

condition described as explosive nervousness is or may be produced. Such patient may suffer from "fearful thoughts" and distressing apprehension of coming evil. Cessation of the drug brings about cessation of the symptoms. It is suggested that another symptom of over-stimulation is fever—witnessed in particular in the convalescent from typhoid. The article is too sketchy, but it should nevertheless serve to point a danger and make us wary. General experience will probably grant that in moderate dose both nux vomica and strychnine may be persisted in for long periods with benefit, but in ascending dosage, and indeed in any case, the action should be carefully watched. A stimulant should be essentially of temporary use, but only too often is it continued unnecessarily and harmfully through carelessness or neglect. This leading article concerns every department of medical practice.

*The Use of Strychnine in Alcoholism* (*Therapeutic Gazette*, November 15th, 1898).—Federoff (*Revue de Thérapeutique médico-chirurgicale*, June 1st, 1898) records twelve cases of beneficial action from strychnine in alcoholism. Strychnine moderates the catarrhal condition of the alimentary tract, and controls the neurasthenic symptoms, in particular the sleeplessness, so difficult to treat. The nervous restlessness of the alcoholic disappeared under the influence of the drug.

*On the Value of Potassium Permanganate as an Antidote to Morphia Poisoning*.—Messrs. Thornton and Ch. Holder have tested the statement made by Moor and others that potassium permanganate acts as an antidote to morphia even when injected beneath the skin. Their experiments upon dogs give a direct negative to this statement (*Therap. Monatshefte*, November, 1898; from *Therapeutic Gazette*, January, 1898).

The antidotal value of the permanganate when administered by the mouth is of course well established, and by direct experiment it may be shown that a fatal dose of morphia may be taken harmlessly if followed immediately by a few grains of potassium permanganate dissolved in water.

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#### ITALIAN RETROSPECT.

By W. FORD ROBERTSON, M.D.

*The Use of Lactophenin as an Hypnotic*.—Christiani (*Il Manicomio moderno*, 1898, No. 2) has recently very strongly advocated the use of lactophenin as an hypnotic in the sleeplessness of the insane. Although his paper has already been noticed in this country (see *Brit. Med. Journ.*, 1898, vol. ii, Epitome, par. 448), in view of the probable importance of the subject, and the fact that the alleged therapeutic value of the drug has received strong confirmation from the experiments of Namirez (*Brit. Med. Journ.*, 1899, vol. i, Epitome, par. 128), it may perhaps be useful to give an account of his observations here. He states that he has used lactophenin as an hypnotic in over two hundred cases of insanity, including practically all its various forms. He

administered it in doses of from two to three grammes suspended in sweetened mucilage, one hour after supper. He concludes that the drug has an hypnotic action which is certain, rapid, intense, prolonged, and free from any danger. This action manifests itself in from half an hour to one hour after administration. The sleep induced resembles natural sleep. It is profound, quiet, and restorative, lasting generally from four to nine hours. Return to consciousness is not accompanied by any sensory, motor, or gastro-intestinal disturbances. The drug has no cumulative action. Its prolonged use does not give rise to inconvenience of any kind. In one case of general paralysis its administration was followed by jaundice, which, however, he thinks may have been due to some other cause. He has not found any contra-indication to its use in the existence of morbid physical conditions in the insane, such as nephritis, cardiac disease, senility, pneumonia, &c. It may be given in any form of mental disease. In some instances it has failed, chiefly in cases of severe delirium. Like other hypnotics, it tends in many cases to gradually lose its effect. He believes that lactophenin is the hypnotic *par excellence* in insomnia of the insane accompanied by serious involvement of the physical health.

