

Notes and Comment.

S. WEIR MITCHELL, M. D., LL. D.—The death in Philadelphia early on Sunday morning, January fourth, of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, came as a distinct shock to the members of his profession, as well as to the community at large, notwithstanding his advanced years.

Dr. Mitchell had lived such an active, virile life—was in such a marked degree, after passing the limit set by the Psalmist to a man's years, a living factor in affairs of medicine, in the field of literature and in all that related to the public weal, that the thought of a cessation of his activities through death was not readily associated with thoughts of him and his work.

Dr. Mitchell was born in Philadelphia, on February 15th, 1829, and had therefore nearly reached the age of eighty-five at the time of his death. He was educated in the grammar schools of his native city and in the University of Pennsylvania, but did not take an A. B. because of illness during his senior year. His degree of M. D. was taken at the Jefferson Medical College in 1850, and in 1888 he was given an honorary M. D. at Bologna. Harvard in 1886, Edinburgh in 1895, Princeton in 1896 and Toronto in 1906 conferred upon him the degree of LL. D.

He established himself in practice in Philadelphia, and early became known for his interest in physiological studies and subsequently for neurological investigations.

During the Civil war he had extended opportunities for study of gunshot wounds and other injuries of the nerves at the Turner's Lane Hospital in Philadelphia, established for the care of such cases, of which hospital he had charge. His work entitled "Gunshot Wounds and Other Injuries of the Nerves," written in conjunction with Drs. George R. Morehouse and W. W. Keen and published in 1864, was the result largely of observations made at the Turner's Lane Hospital. A larger work by Dr. Mitchell, "Injuries of Nerves and Their Consequences" was issued in 1872. In 1873 he published "Wear and Tear: or Hints

for the Overworked" and in 1875 "Rest in the Treatment of Disease." In 1877 "Fat and Blood."

The "Mitchell Treatment" as it has been called by some, especially on the continent, the "Rest Cure," detailed in the work issued in 1875, has been, with various modifications, generally adopted and practiced in suitable cases throughout the world, and the introduction and teaching of a systematic "rest cure" has made Dr. Mitchell's name more widely known to the medical profession than any other contribution which he has made to medical literature.

For many years he had been known as the leading neurologist of America, and naturally a certain proportion of his practice, which for many years has been almost wholly a consultation practice, has had to do with mental cases.

Little, however, has appeared from his pen, upon strictly psychiatric topics, indeed we can now recall nothing.

In May, 1894, at the fiftieth annual meeting of the American Medico-Psychological Association held in Philadelphia, Dr. Mitchell delivered the annual address.

It was only after much persuasion that he consented to deliver the address, and he says in his introductory remarks, "I have been sorry ever since" and it is within the knowledge of some that he did not cease to regret delivering the address.

One feels, after having listened to the address twenty years ago, and after reading it within a few days, that while no doubt many things which he then said hurt the feelings of many of his auditors, and upon such an occasion, the celebration of fifty years, organized work for the insane, were perhaps unwisely said, that they were said in the kindest spirit and with an honest desire as he said "to greatly use a great occasion."

It was through life a habit with Dr. Mitchell to place problems before his associates and friends, to send out a questionnaire upon various topics which interested him, and in preparing for the address he followed this custom.

To thirty of "one of the ablest groups of men known to me (he says) the neurologists and consultants of our cities" he sent out a letter asking for suggestions and apparently received many. It is a well-known fact that at that time the men to whom he referred were not either well informed as to the work and methods

of those responsible for the conduct of our hospitals for the insane, or in very great sympathy with them. Nor was the orator much better informed as to recent trends in hospital work and methods as shown in addresses delivered by Dr. Cowles and others at the same meeting. Many of the things he then suggested were already in practice, some were then and continue to be Utopian. Nevertheless, the address made a strong impression and accomplished some good and has been used on more than one occasion by ambitious medical officers of institutions for the insane to aid their arguments before managing boards for advanced methods, more medical assistance, better nursing.

For many years Dr. Mitchell's chief literary activities have been manifest outside of professional lines, though in some of his works he has shown the influence of, and has used with advantage his professional experience.

It is seldom given to one man to achieve fame in two distinct departments of endeavor. Dr. Mitchell accomplished this. After establishing an enviable reputation as a neurologist he entered the field of literature and as a novelist and a poet attained almost equal prominence, but he did not abandon his medical work. He was accustomed to take long summer vacations, when as far as possible he put aside medical work and entered upon the joys of literary creation.

