TREATMENT.


The author points out the difficulty in deciding whether to operate or not in cases of injury of the cervical spine. He quotes Elsberg, who condemns operation in cases which show complete loss of sensation, motor power, and reflex activity below the lesion, but who advocates it in cases when all activity is not lost at first, but with progressive loss within the first few days after injury, especially if compression of the cord by fractured vertebrae or extravasated blood can be demonstrated. The danger of operation on the cervical cord is affection of the vagus and phrenic nerves by the edema induced, with resultant respiratory and cardiac paralysis. Three out of the author's four cases recovered without operation, whereas Elsberg's figures for those not operated upon was 70 per cent of deaths. If the patient does survive, the functional recovery is surprisingly good compared with cases of injury in other parts of the cord. The most frequent residuals are paresis in the extremities, and atrophies in the small muscles of the hand, with stiffness in one or both lower limbs. There is little loss of sensation, and bladder and rectal control is usually re-established. The statistics of surgical interference are not encouraging even in partial lesions, but Elsberg believes that this should improve with greater experience and better technique; the author, on the other hand, thinks that great conservatism should be observed, though in the later stages disabling root pains may demand interference. The cases of four patients are described in full; one of them died, but the other three made relatively good recoveries, all without operation.

R. G. Gordon.


Starting from the hypothesis that in every case of neurosyphilis the nervous system is invaded in the secondary stage, the author takes up the position that every patient with secondary syphilis should be regarded as harbouring spirochaetes in his intrathecal tissues. He considers that at this stage it is dangerous to push antisyphilitic treatment too energetically, as, if one is successful in eradicating the spirochaetes from the general body tissues, the blood will be deprived of antibodies and the spirochaetes in the intrathecal tissues will then have free rein to multiply and attack the nervous system. This theory rests on the hypothesis that antibody reaches the intrathecal tissues from the blood-stream, but no facts or experiments are adduced to prove this. As a corollary we get the unexpected statement...
that “a spinal fluid showing a positive Wassermann reaction commands a much better prognostication than a fluid which has remained normal.” Apparently also it is far safer for a patient threatened with neurosyphilis to have a positive than a negative Wassermann reaction in the blood. The author counsels a prolonged course of treatment so regulated as to keep the supply of antibody going ‘indefinitely’. In a paper so full of apparent paradoxes as this we should have been glad of a little statistical information, but no doubt the author is reserving this for a later paper.

J. G. Greenfield.

Psychopathology.

PSYCHOLOGY.


It is interesting to know that Hazlitt wrote several works, in the years from 1820 to 1822, in which are found striking anticipations of some of Freud’s theories. In his essay ‘On Dreams’ in The Plain Speaker, he writes: “We are not hypocrites in our sleep. The curb is taken from off our passions, and our imaginations wander at will. When awake, we check these rising thoughts, and fancy we have them not. In dreams, when we are off our guard, they return securely and unbidden”. Hazlitt emphasizes the fact that man is far less a rational than an emotional animal. In his works are found a number of passages in which he lays stress on the existence in the human mind of motives or emotions which are ‘hidden’. In ‘Characteristics’ he affirms that “The wish is ‘often father to the thought’, but we are as apt to believe what we dread as what we hope”. (Freud has shown the close relationship between fear and desire.) The suggestion of a constant and dynamic though loosely woven theory of the unconscious is found in the extracts quoted from Hazlitt in this note.

C. W. Forsyth.


It can be demonstrated that, in verse or prose, no expression, however trifling it may appear on the surface, is unmotivated. The author’s present and his past, his secret aspirations and his most intimate ‘soulful’ feelings, are bound to crop up in his writings, manifesting here his love, there his hatred, again a faulty adjustment, now a gratified wish. With a few facts about an author and his works before you it is possible to size up the man, to interpret much in his writings as indications of strength or manifestations of weakness in his personality. The weaknesses are usually undeveloped phases of his personality, and revert to the infantile.