

The Wassermann Test in the Feeble-minded. (*Psychiat. Quart.*, vol. v, p. 45, Jan., 1931.) Bronfenbrenner, A. N.

Amongst a group of 2,463 institutionalized oligophrenics, the writer found 2.7% with a strong positive and 2.8% with a weak positive Wassermann, making a total of 5.5%. In a group of 11,205 orphans the rate of strong positives was 1.1%. The percentages in the three groups of idiots, imbeciles and morons were 6.8, 4.8 and 5.5. The age-gradient (*i.e.*, the tendency of the Wassermann in congenital syphilis to become negative with advancing age) shows its influence when we examine the figures for the weak positives in the three groups, *i.e.*, 4.3%, 3.3% and 2.6%, the idiot group having the lowest average age.

The writer considers that statistics on the positive Wassermann do not adequately reflect syphilitic processes, and therefore cannot be used by themselves for the evaluation of syphilis as a factor in the aetiology of oligophrenia.

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6. Criminology.

The Psychopathology of Incendiaries [*Zur Psychopathologie der Brandstifter*]. (*Zeitschr. f. d. ges. Neur. u. Psychiat.*, vol. cxliv, 1933, p. 148.) Fischer, O.

The author divides pathological incendiarism into three groups:

(1) In psychoses, where, as a result of delusions or hallucinations, the patient is prompted to set fire to property. Schizophrenia and general paresis provide the largest proportion of this group.

(2) The greatest number of incendiaries are mental defectives, and the motive in such cases is often extremely childish. The act is frequently committed from desire for vengeance, or as a naïve attempt to eliminate unpleasant experiences in connection with any particular place.

(3) The third group is made up of such cases as are difficult to assess, both from the psychiatric and forensic point of view. In many cases the pleasure derived from watching the fire is connected with some form of sexuality, and in support of this the writer submits that the crime is frequently committed by girls at the age of puberty, especially at the menstrual period, and that male incendiaries are mostly between twenty-five and thirty years of age. The case of a man, *æt.* 21, is described in detail, showing how the sight of the fire produced intense sexual irritation, which culminated in an orgasm. Hitherto the connection between incendiarism and sexuality has not been clearly demonstrated.

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7. Treatment.

Forced Drainage in the Treatment of Poliomyelitis. (*Bull. Neur. Inst. N.Y.*, vol. i, p. 419, Nov., 1931.) Retan, G. M., and Kubie, L. S.

Report of a case of poliomyelitis successfully treated during the pre-paralytic stage by "forced drainage". The child, a female, *æt.* 9, was submitted to prolonged drainage (36 hours) of the cerebro-spinal fluid through a lumbar-puncture needle. At the same time the production of cerebro-spinal fluid was stimulated by lowering the osmotic pressure of the blood by administering water by mouth and hypotonic saline (0.45%) by intravenous injection. An account of experimental work supporting the theory underlying the method of treatment is given, and also a critique of the results of treatment by serum from convalescent patients.

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