PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

[160] A case of alternation between asthma and manic-depressive psychosis
(Un caso di alternanza tra asma da fiato e psicosi maniaco-depressiva).

This case is interesting in connection with the regular periodicity of the psychosis. The possibility of an allergic phenomenon must be kept in mind and also of the manic-depressive phases being liberated by external factors.

R. G. G.

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY.

[161] The psychobiological constitution of the weak-minded.—E. B. Strauss.

One hundred and ten cases of oligophrenia in males over the age of puberty, and presenting on casual inspection a normal physical exterior, were examined. Anthropometry and somatoscopy, carried out in accordance with the principles laid down in Kretschmer’s Korperbau und Charakter, and Medizinische Psychologie, showed that in 100 per cent. of these cases the basal physical habitus was complicated by a lesser or greater degree of dysplasia. The most prominent dysplastic stigmata were of a dysgenital nature. The degree of intellectual defect in each case was evaluated and tabulated against (a) physique and (b) temperament. The results suggest that there is no correlation between intelligence and either of these two factors.

An investigation into the family histories reveals the extreme frequency of morbid inheritance in oligophrenia. The existence of defects of various kinds in the parents is so striking that they are to be reckoned amongst the determinant or causal factors in its genesis.

Each patient was assigned to a temperamental group. The results showed that the ordinary physique-temperament ratio does not apply in these cases, temperaments which are apparently cyclothyme-cycloid appearing in excess in persons with anomalous physique. In order to explain this anomaly, a phylogenetic theory of the genesis of temperament is here tentatively offered in outline. According to this hypothesis, the patients presenting apparently cyclothyme or cycloid temperaments are in reality fixated at an undifferentiated psychic level, which is normal in infants, in very young children, and in adults of backward races. These would possibly be better designated as proto-cyclothyme and proto-cycloid.

C. S. R.

[162] Cerebral trauma and its relation to mental deficiency.—N. W. Winkelman.
Amer. Jour. Psychiat., 1931, x, 611.

From the author’s studies he concludes that (1) cerebral trauma plays a part
in the deterioration of adults and 'arrested development' of infants; (2) subarachnoid bleeding calls for repeated spinal drainage in order to lessen the after-results; (3) encephalography gives us visual proof of the post-traumatic atrophies present mainly in the fluid field, the fronto-parietal area; (4) dehydration offers a means of improving the mental condition of both the infantile and adult traumatic cases.

C. S. R.


The analysis of this case seemed to the writers important as helping to throw light on the question whether or not intelligence can be regarded as an innate quality. It seemed to them possible that this child of six, whose intelligence was inferior to that of an average child of two years old, may have been hindered in development almost entirely by the drastic restrictions made on his movements. One does not require to embrace the behaviourist's views to agree that speech is to some extent 'conditioned conduct' and that the use of the senses is essential for the development of the intelligence. If it could be shown that mental retardation followed restricted movements in infancy, then the widely held view that we can ignore the environment of the first few years and still measure innate intelligence would be shown to be unsound.

Jennings has shown that many animal traits, usually regarded as entirely due to inheritance, only happen to be constant because the environment is constant. It may be that what we regard as average intelligence is only average because of an average bad environment, and that the Kelvins and Darwins represent another possible average. This is the view held by many psycho-analysts. The case under review is not very convincing, but the child's behaviour, when given his freedom, closely resembled the behaviour of an average child exploring his environment for the first time. Intelligence develops largely through the use of the senses and, for the child, the sense of touch is probably the most important. One would expect that such drastic restrictions of movement for the first six years of this child's life would seriously hinder the mental development. If what was found was due entirely to this, it would follow that difference in intelligence might be expected among children of equal innate endowment if one child was given comparative freedom of action and a varied and interesting environment in the early years, and the other was restricted in action or kept in an uninteresting environment. This is a conclusion to which psycho-analytic work already points.

C. S. R.
[164] Mental and physical development of children prematurely born.—

One hundred and thirteen infants and children, prematurely born, were studied in order to determine whether the mental development of prematurely born children deviated from that of full-term children. This group was compared with 40 full-term siblings. Of the premature group the mean foetal age at time of birth was 33 weeks, and the mean age at the time of examination 2 years, 9 months. For the investigation of intelligence the Gesell developmental schedules and Kuhlmann-Binet test were used.

The mean mental age of 40 siblings exceeded their mean chronological age by 1.2 months; the mean mental age of the prematurely born children exceeded the mean chronological age by 2 months. The full-term siblings tended to cluster more about the average ratings, whilst the prematurely born diverged more above and below. In 'personal social' behaviour, the performance of the children prematurely born was, consistently, relatively superior—probably as a result of the unusual care and attention given to them. In motor performances these children were relatively poor. The grouping of 28 cases of premature children who had convulsions, were cyanotic, or otherwise gave evidence of possible intracranial haemorrhage at birth, did not differ according to the Gesell schedules from that of the entire group. A. G.

[165] On the importance of auditory disturbance in mental pathology
(Sull' importanza dei disturbi uditivi in patologia mentale).—P. Ottonello. Riv. di pat. nerv. e ment., 1930, xxxv, 3, 351.

Six clinical observations allowed the author to examine the correlation between auditory and mental pathological states. He stresses the importance of simple deafness in the genesis of many affective disturbances and points out that it is sometimes necessary to look for a common cause for the two morbid processes.

R. G. G.

1930, lxxi, 165.

A careful study of nine cases showing the degree of susceptibility of different individuals, some exhibiting delirium with small and others being tolerant of very large doses.

Schizophrenics and neurotics yield a high tolerance, but cases of exogenous infection of the central nervous system are highly susceptible owing to the increased permeability of the meninges. The reactions to bromide depend on the personality type and the condition for which the bromide is given. Deliria often occur associated with sexual hallucinations and interferences may be recognized at all levels of the neurobiological hierarchy.

