an equal quantity of salicylate of bismuth, if there be diarrhea, or salicylate of magnesium for diarrhea. Dyspepsia dependent on ptomaines following stomach fermentation, may be treated according to this formula: R. Naphthol B. 3½, Bismuth Salicylate 3½J, M. et div. in capsules No. XXX.; sign, one capsule with each meal. Magnesia may be added, if necessary, to this prescription. The rationale of the treatment is to check fermentation, and to neutralise toxic products.

IMPURITIES OF SALICYLIC ACID.
The British Medical Journal calls attention to an important point in practical therapeutics. Salicylic acid and its compounds are now very extensively used in the treatment of rheumatism and other diseases. Certain experiments of Professor Charteris, therefore, on impurities of that drug, cannot fail to be of interest to the general practitioner. Briefly stated, the British Pharmacopoeia allows salicylic acid to be prepared in two ways: (1) artificially from carboilic acid; (2) from natural salicylates, such as oil of winter green, or of sweet birch. Of the artificial preparations, ten grains of the acid, and eighteen of the sodium salt, killed a rabbit. Of the natural, thirty grains of salicylic, ten of the acid, and thirty-two of the salt, did not injure a rabbit of two and a-half pounds. The poisonous impurity in the artificial preparations has been separated, and one grain killed a rabbit of two pounds. The injurious effects of the salicylates are chiefly headache, singing in the ears, and delirium. These investigations are likely to throw discredit on the present artificial preparations, and to open up a market for an absolutely pure drug.

METHYL-ACETANILIDE.
Dr. Thomas Fraser, Professor of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh, publishes a lecture on "the analgesic action of methyl-acetanilide or exalgin." Methylacetanilide or exalgin, is one of the four methyl derivatives of acetanilide, discovered by Hoffman, and its formula is C₅H₅NO. It occurs in the shape of colourless needle-shaped crystals of considerable length, which have a faintly aromatic odour, and a slightly pungent taste. It is nearly insoluble in water, but freely soluble in dilute alcohol.

From 16 to 20 grains may be dissolved in half a dram of rectified spirit, and this diluted with three or four ounces of water. A tea-spoonful containing from half a grain to a grain may be used. Dr. Fraser has administered the preparation for neuralgia, and for pain in various diseases. The largest quantity given in twenty-four hours was fourteen grains, from which no disagreeable effects resulted. Cases are detailed of neuralgia of the right inferior and superior troclear nerve, of sciatica, of herpes cervico-brachialis, of neuralgia of the right arm, of teetachia, of locomotor ataxy, in all of which pain was relieved. Out of eighty-eight cases, sixty-seven experienced relief from pain. The best results were obtained in neuralgia. In conclusion Dr. Fraser observes, "the results justify the hope, that exalgin may take a useful and important place among the remedies by which pain is relieved, and it has the enormous advantage of being free from the disturbances and inconveniences that are associated with the action of nearly all other subduing agents, and from the dangers inseparable from the use of the more powerful of these agents." Now it is only quite recently—within the last few months—that the action of methyl-acetanilide has been made known by Bardet, Binet, Dujardin-Beaumetz, and others, and Dr. Fraser seems to have tried it first in this country. As a rule, we look with some degree of doubt on new remedies; for it is so often noticeable that a new remedy is spoken of with great approval, soon, however, lapsing into the mass of utterly forgotten preparations. Dr. Fraser's observations are, however, so careful and comprehensive, that we imagine a better fate is reserved for methyl-acetanilide. In the "Retrospect" of February 8th, is a notice of acetanilide and its power of reducing febrile temperature; and some time back we remarked on the occasionally evil results arising from the use of antifebrin, antipyrin, &c. In connection with this subject we again quote Dr. Fraser, who writes, "the study of members of this group has shown that very slight changes in their chemical composition, may be followed by marked changes in their pharmacological action." Methyl-acetanilide illustrates this, for it is found to be a more powerful analgesic than acetanilide. When unpleasant results arise from the use of these anti- febrin drugs, much must be attributed to peculiar constitution or temperament, or idiosyncrasy. But there is another danger of the drugs not acting as it is intended they should, which, as Dr. Fraser points out, may depend on chemical preparation. This, however, is a danger the chance of which must be incurred. For, as observed in the "Retrospect," February 15th, under the heading of "Adulteration of Drugs," "irrespective of intentional adulteration, of which we believe there is little, drugs used in composition differ in strength themselves, and a very slight accidental variation of chemical process may produce a different result ... the greatest care cannot always secure exactly similar results." This is a matter which the chemists must look to.

THE PRACTITIONER'S BOOKSHELF.
(Books for Review should be sent to The Editor, The Lodge, Porchester Square, W.)

INSOMNIA,*
Healthy man may be said to pass from one-fourth to one-third of his life in sleep, hence the importance of the loss to him of that power which is practically the daily renewal to him of the forces of life. It is a curious fact that, although in special works on medicine there are chapters on insomnia, there has been no recent complete study of insomnia till Dr. Macfarlane's work appeared.

