

Social Medicine, Medical Economics and Miscellany

INSANITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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About 4,500 insane are reported at present in the Philippine Islands, distributed thus by provinces: Bohol, 463; Cebu, 343; Pangasinan, 270; Tayabas, 227; Leyte, 167; Oriental Negres, 163; Ilocos Sur, 146; Iloilo, 142, and so on down to Isabela with only 3. About 800 are cared for in institutions for the insane.

According to race there are seven Americans, fifteen Europeans, and thirteen Chinese and miscellaneous, all the others being Filipinos; 2,700 are male, and 1,800 female.

An analysis made recently of 650 deaths and discharges from hospital gave about the results shown in Table 1. The mention of "cures" among alcoholics and opium users means, of course, only that the patients left the hospital in good condition, and, temporarily at least, free from the habit. Practically all of the alcoholics were Caucasians.

TABLE 1.—DIAGNOSES IN SIX HUNDRED AND FIFTY CASES

Diagnosis	Cured	Im- proved	Un- changed	Died	Total
Mania, manic-depressive insanity etc.	63	111	28	43	245
Dementia, feeble-mindedness, etc.	0	30	13	88	131
Melancholia	13	25	2	7	47
Paranoia	0	0	4	0	4
Epilepsy	0	0	3	0	3
Observation and miscellaneous	1	1	23	3	28
Opium habit	27	0	0	0	27
Alcoholism	161	0	0	4	165
Total	265	167	73	145	650

A series of 358 insane in the hospital were found to be suffering from the different forms of mental trouble shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2.—FORMS OF MENTAL TROUBLE

Diagnosis	Male	Female
Melancholia-mania, manic-depressive insanity	140	32
Dementia praecox, paranoia, paranoid forms	110	28
Epileptic insanity	16	1
Alcoholic insanity	7	0
Senile dementia	3	2
Opium habit	2	0
Miscellaneous and unclassified	15	2
Total	293	65

It may be seen from these tables that the forms of mental diseases in the Philippine Islands do not differ essentially from those in the United States or other countries, as regards either classification or numbers in each division.

If we place the number of inhabitants in the Philippine Islands at about 8,000,000, it will be seen that the proportion of insane is about 1:1,800, or only about 562 to 1,000,000 of population; whereas the United States and Great Britain have over 3,000 per million, including both insane and idiots. It should be remembered, however, that the number of insane usually increases in proportion with the completeness of statistics.

At present those under institutional care in the Philippine Islands include the criminal insane and the more violent cases. It is hoped that shortly a new pavilion for the milder cases will be erected at San Lazaro.

The condition of the insane has improved greatly during the last fifteen years, not only as regards the number treated in institutions and otherwise, but also as to the general attitude adopted by relatives and friends. The common superstitious beliefs regarding the insane are well known; but it is only rarely at this time that these patients are regarded as other than sick persons and treated accordingly. Those in the hospital do a good deal of work in the garden and around the grounds, and also along industrial lines, making such articles as slippers, belts, baskets, mats, and clothing for themselves and other patients.

Insane Filipinos are comparatively docile and easily handled, much more so than an equal number of Caucasian insane, as they are not as strong physically, and perhaps not of as aggressive a disposition in general. It is naturally less difficult to care for the mentally afflicted here than in the United States, as the question of heating requires no attention, and ventilation almost takes care of itself, all buildings being made as open as possible. Clothing is also much simpler, and necessary bedding not nearly so abundant or elaborate.

There are only two asylums for the insane in the Philippines, both in Manila; they are the Hospicio de San José, a church institution, with a branch in Cavite, and San Lazaro Hospital, which is the regular government insane asylum, also being the officially designated institution for reception of criminal insane. It is obvious that more accommodation for the insane is needed, and it will without doubt be furnished in the near future.

Fixing Nitrogen

John E. Bucher of Brown University in a recent address before the Institute of Chemical Engineers advanced some new ideas for the fixation of nitrogen. This means getting nitrogen from the air into chemical combination so that it may be used for the production of chemicals, dyestuffs, explosives, fertilizers, and generally in chemical industry. Methods have been devised, but have hitherto been expensive and complicated. Bucher has discovered that nitrogen will combine with an alkali and carbon in the presence of iron as a catalyst and produce the cyanid of the alkali. From the mixing of soda ash with either powdered iron or iron ore and powdered coke and heating in an ordinary furnace with a stream of air through the furnace, sodium cyanid results, with the iron uncombined. No electric power is needed, no costly materials, and no expensive special apparatus. When the sodium cyanid is treated with steam, sodium bicarbonate and ammonia result, and in the latter the chemist has the fixed nitrogen from which he can make fertilizer or some other product containing nitrogen. By introducing into a solution of the sodium cyanid waste gas from the furnace containing carbon dioxide, urea is produced, which is three times as rich in nitrogen as sodium nitrate and twice as rich as ammonium sulphate, both of which are used as fertilizer and play an important rôle in food production. Sodium cyanid when treated with an electric current separates into metallic sodium and cyanogen. There is a large demand for the former in chemical industry, and the latter is rapidly absorbed by hydrochloric acid and becomes oxamid, which contains nearly one-third nitrogen, and on account of its slow solubility in the soil, should, it is said, make an ideal fertilizer. Heretofore urea and oxamid have been too expensive for use as fertilizers, but Bucher's ideas open up great possibilities in this line, as well as in others requiring the employment of nitrogen.

A Case of Quintuplets

W. Martin reports, in the *British Medical Journal*, March 17, 1917, the case of a woman, aged 39, who bore five babies in one labor. The woman was one of a family of eight children, with no history of multiple pregnancies, except that a sister had twins once. The husband was one of a family of six with no history of multiple pregnancies. The labor began at 9 p. m. and terminated with the birth of the fifth child at 3:48 the next morning. A quarter of an hour later the placenta was delivered, which was in one large mass, with five separate sacs, each of which presented in succession during the labor and was ruptured by Martin. The children were well formed, about 8 to 12 inches in length, and were all born alive. Four were boys. They lived for periods varying from one and a half to twenty-eight hours. The amount of liquor amnii was enormous. The mother had a normal puerperium. The labor took place in the eighth month and it was her eighth pregnancy. All of the other children were living.