catatonia resembles pathological states producible in the cat by the use of bulbocapnine. Presumably there is some toxic condition underlying the phenomena of catatonia as observed in clinical cases.

J. V.


A historical survey and a brief outline of the phenomena upon which this work is based are given. The technique and the results obtained are discussed. The conclusions arrived at are that Cooper’s technique is superior to that of Boehner and Wassing and similar methods. The sedimentation test is of no value in the differential diagnosis between various psychoses. It also has no value in estimating the degree of mental improvement or deterioration. The existence of a constant and marked acceleration of sedimentation velocity in general paralysis has not been confirmed. The sedimentation test is of value in mental hospital practice in assisting towards an earlier diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis than is usually obtained in those cases where, owing to mental impairment, the patient is unable to give the necessary intelligent co-operation in the physical examination. It appears probable that chronic processes do not materially influence the sedimentation velocity of the erythrocytes.

C. S. R.


Based upon the study of about 1,100 psychotic patients coming to necropsy at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, Washington, in the past ten years, figures are presented to show graphically what has always been recognised, that individuals in their susceptibility to disease vary according to their psychological responses. The preponderance of tuberculosis in the schizoid individual is contrasted with the susceptibility to carcinoma, chronic streptococcus infections and circulatory disasters in the extroverted individuals, particularly the paranoid. Methods of prevention of morbidity and mortality are suggested. It would seem possible to apply these preventive measures intensively to the groups to which they are best adapted.

C. S. R.

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY.


Pick in 1892 described regional atrophy of cortical convolutions in some senile brains. The atrophy was usually more or less symmetrical but greatest on the left side. Clinically the most evident symptoms were dementia and a
somewhat peculiar type of aphasia. Since then numerous authors have described similar cases, and have found that the pathological substratum consists of a cortical atrophy affecting especially the deeper layers of cells and the association fibres. Senile plaques are rare and the peculiar changes of the neurofibrils characteristic of Alzheimer's disease are not found.

The case described by the writers was one of dementia, beginning at the age of 42 and fatal in seven months. Bilateral optic neuritis was found on examination along with apraxia and sensory aphasia. Post-mortem the brain was found to be atrophied especially in the fronto-parietal regions, the temporal pole and the insula. Microscopically there appeared to be a purely neural atrophy affecting especially the cells of the second, third and fifth cortical layers. There was considerable neuroglial overgrowth and a great excess of corpora amylacea. The argentophil corpuscles of Alzheimer were not found. Vascular changes were slight and insignificant.

The authors discuss the etiology of the condition, but are unable to find any constant factor. There is no evidence that the basis of the disease is either vascular or infective. On the other hand certain cases are familial, or other neuropathic diseases have occurred in the family. The basis of the disease appears to be a degeneration of the cortical nerve cells, without evidence of inflammation.

J. G. G.


A somewhat remarkable theory is here put forward. It is built up as follows:

1. The neurones are regarded as the physical basis for habits and character. Normal character is believed to be formed round the paths of incoming impulses from the sense-organs. The inner or cortical neurones are believed to depend for stimulation and exercise upon incoming sensory impulses. Repetition tends to link up the cortical neurones into habit patterns and integrations.

2. If the central neurones are not connected directly or indirectly with some variety of sensory mechanism, they constitute an element of danger, in that they may undergo a morbid integration competing with the normal personality. Delirifacient drugs owe their characteristic effect to their selective stimulating action, affecting only certain of the neurones, and thus dilapidating the normal habit patterns and integrations. Chemical stimulation tends to build up an artificial personality which competes with the normal, or sense-organ, personality.

3. Epilepsy is due to a parasitic fragment of personality, consisting of cortical neurones insulated at their afferent or receiving pole; these cells are connected with the motor centres by their efferent pole; they receive no afferent impulses and are left to accumulate their energy until such time as they explode on relatively slight stimulation from some source other
than sensory stimulation. Traumatic epilepsy is based on the fact that certain neurones have been deprived of their afferent connections and their opportunity to function; they constitute an element of instability until they have become reintegrated or reattached to the normal senseorgan personality.

