

looking over asylum statistics from year to year, we have been much struck with the high percentages of this disease in districts consisting of or comprising busy seafaring communities. As instances, we can give Hull, Newcastle, Bristol, Portsmouth, Glamorgan.

Dr. Bruce's successful introduction of thyroid treatment in cases other than those of myxœdema is referred to with warm approbation, and his subsequent receipt of the University gold medal for his thesis on this subject is recorded.

PART IV.—NOTES AND NEWS.

MEDICO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

GENERAL MEETING.

A General Meeting of the Association was held at 11, Chandos Street, London, on Thursday, November 21st, 1895, David Nicolson, M.D., President, in the chair.

This was the first statutory meeting since the incorporation of the Association, and according to the Companies Acts, 1862 to 1890, the first meeting must be held within four months of the granting of the Certificate.

The minutes of the last General Meeting (held on May 16th) having been read and approved,

The **PRESIDENT** said that, before beginning the ordinary business, he might be allowed to say a few words about one of the oldest members of the Association, who was that day laid in the grave. Dr. Jamieson, of Aberdeen, lately the oldest Asylum Superintendent in Scotland, was a man of singular capacity, who, though but little known to the junior members of their specialty, in his day did a great work in bringing his asylum up to the standard, while his writings and lectures were well worth perusal, even in the light of the best work of recent years.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS.

The following were declared to have been duly elected:—William Bubb, M.B.C.S., L.R.C.P.Lond., Second Assistant Medical Officer, Worcester County Asylum; Arthur George Ewbank, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.Lond., Assistant Medical Officer, Middlesex County Asylum, Tooting, S.W.; George Baths Griffiths, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.Lond., Assistant Surgeon, H.M. Convict Prison, Portland; Frederick Walter Mott, M.D., B.S.Lond., F.R.C.P., Pathologist, London County Asylums, Assistant Physician, Charing Cross Hospital; Gilbert Edward Mould, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.Lond., Assistant Medical Officer, Peckham House, S.E.; Margaret Cochran Dewar, M.B., C.M. Univ., Glasg., Assistant Medical Officer, Crichton Royal Institution, Dumfries.

LATAH.

Dr. W. GILMORE ELLIS read a paper on "Latah," which will be published in a future number of the Journal.*

Dr. COOKE referred to Mr. H. A. Forbes' book, "A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago," in which almost all the symptoms alluded to by Dr. Ellis were clearly described, and instances of several cases were given. Mr. Forbes regarded it as being of a hysterical nature, and mentioned that it was chiefly found among women, although occasionally men were affected by it. He also pointed out, as Dr. Ellis had done, that the onset of the attack was due to the person being startled by some object of terror, or by being suddenly excited. The marked tendency to imitate other people on the part of the subjects of *latah* was also well illustrated by Mr. Forbes. According to him the condition varied in degree, so that whilst some were utterly incapacitated by it others were only

* But see "Journal of Mental Science," Vol. xii., pp. 657 and 728.

slightly affected, as, for instance, in their walking. A curious case described by Mr. Forbes might be quoted:—"On one occasion, while eating a banana, I suddenly met a servant (the subject of *latah*) with a piece of soap in her hand, and perceiving she was slightly *latah*, but without appearing to take any notice of her, I made a vigorous bite at the fruit in passing her, an action she instantly repeated on the piece of soap. On another occasion, while she was looking on as I placed some plants in drying paper, not knowing that caterpillars are objects of supreme abhorrence to the natives, I flicked off one in a humorous way on to her dress, one that happened to be on a leaf; she was instantly intensely *latah*, and, throwing off all her clothing, she made off like a chased deer along the mountain road, repeating the word for caterpillar as she ran until compelled by exhaustion to stop, when the spasm gradually left her." Other incidents described by Mr. Forbes ran as follows:—"My own 'boy,' who would unconcernedly seize all sorts of snakes in his hands, became one day *latah* also on suddenly touching a large caterpillar. My host's maid once, while alone at some distance from the house, having come unexpectedly on a large lizard—the Baiawak—was seized by a paroxysm; dropping down on her hands and knees to imitate the reptile, she thus followed it through mud, water, and mire to the tree in which it took refuge, where she was arrested and came to herself." Another case which came under his notice was more tragic in its results. "This woman, startled by treading in a field on one of the most venomous snakes in Java, became so *latah* that she vibrated her finger in imitation of the tongue of the reptile in front of its head till the irritated snake struck her, and the poor creature died within an hour." Mr. Forbes does not go into the pathology of the disease; but, as so little was known about the affection, he (Dr. Cooke) thought it would be interesting to the Society to have these notes brought under their notice.

