

provincial penitentiary for five years. The defense alleged the personator committed his lawless acts while under the influence of liquor, and that he was irresponsible, as he had no remembrance of the acts so committed. The medical evidence in support of this contention designated the disease as "Alcoholic Neuritis," a most unfortunate expression, as by it the conduct of the personator could not be satisfactorily explained. It is sometimes difficult and often impossible to give a name to groups of nervous phenomena to which undoubtedly this case belongs.

I will start with the assertion of the possibility of elaborate automatic acts being performed by drunkards, and there may be no subsequent recollection of them.

Coming to the specific case which has suggested this article, is it possible for a personator to go from one polling booth to another, voting falsely, giving correct, or rather incorrect, replies to scrutineers, personating repeatedly, and yet the next day and thereafter be perfectly oblivious of the whole nefarious business without a shred of recollection of a single link in the whole chain of fraud?

On the principle of mental automatism caused by the suspension of the higher (inhibitory) centres such an act can be explained and understood. One can imagine the sneering incredulity with which this hypothesis would be received by a judge and that conglomerate mass of matter called the jury.

Analogous conditions produced by such diseases as epilepsy, acute insanity, sudden intracranial hemorrhage, and by certain drugs, opium and belladonna assist us in elucidating the automatism of drunkards. During acute temporary insanity of epileptics crimes have been carefully planned and skilfully executed, the prisoners escaping, eluding with equal skill the officers of the law. Yet, when confronted with their crimes they have no recollection of them whatever.

When alcohol is taken in intoxicating, not comatosing, doses, a certain number

of victims is reduced to a mere automatic condition. The general doctrine involved in all these cases is the abolition of the influence of the highly evolved inhibitory centres, allowing the lower and grosser centres full unrestrained play. The result is automatic language and movement apart from consciousness.

The action of opium varies, like alcohol, according to individual temperament and the amount administered. Speaking of the effects of opium, Anstie writes: "The apparent exaltation of certain faculties should be ascribed rather to the removal of controlling influences than to the positive stimulation of the faculties themselves or of the physical machinery by which they work."

In like manner the boisterous conduct, the silly behaviour, the maudlin sentiment, the boastful prowess, and the lewd songs of the drunkard are all due to involvement of the higher centres presiding over the highest mind processes, the more automatic faculties running riot.

I can produce numerous instances of mental automatism as complicated and elaborate as in the case of the personator alluded to.

A Cambridge don, while under the influence of liquor, gave a brilliant lecture upon his subject which elicited the surprise and admiration of his class, and the next day and thereafter he had no recollection of the event. He did not know he had given the lecture or that he had been present in the lecture room.

A friend of mine of wide information and considerable intellectual endowments, has no recollection of his doings while under the influence of liquor. When told of his sustained arguments, brilliant repartee and various peregrinations while having a night of it, he is amazed and states he remembers nothing.

As to the legal responsibility of persons influenced by drink, that is no affair of the medical profession, still the doctrine enunciated may be used in mitigation of punishment.