

Pathological Findings in the Sympathetic Nervous System in the Psychoses.
(*American Journal of Insanity*, April, 1916.) Myerson, A.

This research is based upon the minute examination of the semilunar ganglia in fifty consecutive autopsies performed at the Taunton State Hospital. The following outstanding variations were found: (1) Axonal reaction, a frequent phenomenon in many cases, and prominent in five; (2) emigration of the nucleolus, a rare change, prominent in one case; (3) neurathrepsia, a term used to cover a number of changes of a chronic type, e.g., pigmentation, oxyphilic granules; (4) nuclear changes; (5) capsular changes; (6) increase of interstitial connective tissue.

The findings are thus summarised. First, the semilunar ganglion is apparently often acutely injured in general infection and in enteritis. Second, it is the seat of degenerative processes probably greater in extent than cord, brain, or Gasserian ganglion. These changes probably represent an early and marked senility. Third, there is a decided absence of marked reactive changes (lymphocytes, plasma-cells, etc.), such as are prominent in the central nervous system, Gasserian ganglion, and the related organ or adrenal. Fourth, there is a curious, though not prominent, increase of eosinophilic connective tissue cells which seemed, in one case, to have a phagocytic attraction for injured nerve-cells. The writer emphasises that these findings apply, in his opinion, only to the psychoses. He concludes that in so far as the sympathetic system controls the vascular and glandular system, which plays such a large part in all the great vital processes as well as in the creation and modification of the emotions, a more comprehensive study of this system may throw light on the problems of old age as well as on the psychoses. Also the interpretation of morbid phenomenon needs to take into account the presence of nerve-cells in the organs, such as in the aorta, the heart, the intestines, stomach, genitalia, etc. Symptoms may well arise because of injury to these peripheral cells, either as an antecedent or as a consequent of the disease process. We have, as recent experiments show, drugs that have a peculiar and selective power on the nerve-cells of the autonomic and sympathetic systems. These should be experimentally, as well as therapeutically, used in conditions where the symptoms are even in part vasomotor and glandular.

H. DEVINE.

The Medico-legal Aspect of Dementia Præcox [*La Medicina legale della Demenza precoce*]. (*Archivio Antropologia Criminale Psichiatria e Medicina Legale*, February, 1916.) Ottolenghi, Prof. Salvatore.

In his opening paragraph the author remarks that dementia præcox is interesting from a medico-legal point of view on account of the following circumstances:

- (1) As its name expresses, it attacks the individual at an early age, at the epoch, that is to say, the most favourable for criminal actions.
- (2) The behaviour of the patient, especially at the commencement, may be such as to mask the existence of mental disease.
- (3) It is a very serious malady, causing the decay of all the mental

faculties, but almost always irregularly, so that it may present intervals in which the patient appears to be normal.

(4) From the commencement it attacks the faculties of the highest psychological activity, especially the will and the moral sense.

(5) It is frequently met with in prisons, where it often presents symptoms which may be confounded with common malingering.

(6) It may develop after, and in consequence of, an injury.

The general symptoms which characterise a well-established case of dementia præcox may not offer favourable occasions for at least the gravest medico-legal questions. But, above all, we ought to remember two characteristics of the disease: the deficiency or weakness and deviation of the intellectual, emotional, and volitional faculties, and the disharmony among the various psychological manifestations. These characters give the dominant note to the conduct of the precocious dement, who presents from the beginning a diminution of the logical, critical, and especially of the volitional activities. He shows himself unskilful at work, and from a weakened will and characteristic apathy he will be led into inaction and the most accentuated laziness. Sloth, and a tendency to crimes against property, are favoured by the depression of the sentiment of personal dignity and of the moral sentiment. The depression of the sentiment of modesty finds expression in the crimes against decency and morality, which are often the dominant note of the hebephrenic variety of the disease.

