

### 3. Psychiatry.

*Suicide Among Civilized and Primitive Races.* (*Amer. Journ. Psychiat.*, vol. xcii, p. 1346, May, 1936.) Zilboorg, G.

The writer points out that suicide was very common among primitive peoples, i.e., whole tribes committed suicide rather than face the Spanish cruelties. The relationship between psychosis and suicide is not clear. The Jews in Prussia yielded a greater percentage of mentally sick among their co-religionaries, but fell among the lowest places in the statistical tables on suicide. The Prussians were exactly the opposite. A relationship appears to exist between suicide and murder. There is an inverse ratio. Catholic countries show a high murder-rate and a low suicide-rate. Not only patients with depressions commit suicide, but also cases of hysteria, compulsion neuroses and some types of schizophrenia. It was found that the death of a parent or sibling during the formative periods of the future suicide (between 4-6 years and at puberty) produces a definite predisposition towards suicidal depressions. The universal rejection of suicide as something sinful and forbidden only dates from the fifth century. The impulse to destroy oneself is deep-rooted in primitive man and thought nothing of. In Scandinavian folk-lore no one is permitted to enter Valhalla who did not die in battle or from suicide. The simplest form of suicide appears to be met with among the Papuans, who simply lie down and die peacefully! Detzner (1920) says he saw hundreds of such peaceful, voluntary deaths.

Strangulation or hanging seems to be the most ancient form of suicide. The belief in after-life seems to be one of the most forceful determinants for human sacrifice and suicide.

The most frequent suicidal drive which we find clinically to-day, the primitive identification with the dead, has its own history. Passive suicide, which was actually a requested murder, evolved into active self-murder, the psychological purpose of which was entrance into hedonistic eternity and identification with the dead. Through the primitive act of suicide man achieves a phantasied immortality—a purely infantile way of achieving a seemingly adult goal. There is a phantasied preservation of the ego through death.

G. W. T. H. FLEMING.

*Study of a Case of Cyclic Psychic Disturbances Associated with Menstruation.* (*Amer. Journ. Psychiat.*, vol. xcii, p. 1403, May, 1936.) Horwitz, W. A., and Harris, M. M.

The authors present a study of 2½ years' duration of a patient with psychotic episodes closely related to the menstrual cycle. Antuitrin-S and theelin administered hypodermically had no effect. Continued oral administration of large doses of thyroid brought about a marked amelioration in the clinical picture with freedom from psychotic attacks. Discontinuation of thyroid was followed by a return of symptoms, which disappeared on further thyroid treatment. Possibly the mental disturbances in this case were due to endocrine dysfunction, perhaps of the pituitary.

G. W. T. H. FLEMING.

*Capgras's Syndrome [Le syndrome de Capgras].* (*Ann. Méd. Psych.*, vol. xv [1], p. 706, May, 1936.) Brochado, A.

Six cases of Capgras's syndrome of the illusion of doubles are described. Of these, one occurred in a recurrent melancholic, three were schizophrenics, and two suffered from chronic hallucinatory psychoses. Five of the cases were women, and the writer comments on the extreme rarity of the syndrome in the male.

It is noted that the double is associated invariably with a person towards whom the patient feels an intense affective bond, and that in each case an affective crisis

was responsible for the evolution of the syndrome. The writer finds a close association between Capgras's syndrome and the *déjà vu* illusion. In one of the cases cited both illusions were present.  
STANLEY M. COLEMAN.

*Tuberculosis and Dementia Præcox* [*Tuberculose et démence précoce*]. (*Ann. Méd. Psych.*, vol. xv [ii], p. 1, June, 1936.) Beerens, J.

A survey of the statistics brings forward no irrefutable evidence to suggest that in dementia præcox death from tuberculosis is of exceptional frequency. Laboratory investigations on twelve cases of dementia præcox suffering from tuberculosis established the absence of the tubercular virus in the cerebro-spinal fluid, while serological examinations showed the absence of a positive reaction for tuberculosis.  
STANLEY M. COLEMAN.

*The Genesis of Schizophrenia*. (*Char. and Personality*, vol. iv, p. 185, Mar., 1936.) Bruel, O.

The writer considers that contrary to what most people teach, schizophrenics and schizoids possess the ability to feel in a truly extensive degree. Bleuler's autism consists in blocking all unpleasant emotions from consciousness. The prepsychotic schizoid is a hypersensitive, highly-strung individual. The writer suggests on this theory that the nursing of schizophrenics by nurses of schizoid type is indicated. This has been tried by various psychiatrists with a certain measure of success. It is pointed out that the morbidity amongst schizophrenics in Sweden is lowest in the northern and middle areas where the inhabitants are predominantly schizothymic. In Iceland also where the typology corresponds largely with north Sweden, the morbidity is low.  
G. W. T. H. FLEMING.

*Concerning Schizophrenia and Manic-depressive Psychoses Associated with Pregnancy and Childbirth*. (*Amer. Journ. Psychiat.*, vol. xcii, p. 1331, May, 1936.) Davidson, G. M.

The writer points out that the prognosis of post-partum schizophrenia is better than in the usual forms, probably due to the fact that only catatonic cases were met with. Hebephrenics or simple deteriorations were encountered. The factors at work appear to be (a) mental conflicts, (b) neuro-endocrine and metabolic changes and reticulo-endothelial dysfunction, (c) precipitating and aggravating factors supplied by the pregnancy, etc.

The treatment in most cases consisted in giving theelin, sometimes with antuitrin-S or thyroid. Excited cases responded to prolonged baths followed by occupational therapy. Excited, agitated or anxiety cases should not be given theelin and thyroid.  
G. W. T. H. FLEMING.

*Clinico-pathologic Study of Alzheimer's Disease*. (*Arch. Neur. and Psychiat.*, vol. xxxvi, p. 293, Aug., 1936.) Rothschild, D., and Kasanin, J.

The writers describe five cases of Alzheimer's disease. Two cases of toxic psychoses are reported in which lesions of the type occurring chiefly in Alzheimer's disease and in senile disorders were shown. These observations suggest that the changes characteristic of Alzheimer's disease and of senile dementia represent a general type of tissue reaction which may be caused by different exogenous and endogenous factors. It seems possible that toxic factors may modify the normal ageing process, giving rise to syndromes like Alzheimer's disease. From a psychological standpoint, Alzheimer's disease is characterized by profound regression to primitive infantile levels of behaviour, with a tendency to compensatory phenomena. The suggestion is made that one is dealing with an attempt at rejuvenescence in the face of an abnormal ageing process.  
G. W. T. H. FLEMING.