R. G. G.

[57] Psychoanalytic mechanisms in clinical psychiatry.—WILLIAM MALAMUD. 

*Psychoanalysis* maintains the attitude that whatever the relative importance of organic causes (and it considers them highly probable) may be, the facts in terms of behaviour phenomena must and can be rendered intelligible to psychological approach. An insight thus gained is of more than didactic value. With the gradual accumulation of empirical data pointing to the important rôle played by psychogenic factors in the pathogenesis of the psychoses, this method in giving us an insight into the psychology of the development of the process opens up a new field for therapeutic and preventive medicine. In extramural work with persons whose problems have not brought them to a hospital or where a readjustment is to be attempted after an acute disturbance, an understanding of the handicaps under which the patient is working and of his own inadequate attempts at reconstruction offers a starting point for the physician’s efforts. The attitude that phenomena of psychotic behaviour are primary, non-deducible and unintelligible structures, the use of methods that disregard the relation of the phenomena to the evolution and totality of a given situation merely help to maintain, if not increase, that wall of isolation that the disease process has built up round the patient. Such structures are abstractions, not realities. An occurrence in a human life, be it in health or disease, must always be regarded as an interaction between a special personality and a given environmental situation. It is this attitude more even than any particular theoretical aspect that makes the psychoanalytic or any allied method valuable in clinical psychiatry.

C. S. R.

[58] Focal infection in teeth.—GEORGE W. HENRY and MARY C. H. DOYLE. 

Focal infection frequently occurs in the root canals and pulp chambers of teeth. Over 50 per cent. of teeth ordinarily extracted from psychotic patients contain streptococci and 10 per cent. contain hemolytic streptococci. Pathogenic streptococci occur with equal frequency in the teeth of both psychotic and non-psychotic patients. No specific relationship between dental infection and any particular type of psychosis was observed. Dental X-ray photographs give accurate indication of infection in about 75 per cent. of cases, and should be made of the teeth of all psychotic patients.

C. S. R.
Some recent work suggests that the functions of the liver are deranged in mental disease. This results in an alteration in the output of the derivatives of tyrosine, tryptophane and histidine in the urine, and perhaps also in the amount of bacterial fermentation in the intestine. This derangement of the liver may be either a cause or a symptom of the mental disease, and the increased intestinal fermentation may in the same way be either a cause or effect of the liver disturbance. In this paper, methods of quantitative analysis are given by which the intestinal fermentation of tyramine and the excretion of the derivatives of tyrosine, tryptophane and histidine can be estimated.

C. S. R.

PROGNOSIS AND TREATMENT.

The author states he has endeavoured to rid hypnotism of everything that should be looked upon as extraneous and to discover what was common to all sets of hypnotic procedures. He concludes that this is placidity (sometimes, but not always, accompanied by drowsiness), sometimes aimed at, and at other times a result of having strained—and thus fatigued—attention. On the basis of placidity, easy attention can usually be imposed; and by means of such attention, extraordinary mental and physical effects (due to favourable distribution of energy) can be obtained. Ordinary attempts at close attention, being accompanied by strain, contract and cramp the mental power; whereas by hypnotic artifices attention is rendered mobile and imagination vivid. Hypnotism is defined as “an artificially-induced contemplative mood.” Some persons act ridiculously because they purposely simulate, some because they imagine themselves dominated, and others because they are very suggestible and so may be easily rushed into acting a part. The fictitious nature of ascribed hallucinations and illusions can readily be proved without reference to the unprompted admissions of suggestible subjects. It is among very suggestible people that the particular phenomena occur which have misled operators regarding hypnotis. Hypnotism tends to develop a commonly neglected side of the mentality—the meditative, and can be a valuable reclaiming influence provided desire of moral improvement be aroused in the sinner. Had hypnotic processes never come into existence, but had there been a desire to increase most effectively the capacity of attention, rendering it easy and at the same time profound, the same kind of training should have been adopted here as with other powers; we should have sought to obtain a condition of mental relaxation, and gradually built upon that a habit of mental economy. This is what hypnotic processes do when successful. Whatever in addition occurs is incidental—due to expectancy, mainly. An increase in the capability of using