Other crimes may be the consequence of special intellectual deviations, which may present to the patient strange ideas on a basis of persecution—paranoid delusions which are united to impulsiveness, and then the sufferer from dementia præcox may be led to crimes against the person, to violence, to false accusations, to delusions of persecution, and even to suicide.

The initial period of dementia præcox is especially interesting from a medico-legal point of view. The surprising frequency with which this disease develops in young criminals, who are recognised as insane during the expiation of their offence, and are sent to an asylum, gives rise to the suspicion that at the moment of committing the crime they were in the prodromic period, especially when the psychosis reveals itself shortly after condemnation. Pighini maintains that 50 *per cent.* of the prisoners suffering from dementia præcox, studied by him in the criminal asylum of Reggio Emilia, may have been unjustly condemned.

Of the varieties of the diseases, the hebephrenic has the greatest forensic interest, particularly that milder form (the *eboidofrenia* of De Sanctis) so frequently met with. The patient becomes idle, incapable of work, of study, and indeed of all fixed occupation. These phenomena are often the cause of disorders in scholastic life. In given circumstances such patients may wander away from home, commit petty crimes, and even thefts. Others, carried away by an exaggerated opinion of their own personality and genius, turn to new occupations. They abandon their ordinary employment for this new mode of life, in which there is no solidity, and are often drawn into dissipation, illicit speculation or dishonest trickery, spurred on by vainglory and a desire to make a figure in the world. These individuals are often brought before a

court of justice, and are condemned to punishment for crimes which are the undoubted result of the disease from which they are suffering, and require not condemnation but appropriate medical treatment.

There are two points of special forensic interest in the catatonic form of the disease.

(1) The value of such a patient's evidence: In spite of the stupor, immobility, and want of activity, the patient, being conscious, may remember and be able to relate any violence to which he may have been subjected. He also may be able to describe any scenes at which he has been present. So that his evidence, with great reserve, may be worthy of credence.

(2) In this phase of the malady the patient may develop a state of excitement in which he may commit acts of impulsive violence against himself or others. It being found that consciousness is present, in spite of the patient's inability to understand his own state of excitement, or of being able to control it, it may happen that at the first superficial examination he is believed to be a malingerer.

In the paranoidal form of the disease, characterised by delirious ideas, hallucinations, and delusions of persecution and grandeur, the individual may be guilty of false accusations and violence, but the absurdity of the delusions, while sharply marking off this form of alienation from the true paranoia, demonstrates the mental disorder.

In the first period of dementia præcox the patient from his inertia, apathy, and general behaviour, may be confounded with the common criminal, the idler, or the malingerer. In the later stages the disease may be mistaken for paranoia or certain neuropsychopathic states. When the differential diagnosis oscillates between dementia præcox and certain forms of paranoia, the legal consequences may not be very grave, as in any case one is dealing with a psychopathy of a progressive form. The question is more grave when dementia præcox is confused with psychasthenic or neurasthenic states, for here the decision is especially concerned with civil capacity. In neurasthenia the judgment is not serious, while in dementia præcox the prognosis of probable incurability inclines the specialist to exclude the patient from every civil capacity.

J. BARFIELD ADAMS.

Bergson's Theory of the Dualism of Intelligence and Instinct applied to Criminals, Fools, and Geniuses, and to a New Classification of Mental Diseases. [*Il dualismo Bergsoniano dell' intelligenza e dell' istinto applicato ai criminali, ai pazzi, ai geni, e ad una nuova classificazione delle malattie mentali.*] (*Archivio Antropologia Criminale, Psichiatria, e Medicina Legale.* February, 1916.) Lombroso, Dr. Gina.

From its commencement the science of criminal anthropology has been faced with the problem of the intelligence of the criminal, which from many points of view appears to be inferior to the normal, and from others, especially in the cleverness shown in carrying out crimes, and in the satisfying of passions, rises often to the level of genius.

The same contradiction exists in the question of genius. Cæsar Lombroso has demonstrated that geniuses, the gods "before whom a