Dr. MÉRCIER thought it matter for congratulation that the Association should have had such evidence that its ramifications extended to the far East, and that a gentleman from so distant a quarter should come to give them an account of a disease of which most of them had not even heard before—a disease which, he thought, was unique and had very few, and those not very close, relationships. As far as he could judge from the clear account which Dr. Ellis had given, its nearest relationships were with hysteria and with hypnosis; but they could certainly rest confident that it was identical with neither of these. The most curious and striking sequel of the malady was the extraordinary tendency to imitation. This was a tendency which was very deeply ingrained in the human race, and also in its ancestors. It was well known how exceedingly mimetic were almost all the races of monkeys, and it therefore seemed to him that in this malady they had a recrudescence and an exaggeration of this ancestral peculiarity. It was a fact well known to biologists that when an ancestral faculty which had been in abeyance for many generations was revived, not only did it become exaggerated, but it also took on morbid manifestations. He made this suggestion in explanation of the pathology of this very peculiar disease.

Dr. MICKLE thought, from Dr. Ellis's account, that *latah* had certain physiological relations with some conditions known to them, and an absolute identity with other diseases which had been described in different parts of the world. It appeared to him that, besides certain hypnotic conditions and certain cases of hysteria, it had other affinities. He would say in reference to a remark made by Dr. Ellis that "hysteria was very rare among the Malays"—that most nervous diseases had peculiarities which were impressed upon them by the races in which they arose; and that they did not expect to find all nervous diseases, particularly those of a functional character, quite the same in the red man as in the black; at all events, if they expected it they did not find it. Among the other conditions to which, he thought, *latah* had not very remote relationships, were the whole series of morbid impulses, the impulsive conditions which arose in various forms of insanity in which "impulse" constituted practically the morbid condition. And in this connection he thought the relationships were not very distant between the disease which had been described to them and those conditions known to them as being impulsive acts connected with so-called "imperative ideas." For example,

he had noticed in Dr. Ellis's description several cases in which there were distinct varieties of that peculiar condition found in Europeans called onomatomania, an affection which, though it did not constitute insanity, did certainly in some cases pass into it. This condition, where words had such an extraordinary effect upon some individuals, found its germ in the peculiar mystical meanings which had been attached to certain words. Some of them ascribed an extraordinary significance to the name of the person. Others considered that in some way the divinity was wrapped up in certain words or forms of words; while by others extraordinary significance was attached to certain sounds. With regard to the *identity* of this disease with other conditions which had been described, he believed that *latah* was precisely the same disease as that which obtained in North America among certain savage tribes, where it was called "the jumping disease," and its subjects were called "jumpers;" precisely the same disease as had long ago been described as existing in Siberia under the name of "meryachit." The imitiveness of the subjects of the last-named (most important in *latah*) was found not merely in hypnosis, but also in mental derangements which constituted a reversion in type.

The PRESIDENT said the paper covered a very extensive range, not only in its suggestiveness, but also as regards the natural history aspect. He thought that before they could pretend to understand a disease of that kind they had to surmount the great difficulty of attaining to a knowledge of the peculiar mental disposition and characteristics of the Malays, and the races near to them, and the country in which they lived. Then followed the question of individual modifications that might arise in one case or another. They could not expect an exact reproduction to all time of the original form in which a disease or a peculiar mental condition showed itself. It seemed to him further that they had to consider the influence of heredity, and how far, apart from the mimetic faculty, and without premeditation, this derangement was a matter of education through family habits, so that what would seem very strange to us might not seem to them so striking a deviation from the normal. No doubt the imitative propensity, the determination to follow out a suggestion made by another person in the presence of the affected individual, supplied a clue in the direction of what Dr. Mickle had referred to as the mystical element in such conditions, and he thought the ultimate outcome of the study of *latah* would show that there was some religious basis underlying the affection which they were unable to explain, unless Dr. Ellis could tell them how far the compelling influence of religious belief could be traced. The subject was one which merited very close attention. He thought it was likely there was a very large substratum of simplicity of mind without actual weakness of mind, such as was generally ascribed to the Malays—a simplicity of mind which rendered them very susceptible to external influences and apt to be thrown into a state of profound agitation. Some element of that sort, as Dr. Ellis himself had suggested, was no doubt at the root of the extravagant demonstrations and of the morbid sensory phenomena. They had great reason to be grateful to Dr. Ellis for bringing so obscure but at the same time interesting a subject before them.

