Miscellany

THE INFLUENCE OF SMALL DOSES OF ALCOHOL ON THE CAPACITY FOR MANUAL WORK. W. H. R. Rivers and H. N. Webber (*The British Journal of Psychology*, January, 1908.)

The results obtained by investigation of this problem are very contradictory. Thus Lombard, Rossi, Frey, and in some cases, Joteyko have found the amount of work decidedly increased after doses of from 5 to 20 c.c. of absolute alcohol. Destrée and in some cases Joteyko have found a decided decrease with the use of the same doses; and Schaffer and Féré found an initial increase by a fall below normal. Schumberg and Schnyder obtained positive results which, however, varied according to the conditions of the experiment.

The authors, for their work, endeavored to have each experiment under, as far as possible, exactly similar conditions. The experiments were undertaken at the same hour each day, and at the same interval after a meal which was of the same kind and amount. The other conditions of life were also regulated. The same amount of work was done. The same amount of exercise taken at the same times. Disturbing factors were avoided and all articles of food containing caffeine or alcohol were prohibited.

The most important factor to regulate, however, was believed to be the mental state and it is in this particular that these experiments are unique. The method employed to accomplish this result was the use of control substances. The most successful control was a mixture of capicum, cardamon, chloroform and peppermint. This mixture so disguised the taste of alcohol that the subject could not tell when alcohol was administered and when the mixture was free from alcohol. By this method the authors believe they have done away with the disturbing factors of suggestion, sensory stimulation, and interest. Further control experiments were made with mixtures not so decidedly unpleasant but on the contrary pleasant, to determine whether this factor entered into the results. Of course, in both cases the alcoholic mixture had the same taste as the control. A further control experiment was made by giving the alcohol with the full knowledge of the subject. The instrument used for determining the effect on muscular work was Kraepelin's modification of Mosso's ergograph.

As a result of the experiments carried on along these lines the authors conclude that "Doses varying from 5 to 20 c.c. of pure alcohol are without effect on the capacity for muscular work when the factors of interest, sensory stimulation, and suggestion are excluded."

This conclusion is very interesting and seems to be more in harmony with what we might naturally expect than many of the results of experimental work that has been done. In view of the well-known depressing and paralyzing effects of alcohol this conclusion would make it doubtful if it was under any circumstances even for the first half hour or so after ingestion, as has been claimed, a stimulant. This probability is strengthened by the fact that increase in muscular work was found only once after taking alcohol and that then the subject's knowledge and the immediacy of its action lead the authors to the conclusion that the result was largely psychical in origin. They believe "that the results of most of those who have found the capacity for muscular work increased under the influence of such doses as 5 and 10 c.c. have been due, not to the physiological action of the substance, but to the interest aroused by

taking the alcohol and the sensory stimulation involved in swallowing it, while those who have found a diminution in the amount of work must be open to the charge of having been influenced by suggestion."

WHITE.

THE RELATION OF THE MEDULLA OBLONGATA TO THE PUPIL. L. Bach (Münch. med Woch., 54, 1907, June 18).

The author ascertained through experiments on monkeys, cats and rabbits that decapitation does not destroy the light reflex of the pupil unless there is an injury to the medulla extending to the fourth ventricle, when the light reflex disappears at once. Ruge obtained the same results from his investigations. To further explain these results H. Meyer and the author have made sections through the medulla of a cat, near the spinal end of the fourth ventricle and found that these caused the light reflex to disappear and a dilation of the pupils, while sections above or below that point never produced these phenomena. Exposure of the medulla or application of irritants also influenced the light reaction and produced myosis. As not all sections made at the spinal end of the fourth ventricle caused the light reflex to disappear, Meyer and the writer concluded that only a very circumscribed area was concerned with the light reflex, and are of the opinion that this small area is the pupillary center in the spinal end of the fourth ventricle. Burke and Trendelenburg in their eight experiments on cats were unable to obtain the same results as Bach. These authors are of the opinion that Bach's hypothesis of an inhibitory center must be abandoned.

FRED J. CONZELMANN (U. S. Army).

PARANOIA AND THE WORKINGMEN'S AID FUND. Dr. Tintemann (Münch. med. Woch., 54, 1907, July 23).

The author reports two cases in which two cases of physical injuries of a trivial nature were the exciting causes of the psychosis. Case No. 1, admitted January 1903: A man of marked neurotic and vesanic taint received contusions of the soft parts of the left leg in 1895 which incapacitated him for work for a long time. He received full support for one and one half years from the workingmen's aid fund, when he was declared to be able to earn his own living and all aid was withdrawn. Since then he has been striving, employing legal measures, to obtain the allowance of the aid fund. In addition to the complaint of the injured leg he now has general nervous affections. He felt that he was ill treated by everybody; many wrongs were done to him; he was fully convinced of his incapacity to work; wrote threatening letters to higher authorities. He was weak-minded and showed a marked judgment defect. In the court the question was asked whether the mental disturbance was a direct or an indirect result of the injury. The author expresses the opinion that the injury was the exciting cause in an individual with marked hereditary predispositions, and the patient was therefore entitled to at least part of the support of the aid fund. The second case was that of a laborer, who on account of rheumatism resigned his position and demanded that the annual rental allowance be allowed him for disability. When this was refused he began legal measures, had law suit after law suit which never terminated in his favor. He came in conflict with city officials. Refused to send his child to school; would not buy any shoes for the child in order to show his poverty; was brought to court and fined, refused to pay his fine; was imprisoned; when