

good work has been done in this way at Northampton and other asylums, and possibly the Medico-Psychological Association may profit by incorporating into its own scheme some of the methods proved useful at these institutions. In order, however, to maintain an uniform and sufficiently high standard of training and acquirement, it is desirable that a central authority, such as the Medico-Psychological Association, should have the control of examinations, and we are glad to hear that in the near future 'all questions will be set by specially appointed examiners, who will also read and assess the replies from every asylum, and in this manner the risk of variation of standard at different asylums will be obviated.'

LABORATORY OF THE SCOTTISH ASYLUMS.

The report of the General Board of Management has now been issued, signed by Dr. Yellowlees, the chairman. We are glad to note that the financial condition of the institution is satisfactory, for the successful issue of this scheme will induce other parts of the country to go and do likewise. The Board rightly bestow high praise upon the services performed by Dr. Ford Robertson, whose annual report has also been circulated. He refers to his work in original research, which has been already in part placed before our readers, and acknowledges various gifts made to the Laboratory. Dr. Robertson also has a word of praise for other workers who have assisted him during the past year, and notes the appointment of Dr. David Orr as pathologist to the Prestwich Asylum. We understand that Dr. Ford Robertson has in preparation a *Text-Book on the Pathology of Mental Diseases*, and shall await its issue with keen expectation. As it will be fully illustrated with expensive plates we trust that the members of the Association will do their best to subscribe for the limited edition to which it must be restricted. The price has been fixed at fifteen shillings net, and orders may be given to Mr. Clay, Publisher, 18, Teviot Place, Edinburgh.

"LUNATICK ASYLUMS."

The *Lancet* says:—"We have received a small pamphlet bearing the above title. The sub-title is 'An Essay by a Doctor of Arts, Oxford.' The degree is one we are not familiar with, and if conferred by any university it is certainly not so by the University of Oxford as would seem to be implied. The writer's argument would seem to be shortly that (1) asylums are too palatial and luxurious; (2) that weak-minded persons should be treated in separate establishments, however small and homely; (3) that there should be no private madhouses; (4) that asylums are conducted on the lines made familiar to us by such works as 'Valentine Vox' and 'Hard Cash'; and (5) that 'into these establishments the young and unfortunate are trepanned—magisterial warrants not even solicited— That the 'over wrought' should be tended in a home something resembling the best kinds of almshouse is an idea with which we can all agree, but that the modern lunatic asylum is anything like the institution which a 'Doctor of Arts' describes or that Lunacy Commissioners neglect their duty, as he implies, is absurd."

We reproduce this to show that our critics are still on the alert, and that some of them are as unreasonable as ever. Lately, as reported by the *Hospital*, on the opening of a new building at Lewisham Infirmary for the reception of insane patients, the Chairman of the Board of Guardians "compared private asylums with those supported by the public purse to the disadvantage of the former, because it was profitable to the former to retain their patients as long as possible," &c., &c. Our readers will not be surprised to hear that Dr. Toogood followed with the opinion that incipient lunacy is better treated by general practitioners than by specialists, because "often physical causes lay at the root of mental disturbance, and with the healing of the body the mind recovered its balance," and so on. It was evidently

too good an opportunity for cheap and sophisticated oratory to be missed. The idea of specialists treating a 'physical cause!' Why they will claim equality with the general practitioner next. And yet, when the Toogoods of this world fall into ill-health, mental or physical, we find them knocking at the doors of those whose specialised skill and experience have brought them repute.

A NEW JOURNAL.

Our esteemed colleague Dr. Bresler is about to produce a new journal, entitled *Psychiatrische Wochenschrift*. Although there is already a large number of periodicals dealing with mental diseases in Germany, Dr. Bresler hopes to find a public for yet another. We are assured that, if energy and capability can command success, Dr. Bresler will make this new journal widely popular in our department of medicine.

CORRESPONDENCE.

FROM DR. ALDOUS CLINCH.

It is with the greatest diffidence that I make the following comment on the work of one who is held in high esteem, but it appears to me that by withholding it confusion and error might arise.

Dr. Ireland, in a paper in the *Journal of Mental Science* of January, 1898, in another in January, 1899, and in the new edition of his book on the *Mental Affections of Children*, frequently indicates how tracts in the nervous system have been worked out by studying the time of development of what he calls in some parts the *axis-bands*, and in other parts the *axis-cylinders*.

I have referred to Flechsig's original article in the *Neurologisches Centralblatt*, and find that the word translated as axis-band or axis-cylinder is "*markscheide*." The usual translation of this is medullary sheath, or white substance of Schwann.

The axis-cylinders are developed at a very early stage, whereas their separation and insulation by the medullary sheaths occurs at a very late stage of development, and is not complete till after birth. By the study of the medullation, and not by the study of the development, of the axis-cylinders, has Flechsig succeeded (to a disputed extent) in analysing that labyrinth of tracts, by means of which nervous impulses correlate our acts to our sensations.

FROM DR. IRELAND.

As Dr. Clinch has pointed out, in the *résumé* of Professor Flechsig's researches I have given a wrong translation of the German words *Mark* and *Markscheide*. I had hurriedly supposed that *Mark* was used for the axis-cylinder, and *Scheide* for the medullary sheath or myelin, and thus I slipped into a loose rendering of Flechsig's view of the import of the development of the nerve fibres, which I much regret, and which I now endeavour to correct.

Kölliker, in his *Microscopische Anatomie*, p. 6, thus defines these terms: the *Markscheide* or the *Nervenmark*, the *Myelin* or the *Myelin Scheide* of authors; by these names are indicated the contents of the dark-edged nerve-fibres lying between Schwann's sheath and the axis-cylinder. This myelin is distinguished by its softness and great changeableness, and has been the occasion of much difference of opinion.

Markhaltige-faser means a nerve-fibre which has got to that stage of maturity that the axis-cylinder is covered with the medullary sheath. Flechsig has succeeded in colouring the myelin with logwood, so that in his preparations of the brains of new-born children the ripe nerve bundles appear as blue tracts amongst