

spinal fluid. On the other hand, if laking does not take place, then the complement must have been previously fixed by the combination of the syphilitic antigen from the liver and syphilitic antibody in the cerebro-spinal fluid.

While Wassermann's observations have received the widest confirmation, his interpretation of the phenomenon has met with serious criticism, and is to-day practically discredited. It is quite true that the reaction just described is positive in over 95 per cent. of cases of parasyphilis, and negative in other diseases, so that beyond doubt there is some substance in the cerebro-spinal fluid, which, when combined with syphilitic virus, has the power of fixing complement and of thus inhibiting haemolysis. But the nature of this substance is a far more disputable matter. That it is not a specific syphilitic antibody seems to be certain from the observations made, first by Weil and Braun, that it shows the same power of inhibiting haemolysis when combined with other substances than syphilitic virus—for instance, lecithin. It is now known that the place of the syphilitic antigen can be taken by a number of substances, including lecithin, bile salts, brain emulsion, normal liver emulsion, etc.; and Benecke has recently brought evidence to show that the efficacy of the syphilitic liver in Wassermann's experiments is due to the presence in large quantities of a peculiar soap pellicle that surrounds the fat droplets characteristic of that lesion.

Leaving, however, the theoretical aspect of the question, we have to note that all workers at the subject—notably Plaut, Morgenroth, and Stertz, Marie, Levaditi, Yamanouchi, Weil, Eichelberg, and Neubauer—are unanimous as to the high practical value of Wassermann's discovery. It may be said at once that it is the most certain sign of general paralysis we at present possess. Its only disadvantage is the complexity of its application, and before it can be of much value in practice it will have to be considerably simplified.

Two other methods may be briefly mentioned. In 1907, Fornet and Schereschewsky stated that the serum of a luetic patient gives a specific precipitate with the