

*Conception during Intoxication* [*Die Zeugung im Rausche und ihre Schädlichen Folgen*]. [*Zt. f. d. gesamte Neurol. u. Psychiat., Heft 1 and 2, Bd. xi, 1912.*] Näcke.

Some years ago Prof. Näcke discussed this question, and came to the conclusion that there is no reason to believe that the alleged evil effects on the offspring of conception during intoxication have ever been demonstrated. Since then the question has been discussed and investigated from various points of view, and Näcke now returns to it in order to ascertain whether there is any ground for modifying the conclusion previously reached.

The difficulties and fallacies surrounding the subject still remain. It is necessary to be reasonably certain that acute alcoholic poisoning (of which the usual but not necessary indication is intoxication) really existed at the time of coitus, that there was no other act of coitus, that both parties were hereditarily sound, and that no other temporary source of disturbance or exhaustion was present at the time. Näcke finds that among alleged cases recently reported only Holitscher's make any serious attempt to fulfil the conditions, and even these cases are too summarily reported, and leave many loopholes for doubt. Arguments based on group phenomena, without individual investigation, are obviously of no value. This is notably the case as regards Bezzola's oft-quoted statement that in Switzerland most imbeciles are conceived at popular festivals, especially those in connection with the wine industry, when drunkenness is common; it is quite clear that at such periods the unbalanced elements in the population will be specially prompted to sexual indulgence and will find special opportunity for such indulgence. Statistical associations of this kind are never decisive; they can at most present a possibility.

Difficulty and doubt, also, still surround the experimental attempts to demonstrate the action of alcohol on the generative elements. The experiments of Nicloux and Renaut, tending to show that alcohol speedily reaches the testicular fluids, are contradicted by others which indicate a special resistance of the testicle to toxic influences, and Kayserling states that there is still no evidence that alcohol can penetrate the spermatozoa themselves. Artificial fecundation in mammals with alcoholised semen has yielded very contradictory results, Ivanoff finding, indeed, that the semen is peculiarly refractory to alcohol. Féré's results with the alcoholic injection of eggs are certainly very interesting, but we do not know what bearing they have on man or other mammals.

The difficulties in the way of scientific proof are thus "colossal." We must content ourselves with probabilities in carefully investigated individual cases. It would appear that only in rare and exceptional cases is conception during intoxication attended with evil results to the offspring. Even as regards these exceptional cases we have no certainty, only a probability.

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