

**PELLAGRA.**

(concluded from page 1.)

and go at first, re-appearing at the same spots and gradually becoming fixed. The grand difference in leprosy, at least in the nodular variety of it, is that a new growth of a granular kind arises at these spots in the skin and around the nerves. The occasional deep discoloration of the pellagrous skin in certain spots has suggested a resemblance to Addison's disease of the suprarenals, and has even made the diagnosis difficult. But after the cutaneous disorders the course of pellagra is something sui generis; the melancholy, imbecility, or mania, as well as the mummified state of the body, are peculiar to it. With ergotism the points of resemblance are more perhaps in the causation than in the nosological characters; both diseases are specifically due to damaged grain, ergotism being caused by the presence of an actual bulky parasitic mould on rye, whereas pellagra is more probably caused by fermentation and decomposition within the proper substance of the maize-corn. As regards heredity, it is much less marked in pellagra than in leprosy, but there are good grounds for believing that the disease is in fact inherited sometimes by the offspring; infants at the breast may show the symptoms of it, but that fact is not itself conclusive for heredity, for the reason that infants at the breast are partly fed on the household potents. As regards contagiousness, there is no more proof of it in pellagra than there is in leprosy.

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND HISTORY.**—Pellagra is peculiarly a disease of the peasantry, being hardly ever seen in residents of the town. In Italy the number of peasants affected by it was estimated in 1879 at 100,000, the distribution being as follows:—Lombardy, 40,888; Venetia, 29,886; Piedmont, 1692; Liguria, 148; Emilia, 18,728; Tuscany, 4882; the Marches and Umbria, 2155; Rome, 76. In Lombardy the worst centres are in the provinces of Brescia, Pavia, Piacenza, and Ferrara. In Italy the disease

has increased very considerably within the last thirty years; thus, in the province of Vicenza the number of persons known to be pellagrous in 1858 was 1880, in 1860 it was 2974, and in 1879 it had risen to 8400. There are no accurate returns from the Asturias and other affected provinces of Spain, but the malady there is said to have declined very materially of late. In Gascony, where it did not begin until about fifty years ago, it is somewhat common, most in the Landes than in the Gironde; in one district of the latter Petit estimates that there are 200 cases in a population of 6000. In Roumania the total number is given at 4500, Moldavia having a larger share than Wallachia. In Corfu it exists in 27 out of the 117 communes, the proportion of cases for the whole island being 3.2 per 1000 inhabitants.

Maize was grown in Europe for many years before pellagra showed itself (see Maize); but the outbreak of the disease corresponds on the whole closely to times (particularly in Gascony and Roumania) with the introduction of an inferior kind of maize as the staple food of the peasantry. The first accounts of pellagra come from Spain. Casal in 1762 described the disease in the Asturias under the name of mal de ascos; it is said to have been noticed first in 1785 around Oviedo, being then confined within very narrow limits. The Asturias are still its headquarters in Spain, but it is prevalent also in Burgos, Navarra, Zaragoza, Lower Aragon, Guadajara, and Cuenca, and it is met with in other provinces as well. In Italy it was first reported from the vicinity of Lago Maggiore, and a few years later (in 1750) it broke out simultaneously in the districts of Milan, Brescia, Bergamo, and Ledi, extending afterwards to Como, Cremona, Mantua, and Pavia, and to the whole of Lombardy before the end of the century. It became endemic also in Venetia on the one side and in Piedmont on the other, almost contemporaneously with this. Within the present century it has extended its area southward into Emilia and into Tuscany, while

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it has become more prevalent in its earlier seats at the same time. There is very little of it in central Italy, while southern Italy with Sicily, is absolutely exempt, notwithstanding the common use of Indian corn in the form of bread and macaroni. The first authentic information of its existence in Gascony came from near Arcachon in 1818, after which it spread along the coast of the Gironde and the Landes. It has extended subsequently along the left bank of the Garonne and towards the Pyrenees; but around Dax it is said to have decreased considerably of late. In Roumania, where the medical profession is unanimous in tracing it to the use of damaged maize, it dates from about 1838-46. It is only since 1856 that it has become endemic in Corfu, under the circumstances already mentioned.

**LITERATURE.**—La Pellagra in Italy, Rome, 1880 (official report with appendices relating to France, Spain, and Roumania, and copious bibliography extending to fifteen pages). An article in "The Pellagra in Italy," in the Edin. Rev. for April 1881, is based on this report. The authority for Corfu is Typaldos. The best inquiries on the toxic properties of damaged maize are those of Lombroso. See also the firm a much larger and better store room and will put them directly in front of their warehouse. They carry a very Hirsch, Historische geographische Pathologie vol. ii., 2d ed., Stuttgart, 1888 (Engl. trans.)

\*Of the peasantry of the Asturias, Townsend, a traveller of the last century, says: "They eat little flesh, they drink little wine; their usual diet is Indian corn, with beans, peas, chestnuts, apples, pears, melons, and cucumbers; and even their

bread, made of Indian corn, has neither barn nor leaven, but is unfermented, and in the state of dough; their drink is water" (ii. 14.)

The following is the most recent account (by Dr. Petit) of the condition of the peasantry in the pellagrous district of the Gironde: "The cultivation of this district consists of millet, rye, a small quantity of maize, and a few rare vineyards. The soil does not suffice for the nourishment of the miserable population who cultivate it. They are slovenly, and sleep in their clothes; their labour is in general of the severest kind, and they are very ill fed. Their food is mostly a porridge of millet; maize is rarely part of their diet [elsewhere he says, "in all these provinces the flour of maize enters largely into the food of the people"], which includes a little rye-bread, sour most of the time, a few sardines, and rancid lard. Meat is almost excluded from their food; sometimes onfe-days one may see a quarter of mutton or veal at the repast. Their usual drink is water, and mostly bad water; wine is not drunk except in well-to-do families. Their dwellings are deplorable; they are low-roofed and damp, built of wattle, and constantly enveloped in reek. It often happens that man and beast live together. Pellagra rages as an endemic among these populations."

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