he was ordinarily so fond of, he merely replied that he did not want them. He did not appear to connect me in any way with his not wanting these particular dishes, but seemed really not to desire them. Furthermore, he was told on November 10th that he would want to write to his friend Jenny the following Sunday (November 14th) at 3 p.m. He actually wrote a letter to his friend on November 14th and at 3 p.m. When asked why he had written then he said that he was due to write a letter—as a matter of fact he had not written for four months, he said. Here, again, he did not connect me with the incident in any way, but evidently regarded it as a quite spontaneous act.

In conclusion, I should like to add that in my hypnotic suggestions I have rarely tried to make suggestions directly in opposition to the patients' known likes or inclinations. In the one notable case where I attempted it, namely, that of J. S—, whom I tried to wean from the habit of smoking, I was successful for only a few days. The habit quickly reasserted itself; but perhaps with a long-continued habit of this sort it would be necessary to persevere for days together in order to produce any permanent result. Certainly the ordinary method of hypnotic suggestion, however forcefully carried out, was quite inadequate.

Finally, I should like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. W. A. Parker for permission to publish these notes, and for the facilities he has accorded me generally in their production.

A Case of Moral Insanity with Pyromania.

By H. D. MACPHAIL, M.A., M.B., Assistant Medical Officer, City of Newcastle Asylum, Gosforth.

THE following are a few notes of an interesting case of a male patient, who was admitted here in July, 1910, after giving himself up to the police, because he had an uncontrollable desire to set fire to haystacks:

He is a healthy, robust man, æt. 49, well proportioned and developed, and looks a good specimen of the labouring class. His palate is highly arched; he stammers in speech, especially when excited, and his articulation is indistinct, otherwise there is nothing to note about his physical condition.

His life story, as told by himself, is one long succession of crimes and consequent punishment. He was always wayward, and while still a boy he ran away from home. His first serious offence was committed at the age of fourteen, when he set fire to a house which was being built. After this he was placed in a reformatory, where he frequently felt inclined to set things on fire, but never actually did so. At the age of twenty-two, on the instigation of some unscrupulous man, he broke into a shop and stole goods, which he handed over to this person. After serving a six months' sentence for this he broke into a jeweller's shop

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and stole rings and jewellery because he wanted some money. Since then he has set fire to haystacks on three occasions, and has undergone penal servitude. Since his release he had attempted to set fire to stacks several times. He then gave himself up to the police, was certified, and sent here.

When asked why he sets fire to things, he says it is because he cannot help it; he says he feels he must do it, and is never satisfied until he has made the attempt. He describes how, as he walks along the road, he has peculiar sensations in his head, he hears bells ringing and voices shouting, "Fire! Fire! Go and do it." He then adds, "I do it; I cannot help it." He says this uncontrollable desire comes and goes; it may be present for a fortnight at a time, and then be entirely absent for three or four weeks on a stretch. He says he commits theft without thinking much about it; he steals the articles because he wishes to have them.

He says that, as long as he can remember, bright and glittering objects always had a great fascination for him. He has often stolen trinkets even when he could make no use of them. As a child he was fond of playing with fire. He describes how he would set fire to pieces of paper and take delight in waving them round his head. He often amused himself by lighting fires in the backyard and dancing round the blaze.

Since his admission here he has been quiet and well-behaved, is fond of reading, and takes an intelligent interest in his surroundings. He is a willing worker, and does anything from ward helping to working with pick and shovel. He says he still, at times, feels the desire to set fire to things. On several occasions he has told those about him that he would like to set fire to the asylum. Once or twice, while walking in the grounds, he became very excited at the sight of a heap of garden rubbish on fire, he gesticulated and clapped his hands, and appeared in an ecstasy of delight. When the desire comes upon him he says he does not feel quite as usual, and has been noted to be quieter and rather moody.

This case is very interesting both from the clinical and the medico-legal aspects. The man does not conform to the ordinary laws of Society, and the question arises as to whether he is to be held responsible for his actions. Are we to regard him as a criminal or as a person who is insane, or is it possible that he may be a malingerer? It is not likely that he is malingering, as his experience in the past of imprisonment and penal servitude would hardly induce him to persevere in such a course. In examining the circumstances connected with his misdeeds, we find that they differ somewhat from what we would expect in the case of an ordinary criminal. There is throughout an absence of adequate motive. His acts of theft are committed on very slight pretexts; on the first occasion, because he is prompted by an unscrupulous person who wishes

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to profit by his misconduct; and on the second, because he wishes to possess the articles regardless of consequences. His acts of incendiarism were prompted by no adequate motive. They differ from the thefts in that they appear to be impulsive in nature. They are committed because he feels he must obey the impulse, as he believes he cannot rest until he has set fire to something.

This appears to be a case of moral insanity with periodic impulsiveness. The patient is deficient in the moral sense, and has a very elementary idea of the difference between right and wrong. He is unable to adapt himself to the conditions of existing Society. He is not to be held responsible for his actions, and must therefore be deprived of his liberty, and his detention is in the interests both of himself and of the public.

My best thanks are due to Dr. Callcott, Medical Superintendent, for permission to report this case.

Occasional Notes.

The Prevention of the Propagation of Imbeciles and Defectives.

Preventive medicine is hourly becoming more prominent in the national life, and of all questions concerning the national health probably there are few receiving more consideration by those interested in the progress of the community than this, of the propagation of imbeciles. The Medico-Psychological Association, so largely the custodian of this section of the population, should naturally be expected to be foremost in considering and advising the nation in everything relating to this subject.

That imbeciles and defectives are being produced on a large scale by parents of the same class is too well known to demand any reiteration of the facts and figures on which this statement is based. A single quotation from the recent Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy is a sufficient confirmation and illustration, both of the fact and of the serious extent of the evil: "In *one* country workhouse, . . . the visiting Commissioner, . . . found three women of the (weak-minded) class who had between them had eleven illegitimate children, and

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