Part III.—Epitome of Current Literature.

1. Psycho-Pathology.

An Account of the Witch Craze in Salem, with reference to some Modern Witch Crazes. (*Arch. of Neur. and Psychiat., May*, 1920.) *Potts, C. S.*

In this Presidential Address to the Philadelphia Psychiatric Society, Potts recounts in considerable detail the story of the epidemic of accusations for witchcraft in Salem, Mass., in 1692. The craze began in the home of the Rev. S. Parris, pastor of the village church. His family consisted of a daughter, aged 9, a niece, aged 11, and a servant, Tituba, who was half Indian and half negro. Associated with these were four other girls, some of them belonging to prominent families. For purposes of amusement, Tituba, who had come from the West Indies, used to practise tricks and incantations common among the natives of her home. During these performances they did strange and unusual things, such as getting into holes, creeping under chairs, performing various antics and uttering ridiculous speeches. While it is natural for children to do such things more or less, they were not countenanced by their Puritan relatives and masters. Great, therefore, was the consternation when they learned of it. Dr. Griggs, the village physician, whose niece was one of the participants, was called, and not being able to make a diagnosis, he said, "They are possessed of the devil or bewitched." This, being noised about, caused the children to become objects of curiosity, which made them show off more. Mr. Parris called a meeting of ministers of the neighbourhood, who, after investigating and praying, unanimously concurred in the doctor's opinion. The supposed victims, threatened with severe discipline if they did not tell who had bewitched them, finally accused Tituba and two feeble old women. This was the beginning of a wholesale persecution. In four months two hundred and fifty persons were accused and put in gaol—no small percentage of the population. Nineteen of them were hanged and their property confiscated; two died in prison from bad treatment; one was tortured to death. Ultimately public opinion revolted, and in May, 1693, Governor Phips issued a proclamation releasing from custody all persons—about a hundred and fifty—held on the charge.

As to the psychology of the outbreak, Potts considers it was due to hysteria, fomented by religious fanaticism and lying, some of it possibly of the pathological type, but most of it malicious. The Puritans were a fanatical and bigoted people, who persecuted vigorously all who did not agree with their religious convictions, and this in spite of the fact that they themselves had come to America to escape religious persecution. But for the persecution of heretics, there would probably have been no persecution of witches. These people led a repressed life, and were therefore ripe for any orgy when the opportunity came.

A number of symptoms of hysteria were present. The influence of suggestion and the morbid desire for notoriety are apparent. Mimicry was frequent. Some had areas of anæsthesia or hyperæsthesia. These

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symptoms were encouraged maliciously by older people. Begun by young girls who at first thought of nothing more than being pitied and indulged, the fraud was continued by adult persons who were afraid of being accused themselves. It is noteworthy that many of the accused had had difficulties with their neighbours.

It might be supposed that such a thing could not occur to-day. Potts believes that it is not only possible, but to a certain extent is already occurring. The uproar at the Salem trials reminds him of the newspaper accounts of the hearing on the question of Sunday music in Philadelphia before a committee of the legislature, when speakers in favour of the measure were hissed, vilified, and their voices drowned in the uproar made by their opponents, largely composed of clergymen. Potts says, "We are now suffering from a surfeit of legislation and proposed legislation regulating our habits, our business—in fact, practically everything good or bad that a person is liable to do." This State forbids playing any game of cards in a public resort. That one forbids buying a cigar on Sunday. A number have gravely dealt with the portentous question of giving tips. Every winter produces a sheaf of bills to regulate women's dress. Where the law requires a washer-woman's cook-stove to be assessed, and a millionaire's wife's diamonds are not assessed, the legislature is deeply engaged with the censorship of moving pictures. Where mob murders are a well recognised institution, the legislature is passing an act to regulate the length of hat-pins. A special target for legislative suppression is anything which may add to the pleasure and relaxation of the individual. Innumerable societies exist whose mission it is to regulate public and private institutions, private business, education—in fact, nothing escapes. Many of these organisations and individuals who are ambitious to have the world run according to their ideas, in order to gain their ends are guilty of false and reckless statements, of advocating the confiscation of legally owned property, of breaking laws themselves in order to capture those who in their opinion are breaking laws, and of vilifying and slandering those opposed to them. In all these ways they resemble those who prosecuted the Salem witches. A still more serious thing is that those whose duty it is to enforce the law engage in orgies of persecution in which people's rights are trampled on with impunity. In Newark, N.J., not long ago, policewomen were ordered to forcibly wash the faces of any girls on the street with painted cheeks, and to have them photographed as vampires. In New York, in 1918, a wave of hysterical morality caused the raiding of public hotels, apartment houses, restaurants and billiard rooms, with the arresting, without warrants, of 1,100 people. All this to find possible hidden vice. During the war, tavern keepers who had paid a license and whose capital was invested in their business were compelled to close without compensation, when located within certain prescribed areas. Tobacco is at present in serious danger of execution for witchcraft. In a number of States the sale, and even the smoking, of cigarettes is unlawful; in Kansas, newspapers and magazines advertising them cannot be publicly sold. It will be found that most lynchings and other outbreaks of mob violence occur in States most prone to freak legislation. One of the results of the peculiar state of mind now

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afflicting so many of the author's compatriots is the meddling with the management of institutions such as prisons and hospitals for the insane. The officials of these institutions are very much in the position of the Salem witches.

Much is done now in the name of law, order, and progress that is not sane. The various crazes of to-day are an evidence of the unsettled minds of the community. They are therefore legitimate subjects for the attention of psychiatrists. Not a little of freak legislation is proposed by medical men, which makes it doubly important that we, as medical men and women who study especially mental diseases, should endeavour to guide such minds, both medical and lay, into proper channels.

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2. Clinical Psychiatry.

Dementia Præcox in Twins. [*Démence précose gémellaire.*] (*L'Encéphale, April*, 1920.) *Laignel-Lavastine and Boutet.*

Twin sisters, æt. 37, were admitted at the same time into Sainte-Anne's Asylum in 1913; the diagnosis then made, *viz.*, "folie à deux," was, in the opinion of the authors, justifiable at first. One of the sisters, G., considered to be the active element in the "folie à deux," was the first to start delusions of persecution with false interpretations, and then auditory hallucinations; the other sister, B., developed delusions later. No sooner was G. transferred to another asylum than B., who was regarded as the passive element in the "folie à deux," recovered, or apparently recovered. Thus the first diagnosis seemed to be confirmed, but this did not take into account the subsequent course of the cases.

G. remained under certificates from 1913 until February, 1920, when she died of pneumonia. According to the last report made of her case, there was undoubted mental deterioration, but all the psychic functions were not equally affected; thus, though memory and ideation remained good, and attention was fairly well preserved, both the emotions and the reactions were much impaired. Indifference was the predominant feature of the case—she took no interest in anything, she was neglectful of her appearance, and completely inactive; she had various absurd delusions as well as hallucinations, but she showed no anxiety nor any violent reactions. It became quite clear that this was a case of dementia præcox.

B., though discharged from the asylum within three weeks of her admission in 1913, continued to be more or less deficient—in the words of a reliable informant: "She has never been quite normal since." In November, 1919, she was again brought to the asylum, where she still remains; the following symptoms—negativism, mannerisms, emotional indifference and inactivity—undoubtedly point, in her case also, to dementia præcox.

It is thus seen that the original diagnosis of "folie à deux" finally resolved itself into one of "dementia præcox in twins." Laignel-Lavastine, in a recent paper, insisted on the importance of recognising this particular variety of "familial dementia præcox," which was originally described by Soukhanoff.

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