R. G. G.
[167] **Exploration of the hepatic function in aments and cases of dementia præcox** (Esplorazione della funzionalita epatica negli amenti e nei dementi precoci).—S. GULLOTTA. *Riv. di pat. nerv. e ment.*, 1929, xxxiv, 852.

In cases in which haemolytic processes could be excluded by examination of the osmotic resistance of the erythrocytes, the hepatic function was studied in its antitoxic and biliary aspects. The antitoxic function was examined by search in blood and urine for abnormal aromatic substances. In the twelve aments examined there was an increase of the Van den Bergh reaction for normal bilirubin and absence of urobilin. The 25 cases of dementia præcox resolved themselves into two groups. Those of recent origin or with exacerbations disclosed, like the aments, the presence of aromatic substances in blood and urine, while in the group of old cases these reactions were always negative, with hypobilirubin in the blood, increased resistance of erythrocytes, and urobilin in the urine. These results tend to confirm Buscaino's theory of the enterotoxnic origin of these conditions; they also explain the frequent finding of pathological conditions of the liver after death although no clinical symptoms appeared during life.

R. G. G.

[168] **Electrical skin resistance during hypnosis.**—M. LEVINE. *Arch. of Neurol. and Psychiat.*, 1930, xxiv, 937.

In six subjects no material change of skin resistance was found during hypnosis. The small changes that occur cannot be used as criteria of the depth of the hypnosis. The skin resistance in hypnosis resembles that in mild narcoleptic attacks and 'catnaps,' or brief periods of sleep (e.g., after dinner) from which the person can be easily aroused and from which he usually awakens spontaneously in a few minutes, as seen in normal people. The skin resistance in hypnosis differs from that in normal sleep and in catatonic stupor. The palmar resistance is an index of the degree of alertness rather than of the muscular tension.

G. de M. R.


These clinical investigators found that fluids from untreated paretics give strongly positive Boltz reactions in about 95 per cent. of all cases investigated. Positive reactions are obtained in many other conditions, whether or not syphilis be present. In neurosyphilitic cases, treatment tends usually to reduce the intensity of the reaction; and in cases where protein has also been determined in the fluid, the intensity of the Boltz reaction varies with the protein content.

C. S. R.

Observation (such as many heads of mental institutions must have made repeatedly) suggests to the author the possibility of dividing the relatives of mental patients into several distinct categories.

1. Those with full insight.
2. The indifferent.
3. The definite mental weaklings.
4. The paranoids.
5. The morally defective.

These various types are described in entertaining fashion, with illustrative instances sometimes of an amusing kind.

A. B.


Professor Wimmer has given a useful analysis, supplemented by a large number of references to the literature, of some 34 personal cases in which one or other type of antisocial behaviour has developed at longer or shorter intervals after an attack of epidemic encephalitis.

Among these he notes 17 cases of minor criminal propensities such as stealing associated with lying, amounting on occasion to a regular mythomania. Homicidal tendencies came to the surface in one case. Two patients developed the criminal habit of arson. In 11 criminal behaviour of a sexual kind was in evidence.

The natural question at once suggests itself, viz., to what extent psychopathy was already in existence before the illness. At least two of the cases had shown mental deficiency at an earlier stage, yet in the literature such are seldom met with. Professor Wimmer agrees with those who maintain that as a rule moral depravity in any real sense does not obtrude itself clinically in encephalitics; and that the trouble arises mainly because of 'impulses' or 'compulsions,' appearing without any motivation and proceeding into action forthwith because of defect of control.

S. A. K. W.


It so far appears that, outside general paralysis and cerebrospinal syphilis, no direct relation exists between syphilis and insanity. Williams believes that the spirochaete after successive passages through the host acquires a neurotropic affinity and that this may account for the large percentage of paretics.
According to Plaut, syphilis affects the central nervous system in 10 per cent. of male and 8·3 per cent. of female cases. The relative frequency of paresis in males as compared with females is of special interest. No explanation of this is at hand. Neither mental strain nor station in life seems to predispose to the disease, contrary to popular opinion. Mental disease in general inhibits paresis, for insane patients infected with the spirochaete rarely develop general paralysis. Another curious phenomenon is the rarity of syphilis in epileptics and manic-depressives. Psychoses showing the greatest percentages of syphilitics are alcoholism, narcotic addiction, mental defect and involution forms. According to Plaut 80 per cent. of mental defectives are infected congenitally, while about 6·5 per cent. of all syphilis is congenital.

C. S. R.

PROGNOSIS AND TREATMENT.


Dr. Wuth deals successively with manic-depressive psychosis, schizophrenia, epilepsy, injuries and diseases of brain and meninges, oligophrenia, toxic psychoses and their varieties, senile and presenile psychoses, and syphilitic mental disorders, inclusive of tabetic psychoses and general paralysis. Each is discussed from the above-mentioned point of view, with all the latest methods duly chronicled and examined. He furnishes succinct descriptions of treatment by the production of sleep, of the use of ratbite fever and recurrent fever, of insulin therapy in delirium, and of various other modernities which interest the clinician. The practical usefulness of this paper is augmented by its remarkable bibliography, containing more than 600 titles.

A. B.


A brief histological survey of the views of workers on the psychoses is followed by an account of the psychoanalysis of a case of schizophrenia. The analysis covered 2,000 pages and took place in about 450 interviews of one hour each. The author points out that a preliminary period of "reality testing" is required before the analytic situation is attacked and adds that "it is doubtful whether any type other than the paranoid is amenable to analysis." No claim for a cure is made.

G. de M. R.