

land. The subject of hydrotherapeutics is considered at some length. The various modes of administration of electricity are detailed, brief instruction is given as to the special forms in which they are available. He makes no allusion to oöphorectomy as a remedial procedure, either among general therapeutic measures or when treating of utero-ovarian insanity. What he has to say on treatment by drugs is largely comprised in a therapeutic formula. Under the head of deontology he treats of the physician's duty when consulted as to the conjugal relations, the chances of heredity and the advisability of marriage among the insane or their descendants.

The book closes with a section on medico-legal practice, under the heads of penal responsibility, crimes and misdemeanors of the insane, and medico-legal expertise, or methods of examination in medico-legal cases, all of which is worthy of careful study. A good index adds to the value of the work.

In conclusion it should be said that the work of translation is admirably done, the make-up of the book attractive, the paper and type excellent, and the proof-reading exceptionally good. The book is one which should find a place in the library of every student of the subject.

W. L. W.

Sleep, Sleeplessness, and Hypnotics. By S. V. CLEVINGER, M. D., Chicago.
Reprint from *Journal of American Medical Association*, March 10, 1894.

The main object of this pamphlet would seem to be the advocacy of chloralamid as a hypnotic on theoretical grounds. The author holds that the phenomena of sleep are due to the functional inactivity of the cerebral cells for the purpose of repairing waste; that "the cell eats while the colonial activity ceases, and this is the meaning, the end, and aim of sleep." From this point of view, it seems unfortunate that he does not discuss the causes of insomnia, and explain, if explanation can be found, the reasons for the continual refusal of the cells to rest and feed, notwithstanding their apparent lack of nutrition.

He explains the hypnotic action of such drugs as alcohol, morphine, and chloroform on the supposition that they contribute to the nutrition of the cells; that the drugs are assimilated in such a way as to take the place of the nutritive elements normally supplied by the blood. He believes chloral to act by liberating chloroform in the blood, and inclines to believe that the toxic qualities of the latter are due to its solvent power over sulphur, phosphorus, and the fatty bodies. In chloralamid, on the contrary, he believes the solvent power of chloral over these substances to be inhibited by its union with formamid, so that it becomes an almost wholly nutrient hypnotic.

Assuming the correctness of the author's theory of sleep, it does not seem to us that his explanation of the action of the hypnotic drugs in question is altogether consistent with it. Normally, sleep ceases when the impaired nutrition of the cerebral cells is fully restored, and it would seem reasonable to expect that, if chloralamid, for instance, could supply, in a few minutes, the equivalent of the nutriment which, in ordinary circumstances, requires hours for its accumulation from the blood, wakefulness rather than somnolence should be the result. However this may be, the value of the drug

does not necessarily depend on the validity of the explanation of its action. The author considers its efficacy as a hypnotic, and its superiority to other drugs of that class fully established. He is also led to attribute to it a certain degree of analgesic power, from its usefulness in small doses in facial neuralgia. He recommends its administration in solution rather than in powder, and advises that if it is to be dissolved in water, it be prepared half a day beforehand, on account of its sparing solubility, and the fact that the solution deteriorates by keeping.

W. L. W.

Suicide and Insanity: A Physiological and Sociological Study. By S. A. K. Strahan, M. D., Barrister-at-Law, London, 1893.

In his preface to this work Doctor Strahan, who is already known as the author of certain suggestive semi-medical and popular works on sociological questions, states that his object is to teach a lesson to the public, which is inclined, as regards its sins of omission and commission in relation to the evil of self-destruction, to throw "the onus on Providence" and go its way, "marrying and giving in marriage the relatives of the insane, the epileptic, and the cut-throat, apparently with a fixed belief that there was small chance of the children resembling their fathers." He has sought, he says, "to trace modern suicide to its source; to show how large a percentage of what is really avoidable is deliberately propagated; and how closely it is related to those other abnormal conditions met with in all civilized communities. It is in the hope that people may be induced to use intelligently in the propagation of the human race, some of the knowledge, care, and forethought so successfully exercised in the breeding of the lower animals that this book is given to the public."

From the above quotations it will be seen that the author has a praiseworthy aim, though its practicability may be open to question. The main interest here is as to his method of treating the subject from the points of view from which we as alienists must regard it.

Doctor Strahan divides all suicides into two great classes, the rational or *quasi*-suicides, and the true, or irrational suicides. The former includes all those cases in which death is deliberately chosen by a rational being as preferable to life, thus taking in all the suicides caused by poverty, physical suffering, dishonor of any kind, as well as a small proportion of suicides that are not usually or popularly classed as such; for example, when a man deliberately gives up his life for others, the Casabiancas, the Roman soldier at Pompeii, etc. These lack the condemnable element of cowardice, selfishness, or human weakness, and may be fairly left out of consideration in the discussion of this subject as a pathological or sociological problem.

In the second class, or the true or irrational suicides, the author includes all who are impelled to suicide by insanity, morbid impulsions, or imitation; in whom the act is the result of a fatal defect of the organization, those cases which, to use his own words, "seek death for death itself," and in whom the act is one of the signs of human degeneracy. He divides these into three groups or classes: