

b.—PATHOLOGY OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM, AND PATHOLOGICAL ANATOMY.

THE DIAGNOSTIC VALUE OF THE TENDON-REFLEX.—Dr. A. McLane Hamilton, *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, Dec. 19, gives an account and analysis of eight cases of locomotor ataxia, in four of which the tendon-reflex was absent, as is stated to be the case in this disease by Westphal, while in the remainder it was present and in some cases even exaggerated. These latter were not less marked instances of the disease than the others, so far as the diagnosis could be made during life.

The deduction of Tschiriew that the absence of this symptom indicates a degeneration of the posterior columns at the horizon of the third and fourth roots of the crural plexus, and that when the morbid process does not reach as low as this, it may still be present, may perhaps account for the variations we observe, but further investigations and post-mortems are requisite before we can give this symptom its exact value in diagnosis.

Dr. C. H. Hughes, *St. Louis Medical and Surgical Journal*, Feb., also devotes a paper to this subject, in which he gives the result of the testing of this phenomenon in a number of healthy individuals, and patients suffering from nervous disorders, and concludes, that its absence is by no means necessarily diagnostic of any spinal disease, and only of importance when associated with other symptoms.

THE following is the abstract of a paper read before the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, Jan. 28 (rep. in *Brit. Med. Jour.*, Feb. 1), by Dr. W. R. Gowers, and entitled "A Study of the So-called Tendon-Reflex Phenomena," together with the discussion that succeeded it :

The paper recorded a series of observations on the two forms of muscular spasms commonly known under the above designation ; that normally produced in the quadriceps extensor of the knee on striking the patellar tendon (knee-reflex), usually absent in locomotor ataxy and excessive in lateral sclerosis of the spinal cord ; and that clonic movement which occurs at the ankle-joint on sudden dorsal flexion of the foot, in lateral sclerosis of the cord (ankle-clonus). To ascertain the characters of the knee-reflex, it was examined in three hundred patients, of whom one hundred and fifty were the subjects of simple epilepsy. Of the whole three hundred, it was absent on both sides in eighteen, of whom five had ataxy, three paraplegia without ataxy, one suffered from old hemiplegia, one from vertigo, one from tumor cerebri, one from old rickets, and the remaining six from epilepsy, five being girls. Two only of the eighteen were good walkers. Of twenty-seven hemiplegics, the reflex was equal on the two sides in thirteen, excessive on the weaker side in fourteen. In three cases, it was absent in one leg only ; two of these presented weakness of the leg in which it was present ; in the third it was absent in the leg in which the patella had been fractured