*The Treatment of Acute Delirium by Washing out of the Stomach.*—Dr. A. Marro, of Turin, the author of the important series of articles upon puberty which has recently appeared in the *Annali di Freniatria*, contributes to that journal (1898, f. 4) an interesting paper upon the cure of acute delirium by washing out of the stomach. He describes observations upon twelve cases, only five of which, however, presented the features of what he regards as acute delirium properly so called, namely, rapid onset of the disease, elevation of temperature, profound mental confusion with terrifying hallucinations, and general muscular twitchings. In all of these five cases the treatment was followed by rapid improvement in the mental condition, while of the remaining seven cases four recovered and three terminated fatally. He considers that these results not only furnish evidence of the high therapeutic value of repeated washing out of the stomach in acute delirium, but also contribute to our knowledge of the ætiology of the disease, since they demonstrate that the stomach may be the seat of the generation of the toxins, which when absorbed are capable of provoking the morbid phenomena of acute delirium. He regards his observations as bearing out the view of Ceni that this disease is the result of auto-intoxication by certain common pathogenic organisms.

*Interpretation of Donaggio's Reticulum in the Nerve-cell Protoplasm*—A. Donaggio (*Rivista sperimentale di Freniatria*, 1898, f. iii-iv) has made a further communication regarding the reticular figure demonstrated in certain nerve-cells by his modification of Ehrlich's methylene blue method (see *Journal of Mental Science*, 1899, p. 404). He now regards it as identical with the achromatic reticulum of the cytoplasm. He finds that the threads of the network are most brightly coloured in those portions of the cell in which the chromophile substance is known to be most abundant, and that these brightly coloured threads present a granular surface, while in some cells there can be observed an initial formation of chromatic particles or Nissl-bodies. On the ground of these observations he concludes that in the living state the chromatic

substance is disposed in the form of granules on the threads of the achromatic reticulum, and not in that of the larger aggregations which constitute the Nissl-bodies. It is on account of this disposition of these granules that his method, which does not alter their normal arrangement, reveals the achromatic reticulum both in the cell body and in the larger protoplasmic branches. It will be seen that this view of the arrangement of the chromatic substance of the protoplasm is very similar to that of van Gehuchten, who has maintained that the Nissl-bodies are essentially constituted by a granular incrustation upon the achromatic fibrils.

*Changes in the Nerve-cells of the Cæliac and Mesenteric Ganglia during Digestion.*—G. B. Pellizzi (*Annali di Freniatria*, 1898, f. 4) has made a series of observations upon the changes in the nerve-cells of the cæliac and superior mesenteric ganglia of the dog at different stages of digestion. He finds that the chromatic particles of the protoplasm become entirely or partially consumed with greater or less rapidity when these nerve-cells exhibit their functional activity, and that they are gradually formed again when this activity ceases. The process of reintegration is associated with certain changes in the nucleus. The results of this investigation probably constitute the most important evidence that has yet been obtained in confirmation of the much-disputed conclusion of Mann, formulated in 1894, that the chromatic substance is stored up in the protoplasm of the nerve-cell during rest, and consumed during functional activity.

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#### ALCOHOLISM AND ALLIED NEUROSES.

By G. R. WILSON, M.D.

Three years' numbers of the *Journal of Inebriety* contain contributions which may well be repeated in summary form, and brought before readers of the JOURNAL.

*Alcoholic Neuroses.*—Dr. Howard, Baltimore, contributes a short article on "Alcoholic Maniacal Epilepsy" (July, 1897). He properly emphasises the importance of *petit mal* in alcoholism. Distinction must be drawn between the "drunken stare" which persists during consciousness, and which may accompany conversation, and the "epileptic stare," which is sharp, sudden, with fixation of the oculi-motor organs, and which ceases with a return to consciousness. The minor attacks may last only a few seconds, may be accompanied by the sudden grasping of an object near at hand, but are compatible with the erect attitude and may pass unnoticed. Such attacks are common, and many of them may precede a violent epileptic *furor*—"a period of anger preceded by a calm attitude; then comes the sudden period of ferocity during which the deed is done; almost immediate subsidence of the furor, followed by partial or complete ignorance of the act."

"*Epilepsia Alkoholika*" (January, 1898, Dr. Stern, New York.)—As in Dr. Howard's paper, it is assumed that alcoholism "causes" epilepsy.