SULLA OPPORTUNITÀ ED EFFICACIA DELLA CURA CHIRURGICO-GINECOLOGICO NELLA NEUROSÌ ISTERICA. (E nelle alienazioni mentali.) Risulta di una inchiesta internazionale. Dottori G. Angelucci e A. Pieraccini, Naples, 1897.

As a result of an international inquiry into the relations of gynecology to nervous and mental disorders, and the hopes of operative cure in such cases where such a relationship is stated to be established, the authors present a careful and extended statistical study. In all, they received from alienists, neurologists and gynecologists some 117 replies in full for all the points asked about. As a result of their analysis of these 117 cases, they eliminate at first six cases in which the history would indicate that the results were obtained by suggestion; in the remaining 111 cases it could be shown that in 17 only was there any improvement, the remaining 94 being left in practically the same condition as before. Further, it was to be noted that in the 17 cases 12 would fall under the general head of hysterical disturbance, in 9 of which diseased organs were found, and in only three were these sound. The remaining cases, which resulted favorably, in which the gynecological operations could be said to be responsible, were but five in number; in these two were improved, while three were called cured.

This scarcity and uncertainty of favorable results inclines the authors to believe that in the many reported favorable cases of nervous disturbance cured by means of operations on the pelvic organs another factor is responsible; that, they believe, is suggestion, the operations serving to make the impression more permanent. A brief series of conclusions closes this interesting brochure. These are:—

1. The extirpation of the normal uterus or its adnexa as a means of cure for hysterical neuroses or insanity is distinctly contraindicated.

2. This same condition, "hysteria," even constitutes a contraindication to surgical operations which aim to cure gynecological ailments.

3. Unless there is grave disease of the sexual organs there is no indication for their removal, and any operation for such removal should be considered apart from its remote effect upon the neuropathic state.

4. In certain cases in which there are grave pathological changes in the pelvic organs the operative suggestion effects may legitimately be exercised when there are co-existing neuropathic conditions.

Finally, in conditions of hysteria or allied disorders, in which reputable methods of suggestion have proven ineffectual, one may be justified in resorting to a simulated laparotomy. JELLIFFE.

DYSKINESIAS ARSENICAES (Arsenical Dyskinesia.) By Dr. Juliano Moreira, Bahia, 1896. Also abstract in *Revue Neurologique*, 1896, p. 513

This work was a competitive thesis, presented before the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bahia.

The first part of the monograph contains eight personal observations of accidental and therapeutical arsenic poisoning by the author. The second part treats of the etiology and toxic symptoms arising from the use of arsenic, studying and dwelling in particular upon impairment of voluntary motility, *i. e.*, *dyskinesia*. After considering and describing in detail the functional disturbances of sensory organs (disturbance of tactile insensibility, vision, taste, sense of heat and pain and muscular sense), the author proceeds to discuss the impairment of the motor apparatus (mechanical and electrical irritability of the affected nerves and muscles). Following these observations a

chapter is devoted to the exhaustive consideration of the pathological anatomy, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment of the conditions, respectively, and an elaborate bibliography is appended.

The treatise shows proof of painstaking, precise and scholarly investigation, and our South American colleague is to be congratulated for having contributed such a valuable addition to our knowledge of arsenical poisoning.

MACALESTER.

DIE DARSTELLUNG KRANKHAFTER GEISTESZUSTÄNDE IN SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMEN. Von Dr. Hans Laehr. Stuttgart, Paul Neff Verlag, 1898.

There is hardly any subject in literature which has given rise to more discussion and interpretations than the various cases of insanity in Shakespeare's dramas. It would therefore seem impossible to say anything new on this subject. The little work by Dr. Laehr is nevertheless interesting in various directions, especially as the author endeavors to submit all the different views and theories to a careful investigation. Special chapters are devoted to King Lear, Ophelia, Hamlet and Lady Macbeth, in which the author tries to reach a definite diagnosis in each case. I must confess, however, that any attempt of this kind has always seemed to me of doubtful value, if not quite fruitless. We must not forget that Shakespeare, after all, was not a physician who relates to us the dry history of a case for diagnosis, but that he was the great phenomenal poet, who, true enough, possessed an unusual gift for observation, but who combined this talent with the necessary physical elements of an ingenious artist; *i. e.*, poetical fancy and imagination. To approach his heroes to-day for the purpose of discussing the diagnosis and prognosis of their mental condition from the purely medical standpoint, as we would do at the bedside of our patients, seems to me just as unreasonable as to study the topography of the moon on an oil painting. Whether King Lear suffered from senile dementia, or from paranoia, or, as Dr. Laehr says, from acute confusional insanity, seems to me just as useless to discuss as to criticise the treatment of Lear by his physician, who awakes his patient from sleep with the melodious sounds of music.

Of much greater interest and scientific value to the historical development of psychiatry as well as to the psychological analysis of the ingenious poet are the other questions discussed in Dr. Laehr's work, *i. e.*, "Wherefrom did Shakespeare take the conception of mental diseases?" and "What induced Shakespeare to describe cases of insanity in his dramas?" The chapter devoted to the first question contains a number of interesting data concerning the medical views of insanity at the Elizabethan period, Shakespeare's own observations of psychopathic cases, and the descriptions of mental diseases by poets before Shakespeare. As to the latter question, the motives which induced Shakespeare to picture mental diseases in a dramatic form, I must disagree with Dr. Laehr on several points. His view, for instance that Shakespeare described Hamlet as a psychopathic individual in order to be able to introduce the apparition of the ghost in the tragedy, seems to me to do injustice to the poet. A genius like Shakespeare would never adapt his characters to the surrounding circumstances. The latter would only form the means for expressing and describing the poet's ideas, but could never form the primary motive for a tragedy.

The aims in Shakespeare's dramas are the picturing of the manifold traits of the human character, the conflicts which must necessarily arise from their mutual contact, and the superhuman, divine providence which determines the fate of men, which exercises vengeance