resulting. All of these manouevres were efficient in relieving tension, but she was ashamed of her actions, talked about them little to family or friends, and always completed the acts when alone. At the age of 18 intractable headaches developed. An appointment with a neurologist was arranged, and benign intracranial hypertension was diagnosed on the basis of papilloedema, CT scan, and lumbar puncture, and was subsequently treated with serial lumbar punctures.

Following this procedure, both the headaches and feelings of tension disappeared. Despite a fairly turbulent life pattern over the subsequent few years no recurrence of the tension or headaches developed until the age of 22, when the subjective feelings of tension returned and the self-mutilating behaviour recommenced. Over the past few weeks she has suffered headaches of increasing severity, and she once more has papilloedema on clinical examination.

She is currently being investigated and treated for recurrence of benign intracranial hypertension by the neurologist.

Our case could well be described as being typical of someone engaged in repetitive self-mutilation, as is shown by a recent large study (Favazza & Conterio, 1989). The psychiatric literature on the subject of benign intracranial hypertension is sparse, but feelings of tension are described in most of the comprehensive neurological texts (Vinken & Bruyn, 1982).

In this particular case it is tempting to propose a model wherein subjective feelings of tension precipitated by benign intracranial hypertension induced self-mutilating behaviour, a proposal which would receive support from the temporal relationship with the symptom complexes and which must lead to the speculation that perhaps benign intracranial hypertension may be an underlying, undiagnosd factor in a larger proportion of patients with repetitive self-mutilation than has so far been realised. It would seem essential to perform a funduscopic examination when reviewing these patients.

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A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Dr Brown-Séquard's hypodermic fluid

The extraordinary statements made by Professor Brown-Séquard as to the efficiency of hypodermic injections of fluid expressed from the testicles of young animals in senile debility have been to a certain extent confirmed by M. Variot, who made a communication to the Société de Biologie on June 29th. The patients chosen were debilitated men, aged 54, 56 and 68 years respectively, and they were not informed of the nature of the treatment adopted. In all three cases the injections were followed by general nervous excitement, increased muscular power, and stimulation and regulation of digestion. M. Brown-Séquard said that M. Variot's observations disposed of the objection that the results he had observed in himself were due to "suggestion".

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Research by Henry Rollin, Emeritus Consultant Psychiatrist, Horton Hospital, Surrey

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