

Serum diagnosis in Psychiatry [Du Séro-Diagnostic en Psychiatrie].
(*Rev. de Psychiat.*, Oct., 1908.) Marie, A.

The application of bio-diagnostic methods in psychiatry, recent as it is, has already effected modifications in our views regarding the ætiology, prognosis, and therapy of mental disorders, and sero-diagnostic methods have been especially fertile in psychiatric applications. After summarising recent results obtained in this field by other investigators Marie goes on to speak of general paralysis of the insane. Light regarding the nature and origin of this disease may be expected rather from laboratory investigations than from psycho-diagnostic methods. Marie has studied paralytic dementia by means of cultures from the blood and the cerebro-spinal fluid of persons suffering from this disease, by means of sero-agglutinations with both these fluids, and by the opsonic method. He has thus arrived at results which he regards as negating the idea that paralytic dementia is dependent upon infection with the *B. paralyticans* of Ford-Robertson and McRae. Marie, having visited Morningside in 1904, endeavoured, by laboratory investigations on his own clinical material, to check the results obtained by Ford-Robertson and McRae in Scotland and confirmed by O'Brien in the United States.¹

He made bacteriological examinations of the urine, the various tissues, more especially the nervous tissues, the cerebro-spinal fluid and the blood, and was unable to isolate the *Bacillus paralyticans*. With a pure culture of the diphtheroid bacilli received from Scotland, suspended in physiological serum, injections were made in the ears of two rabbits. No result of an infective character was obtained. Robertson having, however, stated that the rabbit was comparatively refractory to infection, further experiments were made by intra-peritoneal injection of the virus on white rats, again without result. Opsonic and sero-agglutinative tests were then made with the bacilli on several cases of paralytic dementia. The results were the reverse of those which would have been obtained had the bacillus been specific. Marie therefore concludes that the *Bacillus paralyticans* is not the specific exciting cause of paralytic dementia. "It appears to be no more than an epi-phenomenon, a result of secondary infection, which may, perhaps, be especially frequent in certain regions—perhaps the Scottish climatic conditions are exceptionably favourable to its development; . . . cachectic paralytic dements may be especially liable to infection without the bacillus being in any way a cause of the disease; it is possible, of course, that the bacillus may be a cause of the consequences or frequent complications of paralytic dementia (ictus, *i.e.*, congestive seizures); and this is a matter well worthy of further study, especially with a view to the prevention of these complications (the anti-paralytic serum of Robertson for the prevention of congestive seizures.)"

M. EDEN PAUL.

On Some Reflexes in Hysteria [De quelques réflexes dans l'hystérie].
(*Gaz. des Hôp.*, Dec. 1st, 1908.) Roger, H.

The author discusses the pharyngeal, conjunctival and pupillary

¹ See page 558, epitome of O'Brien's "Experimental Observations into the Ætiology and Treatment of Paresis."

reflexes. The pharyngeal reflex is frequently absent in hysteria. Since, however, this occurs in many other disorders and it may be voluntarily inhibited, the symptoms cannot be regarded as a definite stigma of hysteria or in any way pathognomonic. It is noteworthy that the reflex is usually abolished in smokers and drinkers. The conjunctival reflex is also often lost in various other diseases and its absence may result from suggestion. As regards the pupillary reflexes there is some difference of opinion. Many writers have, however, noted its absence during convulsive attacks and also variations in the size of the pupils. Dilatation from painful cutaneous stimulation persists even if the stimulated area is anæsthetic. An extensive bibliography is appended to the article.

H. DEVINE.

Swindling and Hypnosis [Escroquerie et Hypnose]. (Arch. de Psych., Oct., 1907). Leroy, B.

The following case, in addition to its purely psychological interest, is of considerable medico-legal importance.

In September, 1902, Alf., a young married woman, presented herself at the Salpêtrière complaining of incessant persecution on the part of a neighbour. She stated that Berthe, the individual in question, was able to move the furniture about without contact, and to introduce strange sounds and ventriloquist voices into her apartment. Further, Berthe had acquired such influence over Alf. as to force her to hand over all her furniture to her persecutor. The patient's grandmother confirmed this strange story, and added that she herself had been victimised, having been forced to sign a receipt for 950 fr.—none of which had been received—representing the price of some furniture that had been removed.

Investigation revealed the following facts. In 1901 the patient's brother-in-law and his wife (Berthe) came to live in the same house as that in which Alf. and her husband had apartments. Both the new arrivals had rather bad reputations, in consequence of which there was but little communication between the two families.

In June, 1902, Berthe attempted to gain an influence over Alf. by various crude methods which cannot be here detailed. Wearying of tactics which were unsuccessful she engaged in sleight of hand manoeuvres—table rapping, strange noises, furniture moving—which completely duped the grandmother, but not the less credulous Alf., who rightly attributed the phenomena to Berthe, whom she thought was antagonistic and spiteful to her. Finding legerdemain useless, Berthe next tried ventriloquism—imitating the voices of dead relatives, etc. By these means both Alf. and her grandmother became convinced that they were menaced by spirits, and adopted various superstitious practices to rid themselves of their trouble. Eventually in consequence of threats from these “voices” and in obedience to their commands they handed over money and various articles to Berthe, on one occasion giving a receipt as related above.

In the case of the grandmother, who was definitely senile, it is easy to understand how her credulity would make her the ready victim of a clever and designing woman. Alf., however, was more level-headed, and it seemed at first strange that she also should have been duped.