

Language has a trend towards fixity, without which it would be deficient in value. Yet to a large extent this fixity is only apparent. For the word is the tool of a constantly fluctuating life; it is not only the container of what has been, but the suggestive and plastic symbol of what may be. Language is no static thing. In the mouth of the last speaker it takes colour and force from his mental life: a definite act of creation takes place ("the chief and only really satisfying act of life"), and through it a contribution to evolution.

Every word, as a symbol, contains in its history "a monograph on the cultural history of mankind" (Mauthner); and psycho-analytic literature has dealt abundantly with the actual unconscious content of the symbol—that which gives it one side of its energetic value. But equal emphasis must be laid on its dynamic significance: as it is always reaching out towards the environment of the present, and through the present into the future, so it builds up the communal feeling (Glatz), and cradles and nurtures morality (Dacien). SYDNEY J. COLE.

Retro-active Hypermnesia and other Emotional Effects on Memory.
(*Psych. Rev.*, November, 1919.) Stratton, M.

As effects of excitement may be noted—(a) those which are transitory, occurring during the excitement, and (b) those which persist. As transitory effects there may be an apparently general hypermnesia, in which there is a marked freshening of all memories, or there may be a selective hypermnesia, where certain rather narrow lines of association are followed. The lasting effects may be hypermnesia, hypomnesia, or total amnesia for events experienced during the excitement. The following lasting effects may also be noted upon experiences that have occurred before the emotion: (1) The well-known retro-active amnesia; (2) The opposite, retro-active hypermnesia to which little attention has formerly been paid; (3) a combination of both these effects; for the same person the stretch preceding the critical event may show vivid recollections followed by a period of utter blank. The retro-active hypermnesia in the author's cases rarely goes beyond the events of the day preceding the excitement. It occurred in 25 out of 225 cases. The antecedent events are unusually vivid—more vivid than any other of the patients' memories. The vividness is not confined to visual images, although these are more frequent; sounds, the mood, the general state of the mind may be clearly represented. There is some indication that women experience it more frequently than men. In some cases the effect has come at some crisis at early childhood, in others at a later date. The quality of the emotion seems of less importance than the intensity of the shock. Fear, or fearless surprise, or pleasurable surprise may be the cause. If the intensity be exceeded the experiences connected with it are in some degree suppressed; while if it be not reached the experiences are lost probably by a mere failure to gather up the events into the mesh of interest. Emotion facilitates the recall of whatever is noticed during the excitement, and it seems probable that memory images may be treated by the emotional onrush in the same way as perceptive images. The experiences of the preceding day, however, probably do not exist as actual images at the

time of the emotion but as psycho-physical dispositions or traces, so that where there is retro-active hypermnesia the emotion would seem to have the power to strengthen these dispositions and the connections by which they may be called into life. The author gives illustrative cases.

C. W. FORSYTH.

2. Neurology.

Some Observations on the Influence of Angle of Section on Measurements of Cortex Depth and on the Cyto-architectonic Picture. (Journ. Nerv. and Ment. Dis., April, 1918.) Orton, S. T.

The author gives the results of his control measurements of sections from various cortical areas. He used a special block-holder, equipped with a scale, and rotatable, so that from one block of cortex seven or eight planes of section could be made, cutting the cortex at as many different angles. All the measurements were made at the apex of convolutions, where the axes of the majority of nerve-cells pass vertically into the white matter. The depth increments referable to obliquity are tabulated as percentages of the shortest measurement. He concludes that, using sections cut and mounted with extreme care to avoid undue obliquity, one may expect an error of something under 6 *per cent.*, of which almost one half is due to difficulty in determining the line of demarcation between cortex and white matter. The fixing of this line is somewhat arbitrary, owing to the rather gradual and straggling manner in which the spindle-cells of the lowest cortical layer disappear as the white matter is reached.

The cyto-architectonic picture is not much altered except when obliquity is marked. Owing to the wide variations in their vertical orientation, the apparent shape of the pyramidal cells will not serve as an accurate control, though, by ascertaining the proportion of truncated cells to those with long processes, one could probably detect an obliquity sufficient to induce a depth error of 10 *per cent.*

He discusses the significance of depth for evaluation of the cortex, and considers the spatial importance of the vascular system and neuroglia, as well as of variations in the number and volume of nerve-cells and nerve-fibres. He notes the occasional occurrence of great cell richness in a thin cortex, due perhaps to lack of development (or possibly to devastation) of intercellular structures, or to diminished thickness of myelin sheaths. A small brain, whose size is dependent, not on a reduction in number of essential structures, but rather on the size of the constituent elements, may yet in a functional respect be fairly normal.

SYDNEY J. COLE.

3. Clinical Psychiatry.

Atypical Form of Arteriosclerotic Psychosis: A Report of a Case. (Journ. Nerv. and Ment. Dis., December, 1919.) Uyematsu, S.

A married woman, æt. 40, began to have difficulty in doing her work, complaining of headaches, which gradually became more severe. Her memory gradually failed for both recent and remote events. After