

attacking is inertia, the acceptance of theoretical views which in practice mean doing little or nothing, either to cure patients or to add to knowledge. According to the reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy, the recovery-rate of mental diseases in this country is to-day no higher than it was in the seventies of last century. Are we then to rest satisfied with the pessimistic appeal to "heredity," when even those who use this as an excuse for their inertia admit that "we have no definite knowledge of what is inherited"?

G. ELLIOT SMITH.
T. H. PEAR.

The University of Manchester, September 12.

THROUGH the courtesy of the editor of NATURE I have had the opportunity of reading the long comment made by Prof. Elliot Smith, the distinguished anatomist, and by Mr. T. H. Pear, the equally able psychologist, upon my review of their little volume entitled "Shell-shock." As was pointed out, the authors show a lack of practical knowledge of the law as applied to the insane, yet they assert that the main object of the essay is to secure a change in the statutes in order to provide the establishment of clinics in which, to use their own words, patients "afflicted with mental disturbances can be treated while still sane," a problem with contradictory implications, but which is interpreted in the introduction to be "the painful probing of the public wound, the British attitude towards the treatment of mental disorder." As has been stated in the review, this was a corollary that did not seem to follow from the essay, a view also shared by the *Spectator* (September 1), which says that "the authors' assumption, by the way, especially after the statements quoted from the first chapter that the unfavourable termination of shell-shock will be insanity, seems to us somewhat gratuitous." One of the reasons given by the authors for seeking a change in the law is the fact that doctors in British asylums have no adequate knowledge of psychiatry to enable them "to co-operate with the medical schools and the teaching staffs of general hospitals." I claim to be fairly intimate with the knowledge of mental diseases possessed by asylum physicians in this country, and I agree with the two authors' view of their own criticism, viz. that it is well open to the charge of being "superficial, uninformed, and even spiteful" (p. 115), although it is graciously allowed that "there are exceptions to this general statement."

The first pre-requisite in a review is to ascertain the author's opinions upon fundamental facts, and the treatment described in this volume is based upon the authors' views of the hereditary transmission of disease and of the relationship between mind and matter; and because they regard the psychic as the predominant partner, they practically ignore the physical treatment of shell-shock and dwell at length upon the psychic remedies; no adequate place is given in etiology to physical weariness, fatigue, exposure, exhaustion, and the various forms of toxæmia, but an almost exclusive place is given to psychic trauma. The reviewer is criticised for not referring at length to psychological analysis and re-education, but as these are the acknowledged methods employed by all investigators into mental disturbances and are not original, they needed no special elaboration. The reviewer has long taught in his clinical class that the elementary procedure in the treatment of mental cases has been along the lines of the three "E's," viz. explanation, education, and encouragement. In regard to dreams, all psychiatrists realise the occasional help obtained from the latent dream, but the key of interpretation of the manifest dream depends upon the varying code vocabularies employed, and at the moment a certain school is inclined to lay inordinate stress (in the reviewer's opinion) upon

the interpretation of dreams, yet it is the vogue, and this, like other fashions, is entitled to its day.

The authors quote with some surprise my record of 33 per cent. of shell-shock cases with a neurotic family history, and erroneously conclude that the remaining 67 per cent. furnish negative evidence of heredity. As the reviewer pointed out, it would be necessary to ascertain the full family history in each of the remaining cases for at least three generations—which would be impossible—before these percentages could be considered to be trustworthy negative evidence; and at best the pedigrees obtained by the clinician are of the most brief and meagre kind. The authors consider it to be a social stigma to belong to a neurotic family, heedless of the fact that the neurotic people do the work of the world, and in startling contrast to the quip of a leading psychiatrist that he would rather be the offspring of a lunatic than of a churchwarden! The authors are eager to proclaim that the essay was written for the medical as well as the lay reader, and the reviewer accepts the correction whilst adhering to the view expressed that it will be most interesting reading for the latter, although rather "thin" stuff for the former.

When critics are at bay and without missiles of offence, a favourite device is the *ignoratio elenchi*, or the fallacy of the irrelevant, which then becomes a welcome weapon, and the authors conclude their comment by endeavouring to hold up the reviewer to obloquy because he had ventured to suggest a *locus resistentiæ minoris* in the victims of shell-shock.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG-JONES.

The Convolvulus Hawk-moth.

HITHERTO *Sphinx convolvuli* has been reckoned one of the rarer insects in Scotland. In the last fifty years I know of only two authentic records of its occurrence in Wigtownshire; but this autumn it is abundant. One came into my house on September 7; a correspondent in Perth, a well-known entomologist, tells me that he has examined eight specimens taken in that neighbourhood, and a lady in this county, also a trustworthy observer, counted seven of these fine insects hovering round tobacco plants in her garden and darting their long probosces into the flowers. It is difficult to imagine the cause of the appearance of these moths in such numbers after many years of absence.

The immensely increased area now under potatoes might be expected to result in a corresponding increase in the number of death's-head moths. Unfortunately, however, the habit of all the Sphingidæ is to pass the pupa stage buried in the ground, which, in the case of the death's-head, is cultivated land, and the great majority of pupæ are destroyed in the course of tillage.

HERBERT MAXWELL.

Monreith, September 22.

Vitality of Lice.

I HAD occasion recently to examine microscopically some head-lice (*Pediculus capitis*) under water, and I noticed a phenomenon to which I have been unable to find any reference in standard works.

On first being placed into water contained in a watch-glass the lice struggled, but after a short time there was no activity visible, and life appeared to be extinct. After three-quarters of an hour I poured out the water from the watch-glass and dried the lice. In a few seconds they showed manifestations of life, and within a minute resumed their normal activity, internal metamorphosis and metabolism being visible. This led me to further experiments, and I find that after