over-distension, I have not the least doubt, and may I suggest that, in Dr. Norman's case, it was not the strain caused by excessive shouting, but the increase of intra-thoracic pressure in resisting anything being done for her by the attendants.

Such cases are, indeed, very rare, and I cannot find any other record of a similar case in this asylum.

Occasional Notes.

Crook v. *Crook and Horrocks.*

DR. CROOK sought a dissolution of marriage on the ground of the adultery of his wife with Dr. Horrocks. Mrs. Crook suffered from some uterine trouble, for which, under her husband's advice, she consulted Dr. Horrocks. She visited the latter at his consulting-rooms, and stayed for two or three days at a nursing home near by. The attendance lasted, at intervals which do not appear to have been absolutely frequent, and were certainly not increasingly frequent, from November, 1896, to October, 1898. In May, 1898, Mrs. Crook, who had been married in 1891, had her first child. In November, 1899, she suddenly came into the room in which Dr. Crook was sitting and said to him, "I have something I must tell you. I have broken the seventh commandment." On being asked when it happened and who was the man, she replied, "Heaps of times with Dr. Horrocks." Asked why she did not tell it before, she said that she did not wish to get other people into trouble, but it was unhappily only too true. She repeated the statement in various forms. She also said that Dr. Horrocks had the most extraordinary influence over her, and that she never ought to have seen him. It is remarkable that after making her confession she asked her husband with what appeared to him to be perfect good faith, "What does committing adultery mean?" Subsequently she made a confession in writing, and, in reply to questions, said that the very first time she saw Dr. Horrocks they kissed each other, and that on each subsequent occasion of her seeing him at his consulting-rooms they committed adultery. The witnesses agreed that she was a woman of very ladylike and modest demeanour.

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In July, 1899, Dr. Crook consulted a woman who professed palmistry in Margate. He was impressed by what she told him, and communicated this impression to his wife. In August Mrs. Crook went to the woman, who told her that her marriage lines were broken, but not by death; that she had been unfaithful to her husband, and that there would be a dreadful scandal.

When Dr. Crook took proceedings against his wife, the latter naturally placed herself in the hands of her solicitors, who, it appears, were so impressed by her demeanour, that they advised her to consult Dr. Savage. She did so on December 13th, 1899, and, having seen her, Dr. Savage wrote to Dr. Crook expressing the opinion that the charges that she had made against herself were probably only hysterical fancies, and suggested the same to the patient. She made answer, "That is not my case; mine is true," but subsequently she declared that the whole thing was a delusion on her part, due to the powerful impression made upon her by the declaration of the palmist. The President summed up with the most absolute impartiality, and without giving the jury any indication of a lead, and the jury disagreed, and were equally divided. Probate and Divorce Division, March 2nd, 5th, 7th, and 8th, 1900, *Times*, following dates.

Such is a very brief *résumé* of the facts of this case, a case of great psychological interest. The story of Mrs. Crook's adultery rests entirely upon her own uncorroborated confession, a confession which she subsequently withdrew. But it is to be remarked that before withdrawing it she adhered to it for several months, and that she was fully aware in making it of the terrible consequences that it would entail, not only upon herself but on Dr. Horrocks, and that in spite of this spontaneously, and without any sort of provocation, or occasion; without any prospect of deriving benefit for herself or her child, or anyone dear to her; without, in short, any discernible motive; she did in fact make this accusation against herself and him. The question that presents itself to every student of the human mind is, What was her motive in making this confession, *a*, supposing it was true; *b*, supposing it was false?

Supposing that her confession was true, the motive naturally alleged by Dr. Crook's counsel was that of remorse. "Why on earth, it was asked, should she suddenly have confessed her

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guilt after years of silence? Why did Constance Kent seven years after the murder of the child confess from the seclusion of her retreat? From the motive that had made thousands of persons confess since the world began—namely to unburden her mind." This is a very fair argument and, granting the truth of the confession, there is nothing inconsistent with experience in the confession being delayed for months and even years. But the whole story told by Mrs. Crook is intrinsically so extremely improbable, that were it not balanced by the improbability that any sane person would make such an accusation against herself if it were not true, no one would believe it. But of these improbabilities the second is undoubtedly the greater. Granting that Mrs. Crook was in all respects sane at the time of her confession, either her story is true, or in confessing falsely she was actuated by an undiscoverable sane motive. But the circumstances of her life are so well known to her relatives as practically to destroy this latter alternative, so that the question that the jury had to determine was practically whether Mrs. Crook's statement was true, or whether her statement was the outcome of disorder of mind.

Primâ facie her story is improbable in the extreme. She herself is a woman not only of irreproachable record, but of the most marked and distinguished modesty of demeanour. On the other hand, Dr. Horrocks' record is equally irreproachable. The members of every calling live, with respect to their colleagues in that calling, in houses of glass. Every carriage-builder in Long Acre knows of every other carriage-builder in that street whether his work is honest or shoddy, how he treats his workpeople, and all the details of his modes of managing his business. Every solicitor in London knows enough about every leading firm of solicitors to be confident as to whether, in dealing with them, he may expect fair treatment or sharp practice. And every practitioner in the neighbourhood of Cavendish Square knows quite well the general ethics of all the leading consultants in their dealing with their patients. If a surgeon has ever so slight a tendency to operate too frequently; if a specialist takes ever so little too generous a view of the limits of his speciality; if any practitioner is the least inclined to see his patients too frequently; every one knows of it. All his colleagues are quite well aware of his peculiarities, and if such a thing should happen as that a physician should exhibit

