ABSTRACTS FROM CURRENT MEDICAL LITERATURE.

INSANITY.

By Dr. R. S. STEWART.

Sulfonal in Insanity. By Mabon. (American Journal of Insanity, April, 1889.)—This hypnotic was given to 18 patients, 8 of whom were subjects of mania, 8 of melancholia of various forms, and 2 of dementia, their ages varying from 27 to 73, and the results of 119 administrations on 114 nights were as follows:—On 83 nights sleep of 6 hours or more followed; on 20 nights 3 to 6 hours’ sleep was ensured; and on 11 nights there was less than 3 hours’ sleep. The sleep produced was on 97 nights natural in quality, and restless and broken on 17; the time intervening between the administration and the onset of sleep was, on an average, 1½ hour, and the only unpleasant after effect noted was slight somnolence in two or three instances. Doses of 15 grains were generally inefficient, but doses of 30 grains proved reliable and satisfactory. Its administration in hot gruel is recommended. The writer thinks it compares favourably with other hypnotics as regards the character and duration of sleep induced, the absence of any undesirable sequelae, and the easiness of its administration on account of the absence of any taste or smell.

Mania in Exophthalmic Goitre—Exophthalmic Goitre in Mania. By Clarke. (Amer. Jour. of Insanity, April, 1889.)—The first case is that of a female, who at 26 began to show signs of physical weakness. Two years afterwards symptoms of exophthalmic goitre developed. A year afterwards she became exceedingly nervous and irritable, and this condition culminated after eleven months in violent mania, which lasted a month and terminated in death from exhaustion. It furnishes an illustration of the close nature of the connection of the thyroid with the nervous system, and of the undoubted tendency to the development of mania in exophthalmic goitre. In the second case exophthalmic goitre developed in a man aged 46, who had been resident in an asylum for 18 years, and terminated in death about a year afterwards. At the autopsy the pericardium was found inflamed, and contained 6 ounces of serum; the heart was flabby and enlarged, and the aortic cusps slightly inflamed.

Sulfonal and the Value of its Employment as a Hypnotic in the Insane. By Samuel Garnier (Annales Medico-Psychologiques, January and March, 1889.)—Detailed notes of 17 cases of various forms of mental disorder with insomnia, in which sulfonal was prescribed, are here given, along with the results of trials in three healthy subjects, including the writer himself. Of the former 11 were men and 6 women, the ages varying from 18 to 81, the majority being between 30 and 50. The drug was administered 69 times; the average dose was 2 grammes, as much as 3, 4, or 5 grammes being, however, occasionally given; and the following are the conclusions arrived at:—

1. Sulfonal is a hypnotic of very remarkable intrinsic value in the insane, the sleeplessness ceasing in almost all the cases recorded.
2. It shows itself efficient in cases where paraldehyde, urethane, chloral, and hypnotic had constantly failed.
3. The sleep induced does not appear to differ from normal sleep except that, sometimes, it is more profound. The absence of taste and smell facilitates its employment, and it has no sensible action on the respiration or circulation.
4. It occasionally causes vomiting and a slight diarrhoea, and its use may be contra-indicated where these are produced.
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5. Its use being sometimes accompanied by giddiness and difficulty of maintaining equilibrium, like that occurring in alcoholic intoxication, it may be contra-indicated in congestive forms of insanity.

6. An occasional diuretic action is noted.

7. When given during the day as a calmative agent it is not reliable.

8. In divided doses it proves of little benefit.

9. When given as a hypnotic on alternate days, a relative tranquillity is noted in about one-half of the cases during the intervening day.

10. In healthy subjects it seems really to provoke sleep, to extend its duration, and render it more profound. The phenomena accompanying its use are insignificant, and it is indicated at least in all cases of nervous insomnina.

The somniferous effect is manifested with varying rapidity, sometimes occurring very promptly, sometimes not for two hours, and its effects are more marked in women than in men. Dr. Garnier usually gives it in the vegetables of the evening meal (6-15 p.m.) or in hot soup.