He had published some fugitive pieces during and just after the Civil war and in 1867 a story in the *Atlantic Monthly*, but it was not until 1880, when he was fifty-one, that he published his first volume of stories. This was followed in quick succession by other works in prose and verse, but it was the appearance of Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker in 1898, which firmly established him as a novelist of note. At the age of seventy, a year after the appearance of Hugh Wynne, he wrote the adventures of Francois, and then the Red City, published in 1907.

Westways, which appeared within the year, is a story of the Civil war and though written in a style wholly different from Hugh Wynne, promises to achieve as great a reputation. It is stated, as illustrative of the author's great care to suit his language to the period he was depicting, that no word appears in Hugh Wynne which is not to be found in the first edition of Johnson's Dictionary.

It would require as critical an analyst of character and one as skillful in depicting it, as was Dr. Mitchell, to present a true picture of the man.

Investigator, clinician, consultant, poet, novelist, man of affairs—in all, the personality of the man loomed large. It influenced the lives and thoughts of all who came in contact with him, either personally or through the printed page—and ever and always that influence was for good. He had, to a marked degree, that which should accompany and gladden age—"Love, honor, obedience, troops of friends," beyond these he has passed, and in his own words we can express our faith that:

"There soul hath touched with soul, and there the great
Cast wide to welcome thee joy's golden gate."

POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE INSTITUTIONS FOR THE INSANE.—When institutions were first organized under medical control in the United States, much pains were taken by boards of trustees to secure men of first-class ability, who had received training and had experience in the care of the insane. Hartford Retreat became a Mecca to which boards of trustees journeyed to secure officers of new institutions. Thus Dr. Woodward was appointed at Worcester because of the experience gained at Hartford. Dr. Butler was appointed in turn at Hartford Retreat because of training at Boston and demonstrated fitness for the work. Dr. Ray was placed in charge of the Maine Hospital because of his record as an authority in medical jurisprudence and insanity. Bell, Chandler, Tyler, Rockwell and others received appointments in New England because of recognized fitness to assume charge of institutions. When New York desired a superintendent for her asylum at Utica Dr. Brigham was called from Hartford Retreat. When Michigan needed a superintendent at Kalamazoo Dr. Van Deusen was chosen from Utica. Illinois summoned Dr. Andrew McFarland from New Hampshire; and New Jersey, Dr. H. A. Bottolph from Utica. Dr. Pliny Earle of the Friend's Asylum was called to Bloomingdale and later was succeeded by Dr. C. H. Nichols from Utica. Examples might be multiplied but these suffice to show that for many years there was no political bias in the appointment of chief medical officers to institutions. The majority of states in fact have regarded the care of the insane too important

to be entrusted to incompetent hands. It is a sorrowful fact, however, that certain states have always been guilty of political control of their institutions and others which originally had a record of correct views have been drawn into the vicious stream of party politics. In Ohio the idea existed from an early day that institutions for the insane constituted a part of the party machinery and were legitimate spoils.

In early numbers of the JOURNAL OF INSANITY it is interesting to note the discussion which arose at a meeting of the association over the appointment of Dr. Firestone an inexperienced man in Ohio by a friendly political governor. It is a melancholy fact, however, that party politics became entrenched in the institutions of Ohio with disastrous results to the insane. It has not been uncommon to see all boards of trustees and all medical officers removed by an incoming governor under the foolish pretext that it was essential to have all superintendents and officers of state institutions in political accord with the governor. Dr. Richard Gundry, who had for more than twenty years given loyal, faithful and efficient service to the state, was removed from office because he was not of the same political party as the new governor of Ohio who had been elected to serve a term *of one year*. Illinois was free from the contamination of politics until the election of Governor Altgeld in 1893, when he reorganized all state institutions under men of the same political views as his own, with the result that such men as Dewey, Carriel and others were driven out of the state service. The demoralization of Illinois institutions in their progress from bad to worse was an object lesson for years. Fortunately public sentiment was aroused and a change was demanded which found expression in the establishment of a board of control and the divorce of all institutions from politics. It seemed that a bright future had opened for the institutions of the state and that Illinois had developed a system which would place her in the front ranks. These bright hopes have been blighted by the action of a newly elected governor who demanded the resignation of the board of control and drove out industrious and worthy superintendents to put men in place who are willing to use their positions to further his political ambitions. The experience of Kansas has been equally disheartening. For many years able and conscientious men have been driven from

office to satisfy party greed. The same system obtains in many of the Southern and Western states, and the question arises how long will the medical profession remain silent?