This is a most thorough work, and one which it is a pleasure to read and to refer to. Dr. Macfarlane has treated the subject from the causal standpoint, and his tables present a most interesting series of studies showing age, sex, and cause. Omitting sleeplessness induced by pain and trivial reasons, 273 cases of insomnia occurred mainly as follows:—

1. Neurasthenia ... 37 cases or 13·55 per cent.
2. Worry ... 35 13·18
3. Gout ... 26 9·52
4. Overwork ... 23 8·04
5. Menopause ... 18 6·59
6. Dyspepsia ... 17 6·22
7. Alcoholism ... 16 5·86
8. Senility ... 12 4·39

This table represents the experience of three competent observers, and we can take it as accurately showing the causes and numbers in a general run of cases of insomnia. Dr. Macfarlane, after giving tables and a general idea of the causation of insomnia, then proceeds to take each of the above special headings into review, beginning with Overwork. Speaking in the division labelled "Depressing Emotions," he says: "It is important, in the first place, to ascertain the cause of the worry, so that if it has its origin in some bodily ailment, such as varicocele, the cause may be removed. In many cases, however, the patient seeks advice for insomnia or dyspepsia with troubled sleep, and so far from hinting that it is due to grief, he seeks to conceal his sorrow, and it requires delicacy and tact to overcome reticence, and to obtain a frank confession of the trouble."

* Insomnia and its Therapeutics. By A. W. Macfarlane, M.D.
London: H. K. Lewis, 136, Gower Street. 1890.
Dr. Macfarlane's directions for the use of narcotics are most judicious, and show a full acquaintance with modern ideas regarding them. He insists on the dangers of acquiring the habitual use of them, but says wisely, that when the patient is perishing for their want he is a poor physician who withholds them because he is afraid of their after effects.

We note that Dr. Macfarlane speaks well of sulphonal as being of great use in certain varieties of insomnia. Here we can corroborate him. We have seen less ill-effects after its use than after any other form of trustworthy hypnotic. Of course, it does not answer in all cases, and it ought only to be taken under the advice of a medical man, and this rule is without an exception.

This book is pleasant reading, and what is of most importance, extremely helpful. The whole volume bears the impress of that "philosophical spirit" which Dr. Clifford Allbutt, in his recent address to medical students, says is characteristic of early academical and university training.

In conclusion, we can say, after a careful perusal of this book, that Dr. Macfarlane has succeeded in his task, and we are sure that his work will enable the profession to combat successfully that most trying condition, which the well-chosen motto on the title page describes in the words of Job: "When I lie down I say, When shall I arise and the night be gone? and I am full of toisings to and fro unto the dawning of the day."

DIETETICS.

ACUTE CATARRH OF THE STOMACH.

Dr. Robert Saundby, of Birmingham, recommends in this common ailment, acute catarrh of the stomach, a diet restricted to milk and lime water, or, better still, peptonised milk. If, for any reason, this cannot be adhered to, the following may be allowed: Breakfast.—A cup of cocoa or bread and milk, both to be taken cold; a little boiled fish or lightly poached egg, with small slice of toast. Lunch.—A cupful of Benger's peptonised food or a custard pudding. Dinner.—Boiled fowl or stewed sweetbread with toast. Milk pudding. No beer, wine, or spirits. Ateated waters. All fluids in small quantities. In addition, order the following powders:

- **Rg. Hydrarg. subchlor.** gr. x
- **Sfoch. albi.** gr. x
- **F. pulv.** gr. x
- **Sign.** One to be taken at bed time.

**Rg. Bismuthi carb.** gr. x
- **Sodit. bicarb.** gr. x
- **Pulv. rhel.** gr. x
- **Pulv. cinnam. co.** gr. x

If there be much pain, apply a mustard leaf over the pit of the stomach.

"The Review of Reviews," March, 1890.

The March number of Mr. Stead's latest editorial venture contains a very large quantity of eminently readable matter upon many subjects. "Greetings from near and far" come from various personages of note, and the assertion that "the first volume of the Review of Reviews promises to be unequalled as a collection of autographs of contemporary celebrities," seems likely to be fulfilled. But this, we imagine, is not the ultimate object of the new periodical, and one grave charge at least may fairly be brought against it. In its character of supreme critic and final court of appeal, the Review of Reviews ought assuredly to be absolutely impartial and politically unbiased. Yet if there is one thing particularly noticeable about this number, it is its political animus, no matter in which direction it tends. Any such tendency is wrong according to the notion conveyed by the pretentious title adopted. In practice it must prove fatal to its prosperity, and we hope absolute neutrality in politics will be displayed in future. Probably the most useful feature in the Review is its classified list of recent publications, and the brief synopsis it furnishes of the contemporary magazines at home and abroad. Such a synopsi