Dr. ELLIS, in reply, thanked the members of the Association for their patient attention, kindly criticisms, and for the suggestions with regard to future work on the subject. Dr. Cooke had more especially mentioned hysteria. Anything like hysteria as it was understood in England he had never seen in the Malay race. If *latah* were hysteria it was quite a distinct form from that met with at home. In his experience throughout the Malay Peninsula he had never come across any case incapacitated for ordinary work. Dr. Mickle had mentioned "meryachit." In the course of his paper he had spoken of Hammond as having already described "meryachit" and *latah* as, to all intents and purposes, one and the same disease. As to *latah* being a form of degeneration, he did not think it was so. He had come across *latah* subjects who were certainly as able as any Malays. In reply to Dr. Seymour Tuke, all *latah* subjects he had met carried on their everyday work just like other people, and the Malays themselves did not look upon *latah* as being allied to insanity in any way. They excused certain peculiarities. In his paper he had used the word *latah* in the broad sense in which the Malays

used it, without going into any classification of the forms of the disease. He had certainly described some cases as being imitative and others not. On that point he hoped to be able to do some further work, and was, therefore, not then prepared to make further comment on it. *Latah* was just as frequent in the present day as forty or sixty years ago, when the Malays were absolutely uneducated. Now they had British-taught schools throughout the peninsula, and many of the young Malays wrote and spoke English. With regard to religion, the Malays for the last three or four hundred years had been strict Mohammedans, and he had certainly never seen nor heard of religion mixed up in any form with the condition. As to treatment, he had never had an opportunity of trying any, and he had not the slightest idea of how one would set to work, except by having the patient in an asylum under the ordinary conditions. These subjects did not come into asylums. The only *latah* subject in his asylum of 400 people was the nurse to whom he had referred, and she certainly was the best nurse in the place.

Dr. Morrison's paper was, by his own request, deferred till a subsequent meeting.

MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH DIVISION.

A meeting of the Scottish Division was held in the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, on 14th November, 1895, Dr. D. Nicolson, President, in the chair. There were also present Dr. Campbell Clark, Dr. Carswell, Dr. Cowper, Dr. C. C. Easterbrook, Dr. Fox, Dr. John G. Havelock, Dr. R. D. Hotchkiss, Dr. W. W. Ireland, Dr. J. Carlyle Johnstone, Dr. J. M'Pherson, Dr. T. W. M'Dowall, Dr. Rutherford M'Phail, Dr. James Middlemass, Dr. L. R. Oswald, Dr. G. M. Robertson, Dr. J. B. Ronaldson, Dr. Batty Tuke, sen., Dr. A. R. Urquhart, Dr. W. R. Watson, Dr. G. R. Wilson, and Dr. A. R. Turnbull (Divisional Secretary for Scotland).

The PRESIDENT—It is a great pleasure, gentlemen, to me to be here with you to-day, as this is the first occasion on which I have been present at one of our national gatherings, and I need not say that I am very proud to be in the position which I have the honour to occupy. I will now ask the Honorary Secretary to read the minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the last meeting held at Glasgow were then read and approved.

PLACE OF NEXT MEETING.

Dr. TURNBULL—The next Spring Meeting is the meeting referred to in the minutes just read, which it was suggested should be merged in a General Meeting of the Association, and we have to consider if there is any place that might be suggested to the Council and selected for the meeting. The fixing of the General Meeting depends upon the Council, but I suppose they (the Council) would not object to our making a suggestion on the point.

After some conversation, it was decided that the Spring Meeting be merged into the General Meeting of the Association, if the place fixed upon for the latter was convenient to the Scottish members, otherwise that they should hold their own Spring Meeting in Glasgow as usual.

REPORT BY THE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY.

The PRESIDENT explained the circumstances under which the Committee was formed, and the lines upon which it had gone, and continued as follows:—In considering the report made by the Committee on Criminal Responsibility, you will see from the circular it is suggested that the discussion should take notice of the legal procedure in the different forms of minor crime, as well as in capital offences, in which the question of insanity arises, and should include reference to cases which are disposed of without asylum committal.

Dr. IRELAND—I was quite pleased with the report, as the Committee agreed to do nothing. I always consider it a dangerous thing for medical men to expose their flank by going before Parliament, as I generally observe that such proceed-