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gallantry towards his lady patients, not only would all the Portland estate ring with it, but not a practitioner in the country but would hear of it. That a man against whom the slightest shadow of suspicion of such a thing could exist could have been recently elected to the Examinership of the London University is utterly out of the question. And yet if we are to believe Mrs. Crook we must believe, not only that this modest, delicate-minded woman, who did not even know the meaning of the word adultery, kissed Dr. Horrocks the first time she ever saw him, and committed adultery with him the second time, but that Dr. Horrocks belied the record of his lifetime by displaying towards a patient, and that patient the wife of a brother practitioner, conduct that would revolt a Yahoo. *Nemo repente turpissimus*, says the old adage. How then shall we believe that any man, least of all a man of acknowledged probity and honour, could become *turpissimus repentissime?* Such considerations compel us to turn to the consideration of the state of mind of Mrs. Crook, to see whether in that we can find an explanation of her confession.

When Mrs. Crook withdrew her confession she attributed her delusion, as she then called it, to the influence of the palmist. This woman was first visited by Dr. Crook, who appears to have been deeply impressed by her, and who talked to his wife about her. Subsequently the wife goes to her and is told positively that she has committed adultery, and that there will be a great scandal. Her own account is that she was shocked and horrified at the statement, and that she brooded over it continuously until she persuaded herself that it was true. Whatever the palmist had told her husband was true, and therefore whatever the palmist told her must also be true; and at length she was convinced that it was true. After three months brooding over the matter she made her confession.

To the ordinary hard-headed juryman this story seems at least as unlikely as the other; but the question to the student of psychology is, "Is this story consistent with known facts? Is it consistent with experience that a person should falsely accuse herself under the influence of a delusion manufactured, as it were, by the promptings of another person? Have we any facts to guide us?" False confessions from which the confessing party does not seek to derive benefit are not very un-

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common. Whenever a very notorious crime is committed and the crime remains undiscovered, two or three sots are sure to come forward and confess to it; but these cases have no bearing on the present one. That insane persons very frequently accuse themselves falsely of all kinds of crimes and wickedness is, of course, well known; but then such persons manifest their insanity in other ways, and it is never in doubt, and Mrs. Crook evidently did not belong to this class. If her mind was unsound at all, it was unsound with reference to this particular subject only, and cases of ordinary melancholia exhibit no exact parallelism with hers.

No one who has witnessed the growth of an uneasy suspicion of general unworthiness into a delusion of wickedness of a particular kind, can doubt that, in a susceptible mind, the constant brooding upon a specific subject may contribute to the development of a delusion upon that subject. The growth of definite delusions in this manner is quite a common occurrence. It is true that the growth is not ordinarily traceable to suggestion from without. The suggestion usually comes from within, and is combated by those who surround the patient; but it is easy to recognise that if there existed any tendency to self-depreciation, a suggestion of criminality made from without, in a very positive manner, by a person believed to have exceptional and supernatural knowledge, would at once carry conviction, and give rise to a delusion. Such events are not now common, because self-depreciatory persons are carefully guarded against suggestions of the kind, but the time was when they were very common. Undoubtedly many of the confessions of witchcraft were due entirely to suggestion from without. It is undoubted that many of these confessions were extorted by torture, and are therefore valueless; and it is undoubted that some of them were deliberately made for a suicidal purpose. It is probable, also, that, as pointed out by Hume, in some of these cases the accused had actually employed means which they *bona fide* believed would raise the devil or injure others through his means. But still there remains a residue of cases in which the influence of suggestion alone remains to account for the confession. In the well-known case, for instance, of Isobel Gowdie, there appears to have been no influence operative beyond mere suggestion, and the same may be said of that notorious witch, Bessie Dunlop. Moreover, there is a case recorded by Sir George Mackenzie of

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a woman who was willing to confess that she was a witch, but asked first if a woman might be a witch and not know it, a position not very different from that of confessing to adultery without knowing the meaning of the word. Of the influence of hypnotism, and how far an hypnotic state might be responsible for such a confession as that of Mrs. Crook, it is useless to speak, for I do not pretend to any knowledge of hypnotism, and the professors of that art, while they are agreed that under its influence any susceptible person may be made to do anything, are agreed, also, that no person can by its influence be induced to commit a crime; and as the making of a confession of this nature is, if the confession is false, several degrees worse than the crime itself, it would seem that the exercise by the palmist of an hypnotic influence is excluded.

There is, at any rate, no doubt that many persons have, under the influence of suggestion from others, believed themselves guilty of crimes which they had never committed, and, under the influence of this belief, have made confessions in which the purely imaginary crimes were described with minute particularity of detail; nor that these confessions were made in full view of the terrible consequences that it was known they would entail. If we balance the two alternatives, on the one hand, whether both Mrs. Crook and Dr. Horrocks suddenly and simultaneously underwent a sudden and total revolution in their whole natures, and gave the lie to the whole of their past lives; or, on the other hand, whether Mrs. Crook was the victim of a delusion arising under circumstances peculiarly provocative of delusion, and known to have produced delirium in many previous instances, we cannot, under the ordinary canons of probability, avoid giving our adhesion very decidedly to the latter hypothesis.

C. MERCIER.

Degeneracy and the Increase of Diseases of the Nervous System and Insanity.

Dr. Ireland has recently attacked these problems,[1] and although "always with us," like the poor, they are and must remain of perennial interest, since the factors on which their solution depends are ever varying, never constant.

"Degeneracy" has been charged against every nation, in

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