

Science Notes.

THE BRAIN AND THE BLOOD.

THE connection between the mind and the size and quality of the brain is always an interesting subject. It is a general belief, and one which has much in the way of practical experience to support it, that a large brain is usually connected with a higher order of intellect than is a small one.

It is said that in fishes the average ratio of brain-weight to body-weight is about 1 to 5,000; in reptiles, 1 to 1,500; in birds, 1 to 220; in mammals, 1 to 180; in the ourang, 1 to 120; and in man, 1 to 50.

It is a matter of experience that the brains of idiots are usually below the average weight, and those of distinguished men often above it, but, as would be supposed, quality must be taken into account as well as quantity, and there are many exceptions to the rule that a heavier brain means a superior mind.

Particulars of one such exception appeared in a recent issue of the *Lancet*. The case in question was that of a man who had been for forty years an inmate of a lunatic asylum, and yet had a brain weighing 65½ ozs., the average being 49 ozs. The brain of Cuvier, as many of our readers doubtless remember, weighed 64½ ozs.

The average weight of the brain in women is said to be 44 ozs., but whether in their case the relation of brain-weight to body-weight is the same as in men or not it is difficult to say. On such a point the layman must be content to take the word of the anatomist, and even the latter has perhaps an insufficient accumulation of data to pronounce with authority.

Prof. Michael Foster, in his well-known text-book of Physiology, states: "The muscular system and skeleton are both absolutely and relatively less in woman, and her brain is lighter and smaller than that of man." He does not touch upon the relative weight of woman's brain; but if we take the absolute average weights in man and woman and compare them with the average body-weights as given by the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association in 1883 we find that woman's brain is relatively heavier than man's.

Referring to another standard work on Physiology, by Dr. Waller, we read: "As regards sex, the brain-weight cannot be appealed to in evidence of superiority on either side."

In spite of this assertion, and the absence of any expression to the contrary in Dr. Foster's book, irresponsible persons discussing the question of woman's position and woman's work continually affirm that her brain is less relatively than that of man. Another argument used to show that less must be expected of woman is that her blood is of lower specific gravity, and contains fewer red corpuscles than that of man. This statement is indeed supported by Dr. Foster, but not by Dr. Waller. It is within the experience of almost every observant person that anæmia is more prevalent among women than among men, but it would not be just in making an examination of the blood of men and women for purposes of comparison to take that of invalids of either sex.

In conclusion, it is almost needless to say that it is not here intended to advocate either the equality of the sexes in the matter of brain and blood or the superiority of either. What we wish to point out is

that the matter has not been so thoroughly investigated and finally decided as some persons appear to think.

As to what are the microscopic appearances in the brain relating to different qualities of mind, anatomists are quite in the dark.

"Nursing Record" At Home.

A NUMBER of Hospital Matrons and Nurses gathered together at 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W., on Wednesday afternoon, when the Editorial Staff of the NURSING RECORD were at home to their friends and others, to discuss the formation of a Nurses' Circulating Library in London.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Mrs. Gordon, and Miss Annesley Kenealy received the guests, and after tea and coffee had been dispensed, the subject of the Library was considered.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick took the chair, and in her opening remarks, in introducing Mrs. Gordon to the meeting, she said, "that she recognised many years ago the need of a Nurses' Library in London, especially for private Nurses. In many of the large and leading Hospitals at present there were excellent libraries, but she felt that private Nurses, and Nurses in small Hospitals and connected with Institutions and private homes, suffered much from a dearth of books. It had been suggested that the Nurses might take out a subscription to Mudie's, but she would like to point out that the one or two guineas necessary for this represented a considerable outlay in a Nurse's salary; so it had occurred to her that a central Library, entailing only a small subscription, would be of considerable value to those who could not afford a high subscription, and who would like to have a voice in the choice of books. About a year since, she proposed the scheme, and embodied it in a list of suggested schemes for Nurses which she laid before the Committee of the Royal British Nurses' Association, but the suggestion had not been acted upon, and she thought that the time was ripe for some practical action. She emphasised the importance of Nurses cultivating the habit of reading, and warned them against the temptation, when tired, to fritter away intellectual opportunities in the desultory picking up of stray literature which had no educational value.

She said she was struck when travelling in the United States with the culture of the working women of that country. She instanced the Federated Women's Clubs, which were often formed by typists, clerks, machinists and workgirls with little leisure, but who had united themselves together and met in the evenings to read and discuss the best literature in the English language. She thought so much was learnt from books than could not be learnt in any other way. It was her great hope that the best books might be placed in the hands of the Nurses at a small cost, knowing from personal experience their recreative value.

Mrs. Gordon followed with an admirable speech, in which she dwelt upon the important effect on the mind of reading good books. She said:—

"A great deal has been said and written about the necessity of persuading people to read profitably, and of trying to induce young people to avoid enervating their minds and characters by devoting all their spare moments to reading novels, romances and stories.

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