RECENT RUSSIAN PSYCHIATRICAL LITERATURE.

DR. A. DRAGOMANOFF. "A Study of the Pathology of Alcoholism; *Kowalevsky's Archiv.*" 1889.

The author studies the question of the development of an irresistible penchant for alcohol, occurring in persons using it for long periods only in minimal quantities. These persons undergo a loss of physical and psychic energy which can only be compensated for by repeated alcoholic indulgences. Deprived of alcohol these persons are defective, and present the condition known as alcoholic neurasthenia. It is worthy of remark that the patient described by the author had stopped drinking, and only recommenced after the use of wine given by a physician. This fact supports the view held by very many neuro-pathologists, that great care should be taken in prescribing wine for neurasthenic patients lest the treatment serve to arouse the tendency to alcoholism. The studies were made in the clinic of Professor Kowalevsky.

DR. P. AUTOKRATOFF. "The Influence of the Extirpation of the Thyroid Gland upon the Nervous System in the Lower Animals."

Before giving the results of his own experiments, the author gives an *exposé* of the historical development of the doctrine of the functions of the thyroid gland as admitted by physiologists, next a statement of the historical doctrine of the *cachexia strumipriva* and of myxædema, and finally relates the details of his experimental researches. The animals operated upon exhibited, the second or third days after the extirpation, a slowness of movement and a tendency to the recumbent position. Their gait was uncertain and awkward, the hind feet spread out; they could not sit down at once, and only did so slowly and painfully as if they had difficulty in flexing the extremities; occasionally rigidity of the muscles was observed, and the joints bent with difficulty. Fibrillary contractions of the muscles appeared, resembling, to use Ewald's simile, the appearance of a field of wheat agitated by the wind. The third day this tremor extended over the whole of the body. The animals ate and drank very little, and urinated frequently. A little later the muscular tremor passed into epileptic attacks, with involuntary passage of fæces, nystagmus, free salivation and embarrassed breathing. The animal usually succumbed in one of these attacks; in the intervals between them the animals exhibit the *manège* symptom. The tendon reflexes, at first exaggerated, became diminished. The death of

the animal occurs either suddenly, or from a gradual increase of the symptoms just described. The galvanic excitability of the peripheral nerves commonly increases after extirpation of the thyroid gland, but sometimes it is decreased. The electric excitability of the psycho-motor centres, observed after the operation and when the pathological symptoms are at their maximum has been found exaggerated. The author explains all the clinical symptoms that follow the destruction of the gland in the animals, by an alteration in the nutrition of the nervous system. The clinical tableau resembles very closely that of tetany.

In making the microscopic examination of the brains and spinal cords of the dead animals, the author finds only alterations in the gray matter, the tissue of which was turbid and inflated with leucocytes; the alterations in the cord were most intense and exhibited themselves in the degeneration and vacuolization of the nerve cells. The author concludes, on the basis of his researches, that the whole symptom-complex depends upon the suppression of the functions of the thyroid gland. What that function is remains an open question. He supposes that in the absence of the thyroid gland, there accumulates in the system some unknown toxic agent, acting especially on the nervous system, and that therefore the function of the gland is to eliminate from the organism this injurious element.

DR. KOUSNEZOFF. "The Influence of Hyperæmia on the Central Nervous System." 1889.

The author brought on cerebral hyperæmia by the method of Mendel and Fuerstner, and found the following alterations in the central nervous system: hypertrophy of the interstitial tissue elements, including the vessels as well as the neuroglia; the trabecula of the neuroglia were found thickened in many regions of the cord, and it seems as if the cells of the neuroglia in the brain and cord also increased in volume. The nervous elements also degenerated, the protoplasm of the cells underwent alterations which finally caused their destruction and disappearance; they became more or less swollen, the protoplasm became pale, granulated, and sometimes vacuolated; in other cases the cell presents a strongly refractive vitreous body, and the processes disappear or degenerate and become hardly visible, the nucleus, at first visible, next disappears. The nerve tubes also undergo a process of degeneration, first the axis cylinders become tumefied, the enlargements resemble the beads of a chaplet viewed from above, these swellings become

glassy or vacuolated and granular. The whole granular mass appears to spread from the periphery toward the centre and the axis cylinder gradually disappears. The myeline sheath loses its contour and its primitive aspect, it appears to break up and gather in separate drops. All these alterations are inflammatory in their nature; the process follows this order; first the capillaries and the smaller veins and arteries become dilated, hemorrhages take place. Very often there are plasmatic exudations around the vessels and between the nervous elements; and besides these we observe a quantity of scattered white, and partly red, globules. Between the elements appears the liquid escaped from the sheath of the vessels. Then follow the alterations above described. The main reason of the stasis is the embarrassed and interrupted circulation in the vessels, and this, according to Professor Pachonti, is the cause of death.

PROFESSOR P. KOWALEWSKY. "Epilepsia Procursiva" *Meditzina*, 1889, No. 1.

Procursive epilepsy has awakened the attention of the modern medical public, thanks to the Memoirs of Bourneville, Ladame and Mairat. Professor Kowalewsky gives a history of this disease, its symptomology, its etiology, and its course, adding to this the description of numerous cases of procursive epilepsy observed in his clinic for nervous diseases. We report in a few words one of these cases. The patient was a Jew, aged twenty-seven, unmarried, worked at his trade of tailor; his education was limited to deciphering the letters sufficiently to be able to read with difficulty. The father of the patient was consumptive, dying at thirty-two. His mother suffered from attacks of hysteria major. There was no information as to the other relatives of the patient. At nine years of age he was brought from a little town inhabited by Jews to Kieff, and put as an apprentice to a tailor. The next year there was a conflagration in the house next to where our patient lived. Everyone rushed out of the house and the little apprentice was forgotten. He did not wake up until the flames from the burning house were already licking the walls of his sleeping apartment. The child, insane with terror, did not come to himself for an hour. From that time he commenced to have curious attacks, during which he was set to running without knowing where he was going or why he did so. In two or three minutes he would come to himself, and was astonished to find himself in a place more or less distant from where he had been working, and had thrown his implements along the path, and felt a strange feeling of fatigue.

It was stated that he always ran in a straight line, crying "O the fire, the fire!" He never paid any attention to obstacles in his way during this course, and when the attack was over remembered nothing of it. The people who witnessed these attacks report that when it came on he became pale, the eyes rolled back in the orbit, all the expression of the face was that of terror, and he then started to run. He never had an hallucination or delirium. These attacks were very rare in the beginning, only once in two or three months, and they became more and more frequent, and recently he had had two or three of them every day. Nevertheless, there had been happy periods in the life of the patient, during which he had been free from these attacks—sometimes for a month at a time, but these periods were infrequent.

During the five years past the patient has had momentary spells of unconsciousness of short duration, from fifteen to forty-five seconds, especially in summer, and connected with headaches. When he came to the polyclinic for nervous diseases the patient was put on the following treatment: he took for two months forty grammes of bromide of ammonia and three centigrammes of iodide of soda, and every two days an electrical application, the constant current applied to the head for five to seven minutes. He underwent a considerable improvement during the second month of this treatment. The attacks only occurred once in seven to fourteen days—a very noticeable amelioration as compared with their frequency before the treatment began; moreover, he did not cry out during these attacks. The patient then left Kharkoff and passed from under observation.

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JUNE, 1889.