

Medical Matters.

HEREDITY AND INSANITY.

Dr. F. W. Mott, Pathologist to the London County Asylums, and Fullerian Professor, Royal Institution, sums up his conclusions on Heredity and Insanity at the close of a series of six lectures delivered before that body on the subject as reported in the *Lancet* as follows:—

1. Hereditary predisposition is the most important factor in the production of insanity, imbecility, and epilepsy. It is the *tendency* to nervous and mental disease, generally speaking, which is inherited. This may be termed the neuropathic taint.

2. Education, sanitation, and the rest, as Bateson has stated, are only the giving or withholding of opportunity for good or ill.

3. Alcohol is a powerful coefficient, but not of itself the main cause, in the production of insanity, except in the rather infrequent cases of alcoholic dementia.

4. Certain types of insanity may be transmitted with greater frequency than others. This has been termed similar heredity. The types are: Periodic insanity (also termed "manic-depressive"), delusional insanity, and epilepsy. The general rule, however, is for a different type to appear.

5. Mothers transmit insanity and epilepsy with much greater frequency than do fathers, and the transmission is especially to the daughters.

6. Anticipation or antedating is the rule whereby the offspring suffers at a much earlier age than the parent; more than one-half of the insane offspring of insane parents are congenital idiots or imbeciles, or have their first attack in the period of adolescence. This adolescent insanity may take an incurable form of dementia in a large number of cases; in others it is usually mania, melancholia, or periodic insanity, and not infrequently epilepsy with or without imbecility. Very rarely does the parent become insane before the offspring. This is a strong argument of hereditary transmission, possibly hereditary transmission of an acquired character.

7. Regression to the normal average may be (1) by marriage into sound stocks, or (2) by anticipation or antedating leading to congenital or adolescent mental disease terminating the perpetuation of the unsound elements of the stock.

8. High-grade imbeciles who are not at present in any way checked in procreating owing to social conditions interfering with survival of the fittest, together with chronic drunkards,

neurasthenics, and neuropaths, are continually reinforcing and providing fresh tainted stocks.

9. Recurrent insanity owing to the fact that patients are not segregated for any length of time is probably the most potent cause of insane inheritance. Facts tend to support the opinion that the recurrent types of insanity during lucid intervals may breed a stock of potential lunatics and paupers.

10. Nature is always striving to go back to the normal average and only relatively few of a stock are insane. A stock with a streak of insanity when combined with genius is not bad, and the same may be applied to a nation; but we only want a streak of genius and insanity, the great body of the nation should be of good normal average, for I believe that nation will possess the greatest potential virility in the struggle for existence that can breed from the greatest number of men and women with good bodily health who possess a large measure of the three attributes of civic worth—viz., courage, honesty, and common sense, combined with parentage, pride of family, and pride of race.

THE TREATMENT OF DIABETES.

The *British Medical Journal* reports that M. Le Gendre, in a French paper, sums up the treatment of diabetes thus: All meats can be taken, for preference with a good deal of fat if it is digested; oils, cheese, and cream are useful; eggs and shellfish can also be eaten. Green vegetables are particularly to be recommended; potatoes are recommended by Mossé in large amounts, as they seem to diminish the sugar and polydipsia; their richness in potash salts appears also to play a favourable part. Oatmeal is frequently tolerated; peas, lentils, and beans are to be avoided. Oranges, gooseberries, and raspberries, and stone fruit can be taken; raisins should be forbidden. Milk is valuable, particularly in diabetes with albuminuria, but it is often badly digested. Wines are generally well borne, but beer, cider, liqueurs, and chocolate must be forbidden. The best drink is pure water with lemon juice, or tea or coffee. Bread should be avoided as much as possible, and replaced by potatoes. Of drugs, the best are alkalis, as bicarbonate of soda. Vichy water is valuable, and the action of this water can be increased by two cachets a day of benzoate of lithia 25 centigrams, bicarbonate of soda 1 gram, benzoate of soda 25 centigrams. All medicaments which depress the nervous system are to be avoided if the patellar reflex is absent or weak. In these cases stimulants are indicated; quinine is also useful; codeine is also of value.

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