak and quite unable to sustain an examination. The condition of her daughter is most serious, and she seems to be at the point of death. Let us hope that the prisoners will be discharged as irresponsible, and that especial care will be taken of them.

Cocainomaniac Father and Idiot Children.—Dr. Marfan reports the case of two children, complete idiots, whose mother enjoyed good health and was without nervous taint, but whose father had always been a sharp and irritable man. Eight years ago, when suffering from a hypertrophic rhinitis, he had recourse to cocaine, and soon became a slave to it. He actually takes three grammes a day. He is very fat, and shows various nervous disorders (hallucinations, vociferations, etc.). There are four children. First, a girl, 13 years old, very intelligent and enjoying good health; second, a girl, æt. 8, whose conception occurred about two months after an operation on the nose, *i. e.*, at a time when cocainomaniac habits were just beginning: she is thin, rather pale, but very intelligent; third, a boy, æt. 6, who was conceived when poisoning had produced its full effect, he is a complete idiot; fourth, a baby, æt. 10 months, who is a microcephalic idiot.

Parricide and Mental Degeneration.—According to Dr. Régis, of Bordeaux, those who perpetrate a parricide are nearly all degenerate people, and such degeneracy is principally the result of hereditary alcoholism. One can easily find amongst them alcoholism, epilepsy,

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and delusions of persecution, but such signs are rather accessory, and invariably grow on a ground of primordial degeneration. The cardinal symptoms are want of affection and impulsiveness. Orestes had been a lunatic and a member of the family of Atrides, a race of unfortunates, degenerates, and criminals.

Delusions resulting from Jealousy.—Dr. Victor Parant, a son of the well-known director of the private asylum of Toulouse, made a special study, in his inaugural thesis, of delusions of this type. They may, or may not, be systematised. The delusions without systematisation make their appearance in degenerate states, in neuroses (hysteria, epilepsy, neurasthenia), in alcoholism, cocainomania, mania, melancholia, and organic disorders of the brain. The delusions of jealousy which appear among old people seem to be more common than one might believe according to the published cases, and Dr. Victor Parant gives, as a reason of the fact, that old people, when they are not dangerous, generally remain at home, instead of being sent to an asylum; consequently their delusional tendencies are unknown out of the family. It is an early symptom in senile dementia. The author divides the systematised delusions of jealousy as follows: (*a*) primary; (*b*) secondary; (*c*) idiopathic. The most common variety is as follows:—Adult people present delusional ideas primarily, and not as the result of affective disorder. The ideas are accompanied by sensorial disorders, the prodromata are slight and short, there is a period of irritable depression, and the delusion makes its appearance, and it is generally a fear of conjugal infidelity. At the beginning the patient presents a mere anxiety, afterwards a suspicion, finally the delusion becomes fixed. Hallucinations of hearing are most frequent; hallucinations of sight are uncommon. These cases do not generally commit suicide, but they often kill their conjoint.

Systematised delusions secondary to mania, melancholia, *folie à double forme*, neuroses, and intoxication are well known. The last variety is composed of people affected with a morbid jealousy, and who remain their whole life presenting the type of *persécutés-persécuteurs*. They are hereditary degenerates, with stigmata and abnormalities of morals and of temperament. Their delusions are due to false reasoning. They are considered as lucid and are found outside asylums, although they are the worst of lunatics.

GERMANY.

By Dr. J. BRESLER.

The treatment of the insane without isolation in side rooms has received much attention in Germany (Kalmus, *Zellenlose Behandlung;* Halle, Marhold, *Psychiat. Wochensch.*, No. 49, 1900; Bresler, *ibid.*, No. 10, 1901; Hoppe, *ibid.*, No. 30, 1901). The general conclusion is that such confinement is to be avoided as much as possible, but that it is quite the right treatment in some cases.

At the annual meeting of German alienists held at Berlin, April, 1901, several important subjects were discussed. *The family care of*

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