

## PROFESSOR LEIDESDORF.\*

Dr. Max Leidesdorf, late Professor of Psychiatry in the Medical Faculty of Vienna, and an Honorary Member of our Association, died October 9, 1889. He stood in the foremost rank of clinical alienists in Austria. Born in Vienna, in 1816, he studied physic, and after his medical education visited France and England. Having graduated in Bonn, he soon afterwards took charge of a private asylum in St. Petersburg, but ultimately returned to Vienna. Leidesdorf appears to have had to struggle with limited means, and was without any social advantages in his professional career. His enormous energy, however, overcame every difficulty. For 30 years he resided in Vienna, and in association with Dr. Obersteiner, sen., he directed the private asylum at Döbling, founded by Dr. Goergen, whose institution was well known. Under Leidesdorf it flourished greatly. In 1866 he was appointed to the Chair of Psychiatry, in the Vienna University, and attained a gold medal for art and science. In 1871 a Clinic in Medical Psychology was established in Vienna, but Leidesdorf failed to obtain the post. Resignation was not, we are told, his *forte*, and in the following year he was rejoiced to obtain the possession of rich clinical materials, and after Schlager had departed he was made director of a general hospital in Vienna for the observation of mental disorders.

In 1875 he at last became Clinical Teacher of Psychiatry, for Professor Meynert showed that this was misplaced in the general hospital, and ultimately a special ward for observation was placed at his disposal in the public asylum for Lower Austria. So at last he obtained the object of his wishes, but this success was not an unmixed pleasure, as he had much to put up with during the first few years, as Meynert had before him. His conciliating character enabled him to survive all his difficulties, and at last tranquillity came. He could look back upon an honest career of work, and only one care disturbed him—as he, after 13 years of labour, was compelled through sickness to retire from his post, to the great grief of his friends and scholars—whether the clinic would be maintained at Vienna, where alone of all German Universities there were two Chairs of Psychiatry. He hailed the appointment of Krafft-Ebing with great satisfaction, for he was then satisfied that his clinic would be continued. Leidesdorf could not follow in the footsteps of Heinroth and Idler, but, on the contrary, recognized the superiority of Griesinger's teaching. What Skoda was to medicine in general he was to Medical Psychology. He wrote many valuable articles. Among these were *Insanity and Lung-Disease*, *On the Causes of Insanity*, *On the Condition of the Brain in the Primary Forms of Insanity*, *The Sympathy between the Brain and the Nerves of the Body in Insanity*, *Chorea Minor in its Relation to Psychological Disorders*, *Brain-Syphilis in Relation to Mental Disorders*. In 1860 he published "*Pathology and Treatment of Mental Disorders*," and in 1865 his *Manual of Insanity*.

Leidesdorf was free from all bombastic rhetoric; he spoke easily, however, and he was an eminently practical teacher. As Professor Wagner says: "*Er war mit Leib und Seele Lehrer.*"

He was consulted in regard to the mental condition of the Sultan Murad, and subsequently he had under his care at Döbling the daughter of the King of Denmark, and sister of the Empress of Russia, the Princess Thyra of Cumberland. To his personal influence he owed a great part of his success; he had a happy talent of pleasing the lowest and highest with whom he associated, and he knew how to employ exactly the right word and tone with others. The poorest among his patients felt as if his goodwill and attention were concentrated upon him. In spite of his age and severe attacks of illness, Leidesdorf was wonderfully brisk to the end of his life; he suffered for two years untold pain, so that death at last came to him as a long desired release from suffering.

\* This obituary is freely condensed from the notice written by Professor Wagner in the "*Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie.*"