

attempt to effect a reposition of the cord, and should be given so as to cause a complete relaxation of the muscular fibres. Reposition of the cord should be confined, with a few exceptions, to cases of prolapse occurring with a head presentation.—*Medical and Surgical Journal*.

THE AUTOMATIC MAN.

Under this appellation is given, in the *Gazette Hebdomadaire* of July 17, a curious case which has come under the observation of Dr. Mesnet, of the St. Antoine Hospital. A young man during the late war, had a portion of the left parietal bone, about eight centimetres in extent, carried away by a ball. Hemiplegia of the right side was the result, but this gradually disappeared. For sometime past he has been subject to attacks, lasting from twenty-four to forty-eight hours, attended by very extraordinary phenomena. During these, he seems to act like an automaton, walking continually, incessantly moving his jaw (*machonnant*); knitting his brow, and appearing absolutely insensible to all that surrounds him. Not uttering a word, he walks straight forward, and when he meets with an obstacle stops short, explores it with his hand, and tries to pass on one side of it. Surrounded by a circle of persons, he stops at each and endeavors to pass by the intervals formed by their joined hands, then turns back, comes in contact with the next person and resumes his round. All this time he never manifests the slightest consciousness, just as if he were in a state of somnambulism. He is absolutely insensible to pain, so that pins may be thrust through the cheeks or into the fingers, or very powerful electric shocks may be administered without the slightest sensibility being manifested. What, however, is very remarkable is, that by bringing him into relation with certain objects we are enabled to determine in him the entire series of acts which are correlated with the sensation thus aroused. Thus, if a pen be placed in his hand, he seeks for ink and paper and writes a letter in good hand, in which he speaks very sensibly about matters that concern him. If a leaf of cigarette paper is placed in his hand, he feels in his pocket for the tobacco, rolls up the cigarette very adroitly, and having found his match box lights it. If the match be extinguished just as it reaches the cigarette, he finds another, and that several times till he is allowed to light his cigarette. If, at the moment when the match is extinguished another already lighted is presented to him in its place, it is impossible to induce him to light his cigarette by the substituted match. He allows his moustache to become burned without offering any resistance, but will not employ the light thus presented to him.

Among the various experiments devised by Dr. Mesnet, there is one which is particularly curious. The young man is a singer at concerts by profession, and if gloves be placed in his hands he immediately puts them on, and searches for paper. When a roll of this resembling music in form is given him, he places himself in the proper position and begins to sing. It would seem, in fact, that tactile sensation

induced in him becomes the point of departure, and as if of escape of a series of acts correlated to their initial sensation—acts which he accomplishes automatically, without letting them deviate from their habitual and regular succession. Lastly, it is noted that, while in this singular condition, the patient steals all that comes within his grasp. If he touches any person, he feels for his watch pocket, and invariably detaches the watch and puts it in his own pocket, from whence it may be removed without his making the slightest opposition. The crisis once over, he has no recollection whatever of what he has been doing, and becomes again perfectly reasonable.

The questions that such a case must give rise to for the reflection of the physician and physiologist are striking. How, indeed, is such a fact to be characterized? And what idea is to be formed concerning the modifications of the functions of the nervous system which it exhibits? A no less interest must be felt by the medical legist, for evidently during these crises such an individual must be absolutely irresponsible. But, how under similar circumstances, are the facts to be ascertained.

What preceded is a mere sketch of some of the features of this curious case. Dr. Mesnet, armed with all the resources derived from a consummate experience in the study of mental diseases, has had for some time under consideration, and will immediately publish a memoir upon the subject.—*Medical Times and Gazette*, July 25, 1874.

ON LACERATIONS OF THE PERINEUM.

Dr. Wm. Goodell, in the *Phil. Med. and Surg. Reporter* for February 21st, 1874, says: The immediate closure of the rent in lacerations of the perineum ought by this time to be fully recognized by the profession as a very important means for the prevention of future mischief to the reproductive organs. As I have elsewhere shown (*Transactions of the State Med. Society of Penn. for 1873*), and here take the liberty of repeating, the loss of every fibre of muscle in the perineum entails a corresponding loss of power in the floor of the pelvis, and a consequent impairment of support to the reproductive organs. The sustaining power of the vaginal column depends upon the integrity of its perineal abutments. It is the toniccy of the vaginal walls, and the pelvic connections of the womb, that mainly keep it in place. These, in a case of a torn perineum, may not at once yield, but will sooner or later; for air gains access to the womb, irritating and congesting it to such a degree that it ultimately prolapses from an acquired hypertrophy. Unless, therefore, the rent is simply cutaneous, or very slight indeed, it should not be left to nature. Further, it is far more rational to take advantage of the necessary confinement in bed after delivery, and to close the wound at once, while its surface is raw, and the maternal soft parts are comparatively numb and insensible, than to postpone the operation to a time when the woman shall be nursing, when the cicatrized flaps shall demand