

method. He investigated the changes in senile dementia, arteriosclerotic brain disease, general paralysis, congenital brain disease, dementia præcox, manic-depressive insanity, alcoholic and toxic psychoses, brain tumours and myxœdematous psychosis. Of these, swellings on the axons were found in 100 *per. cent.* excepting in dementia præcox and manic-depressive insanity, in which the condition was not found at all. Swellings on the dendrites were found in a varying but smaller percentage in all except dementia præcox, manic-depressive insanity, brain tumours and myxœdema, in which the swellings appeared to be absent. He describes various forms of these swellings, *e.g.*, spindle, pedunculated, bulb-like, etc., and he attempted to discover the contents by means of the staining reactions. Most stained diffusely, and contained some homogeneous argentophilic substance, some showed liquid content, a few had thickening of neurofibrils and whirl-like structures suggesting Alzheimer degeneration.

He concludes that these changes can no longer be considered as specific, but are encountered in cerebella wherever there is a chronic degenerative process. He discusses the question whether they are regenerative or degenerative, and believes that both the axonal and dendritic swellings are a feeble attempt at regeneration.

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6. Sociology.

Kleptomania from the Medico-Legal Point of View [*De la Kleptomanie au point de vue médico-legal*]. (*Ann. Méd.-psychol.* No. 3, March, 1921). Wimmer, A.

The author mentions the conclusion of Marc that the more carefully cases of kleptomania are examined the more one is convinced that true kleptomania—*i.e.*, an irresistible impulse towards theft for the sake of theft—is, if it exists, a pathological rarity. This the author thinks may be true in medico-legal practice, but in the psychiatric clinic it is common, and is one of the numerous mental stigmata of degenerates. He mentions the theory that the theft is a symptom of a repressed sexual wish symbolically satisfied, but considers this is only true probably for a small number of cases. He believes that in some cases it is due to an impulse of an organic nature latent behind the kleptomania, and which under the influence of certain disturbances—*e.g.*, drunkenness, menstruation, pregnancy—is translated into action; he mentions the case of a young girl, æt. 18, “bonne et bonnête fille,” who had violent fits of hunger accompanying her impulses to thieve, and at these times she would steal eatables—cakes, chocolate, fruit, etc. If this patient’s troubles had been reviewed in the court of law rather than in the consulting room, he believes it could have been maintained that she was the victim of a morbid impulse to theft due to an unconscious organic change in her mental state. Many authors have noted the connection between sex and theft, and a distinction has to be drawn between those who thieve articles which give them sexual pleasure—fetichists, not true kleptomaniacs—and those in whom the theft itself produces a sexual orgasm. Of the latter, some recognise the nature of the pleasure, in others the sexual motive appears com-

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pletely unrecognised by the patient. As examples of this group he refers to several published cases of women who were sexually frigid, but who experienced sexual sensations at the moment of theft. He mentions a woman who practised prostitution when young for the sake of gain, and later married a man because she "respected" him; she had feeble sexual desires, and was generally frigid. During her pregnancies she experienced kleptomaniac impulses, which if repressed caused attacks of vomiting; if she yielded she experienced an orgasm. The author considers she was a psychopath of emotional temperament in whom, during her pregnancies, the ordinary temperament was accentuated in a direction more decidedly pathological; her kleptomania does not come in the category of obsessions according to the classic definition, but was a symptom of an organic disorder, and became the equivalent of a normal coitus; he points out that kleptomanias which only show themselves during pregnancy suggest almost irrefutably their dependence on pathological causes. He cites the case of a woman of poor intelligence who was married and had two children; during both the pregnancies she exhibited a depraved appetite, bit her nails, etc. Later she was in an accident, and was concussed, after which she became very nervous and anxious. When she became pregnant for the third time she did not develop her previous eccentric appetite, etc., but had impulses of kleptomania. He considers that her depraved appetite and nail-biting could be attributed to purely somatic alterations, and these were afterwards, during her third pregnancy, replaced by her kleptomania, and he believes that the thefts committed by this woman were due to a morbid impulse which she would not have been able to resist normally, precisely because it was due to an organic cause.

These observations give to kleptomania a different value than that of Marc; but, on the other hand, one can use it with greater precision in the small number of medico-legal cases to which it is applicable.

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