

ALCOHOL-PRODUCED AMNESIA.

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IT is a well-known fact that when a person is under the influence of an anæsthetic the period so occupied is subjectively telescoped and abbreviated into a moment of time. On "coming round" there is no recollection of the intercurrent events of the interval, nor of the interval itself. Thus, just before "laughing gas" is inhaled a patient may be set counting: "One—two—three"; consciousness may then be lost, and a molar tooth extracted without a wince. Upon recovery the counting will be resumed: "Four—five—six." Similarly, some years back, when a penny journal was giving away ten-pound notes, a hospital patient left his ward for a prolonged operation, thinking: "I wish I could meet the Ten Pounds Man." Two hours later, upon regaining consciousness, his first thought, albeit erroneous, was: "I've got the ten pounds!"

The drinking of alcohol has a like effect. Where the toxic effect is chronic it is not uncommon for the victim, when conversing, to repeat the same questions and to narrate the same incidents at inconceivably short intervals to the same companion, even during the same conversation; further, recent impressions—names, faces, facts—appear to penetrate little deeper than the sense organs of hearing or of sight, and so are hardly recollected by the memory. In sporadic drunkenness [several practical tests are available consequent upon this amnesia: "They have stricken me and I was not hurt; they have beaten me and I felt it not." A common excuse for indulging in excess is in order that a wretched person "may forget his misery." If a drunken man is asked the time of night, he will offer in reply the time at which he began his drinking, and he will express dissenting surprise

when his overpatient wife tells him it is long past midnight. If a drunken man is asked the amount of loose money in his pockets, he will state the sum originally there before he began to drink to excess, and he will disappoint his wife, who may be waiting for her full housekeeping allowance from his wages. A medical man of the writer's acquaintance met a professional friend emerging from an East End hostelry. It appeared he was attending a child not far away. My friend was asked: "I'm sober, am I not?" "Just normal. Why?" "Such a funny thing has just happened. As I came away from the patient her mother said: 'Oh, doctor! is there no hope? Must she die?' 'No; please God, we'll pull her through. She'll be out and about in a few weeks!' 'Oh, doctor! we thought there was no hope, for this is the third visit you've paid this afternoon!'" Needless to say, after each visit he had returned to the hostelry, and while there remembered that he had a patient to visit close by.

Certain criminal associations have been explained by men in drink passing through a "dream place," when they have acted irresponsibly. It is said that the quarrels at Donnybrook were only among the intoxicated, who continued the unsettled disputes which were quite forgotten while the parties were sober.

One moral of this fact is: never take a pledge, for good or for ill, from the lips or from the pen of a man "in liquor."

" Indeed! indeed! Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?"