The effect of political control is to establish vicious standards of excellence and undesirable standards of fitness for hospital administration. It demoralizes the chief officer and his assistants and destroys the *esprit de corps* of the whole organization. It does nothing to foster a scientific spirit and banishes the possibility of continuous study and research. Indiana has passed through the deep waters of such political affliction and has recovered from it.

During the past summer there was reason to fear that appointments in New York institutions previously free from party politics were being grasped by politicians. The impeachment of the governor who was responsible for the attempt to destroy the former worthy traditions of all political parties checked the movement for the present time. It remains for the medical profession of New York and every state to assert itself to prevent similar attempts to degrade the public service.

As a by-product of the impeachment of Governor Sulzer the Civil Service Reform Association of New York has protested to Governor Glynn against political appointments in the state hospital service during July and August. One of the most notorious cases covered by the protest is the appointment of J. H. B. Hanify of New York as successor to T. E. McGarr, who had been secretary to the State Hospital Commission from its organization, who was an experienced man and who had rendered the state faithful and creditable service. It appears that Mr. Hanify was a member of a firm of plumbers prior to his appointment at the instigation of Governor Sulzer.

The association also protests, very properly, against the creation of a position as "confidential accountant" for the deposed Mr. McGarr, at a salary of \$2800.00 and maintenance, and exempting it from civil service competition. However much one may sympathize with the former secretary, one can hardly approve the method adopted by Mr. Sulzer to salve that gentleman's wounded feelings by creating a superfluous position in the state service.

Mr. Nelson S. Spencer, chairman of the association, stated in his letter that the State Hospital Commission on July 31 asked to have the position of secretary to the purchasing committee transferred from the competitive to the exempt class, giving as its only reason that "competitive or non-competitive examination is not practicable for filling the said position." The State Civil Service Commission granted the exemption whereupon William C. O'Hern was appointed. Concerning this appointee, Mr. Hanify wrote that "in the position mentioned special knowledge of purchasing methods is essential." The Civil Service Reform Association investigated the special training of Mr. O'Hern and made the interesting discovery that this particular expert in purchasing had for some time past followed the business of a saloon keeper in Hornell.

THE CARE OF THE INSANE IN PENNSYLVANIA.—After considerable hesitation extending over a period of years, during which the County Asylum systems of care of the insane was virtually endorsed, and little done to improve the state institutions, the Committee on Lunacy of Pennsylvania has practically come back to a realization of the fact that state care alone is proper for the dependent insane.

The condition of affairs which confronts the authorities in Pennsylvania as regards the care of the dependent insane is called acute. From our knowledge of the situation and from acknowledged facts we should call it chronic and of long standing.

The hospital at Harrisburg, with a capacity of 1000 patients, has, according to the Secretary of the Committee, 1582 patients. Dixmont, with a capacity for 600, has 971, Warren, with a capacity for 1282, has 1504, and Norristown, with a capacity for 2615, has 3297 patients. Danville hospital has but 16 more patients than its rated capacity of 1450. The Philadelphia Municipal hospital, Blockley, is usually over-crowded, but now to such an extent that we are informed that new admissions have been refused for some months and the same is true we believe at Norristown. The institutions at Wernersville and the new hospital at Rittersville are the only ones with vacant beds in the state—and in addition to these there are 8000 patients in county institutions.

We do not know fully who is responsible for this appalling state of affairs, though we may have some suspicions as to some of the causes.

Several years ago the state started an experimental programme in the care of its insane. The advice of those who by experience were presumed to have knowledge upon the subject, as well as the teachings of experience in other states, was ignored. No very definite or well-thought-out plan was laid down, and a period of vacillating as between state care and county care, between the establishment of an institution wholly for chronic cases or the reception at the same institution of acute and chronic cases followed, while nothing was done or at least nothing adequate to the situation was done, to lessen the over-crowding of the state hospitals.

How the situation is now to be met remains to be seen.

It would, however, be a distinct advantage to those upon whom falls the duty of meeting the situation to read the address delivered by Dr. Mitchell in 1894 in Philadelphia, to which we have elsewhere referred, and to heed much that he condemns, much that he advises.

The municipal hospital for the insane in Philadelphia condemned by resolution on more than one occasion by the Association is still in the same or worse state, if possible, than twenty years ago. A discredit to the city it is such by reason of the very conditions which Dr. Mitchell condemns so repeatedly in his address, the baneful influence of politics.