Sulfonal. By Pachoud and Claret (Annales Medico-Psychologiques, March, 1889).—This short paper by the above-named Swiss alienists was read at the January meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association in Paris, and the results obtained by them appear to be highly satisfactory. In a male patient, the subject of periodic mania with furious excitement, whose last attack had lasted more than six months, and who had been during eight years subjected without avail to treatment by bromide of potassium in large doses, morphine, chloral, paraldehyde, and prolonged baths, evidences of an oncoming excited period began to manifest themselves, and bromide, chloral, and baths again proved ineffectual. Sulfonal was tried and with complete success, for, after taking 40 grammes in a period of 14 days, the excitement abated, and 6 days after showed no signs of recurring. The results in three other cases of mania were equally satisfactory and somewhat similar to the above. Four cases of melancholia were subjected to treatment with very favourable results, and in a case of sclerose en plaques the violent convulsive movements were notably controlled, the effect lasting 15 days after the discontinuance of the drug. This prolonged influence noted here was also observed in other cases, and is attributed by the writers to the comparative insolubility of the drug. They conclude that sulfonal ought to be of great service in the treatment of mental diseases; that periods of maniacal excitement are easily arrested by it; that the insomnia of melancholia yields readily to its employment; and that, in a general fashion, all the insomnias of nervous origin are amenable to its influence. The sleep induced is calm, and resembles in its profundness that of infants; it is induced in from an hour to an hour and a half, and lasts from 4 to 5 hours. Doses of 1 gramme are uncertain, but 2 grammes doses are usually amply satisfactory. No digestive trouble or disagreeable sensations of any kind have been noted.

Sulfonal. By Watson (Journal of Mental Science, July, 1889).—Dr. Watson, of the Govan Asylum, speaks in very favourable terms of the value of this drug as a hypnotic, and his experience leads him to believe that it possesses in addition a not inconsiderable analgesic property. He has tried it in 36 cases of mental and other diseases, with the following results. Satisfactory effects followed in 86-1 per cent; partial success obtained in 5-5 per cent.; and in 8-3 per cent. the results were absolutely negative. The cases in which the analgesic effect was noted were five, including one each of strumous disease of the elbow, varicose ulcers of the leg, and hemiplegia, and two of chronic rheumatic arthritis. With an average dose of 30 grains sleep came on in from half-an-hour to four hours, and lasted from two to eleven hours, the average being about seven and a half hours.

Sulfonal in the Treatment of Insanity. By Peeters (Bulletin de la Société de Medicine Mentale de Belgique, June, 1889).—The results obtained from trials in 9 patients at the Gheel Colony were fairly satisfactory. Of these
were cases of mania, 3 of melancholia, and 1 each of senile dementia and imbecility with excitement, and incomplete results followed only in two of the cases of melancholia. In very excited patients a dose of 75 centigrammes given in the morning was found to exercise a calmative effect, and on this account the writer thinks it possesses a certain curative action. Sleep was found to come on after an interval of 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) to 3 hours, to be fairly light and less profound than that induced by chloral, and to be succeeded by no heaviness of the head, dryness of mouth, or impairment of digestion even after prolonged use. In one case it was found to have a distinct action on the spinal cord, a single dose of 1\(\frac{1}{4}\) gramme given to a patient suffering from incompletely systematised myelitis, accompanied by much sleeplessness, being followed by unusual rigidity of the back and extreme difficulty in walking.

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**Surgery.**

By A. E. Maylard, B.S.

Grape Sugar as the cause of Suppuration with the Staphylococcus Pyogenes Aureus. By Odo Bujwid (Centralblatt für Bakteriologie, Bd. iv, No. 19).—The observation of a very acute abscess occurring in a diabetic patient led the author to consider whether the condition was due to the fact of the staphylococcus thriving better on a soil containing sugar, or whether it was that the tissues in the presence of sugar were less able to withstand the growth of the microbe.

Experiments proved the fallacy of the first supposition, since cultures in 5 per cent solutions of beef-peptone-agar developed more slowly than in ordinary agar.

To prove that the latter supposition was the correct one, the author made the following experiments:—The quantity of staphylococcus capable of being inoculated subcutaneously into an animal without the production of pus was noted. It was then found that the same quantity of the organism in a 25 per cent solution of grape sugar injected caused an abscess to form. Suppuration similarly followed if, after the minimum injection of the cocci, some diluted solution of grape sugar was introduced. If three days were allowed to elapse after the injection of the cocci, the latter were rendered harmless by the tissue, so that the injection of a 12 per cent solution of grape sugar no longer caused suppuration.

The quantity of staphylococcus which was borne without causing any disturbance in the tissues produced, on the contrary, in animals which had undergone intravenous injection of grape sugar, severe phlegmonous inflammation, such as is seen in diabetes.

A Successful Case of Spinal Resection for Depressed Fracture. By Robert H. M. Dawbarn, Ph.D. (New York Med. Jour., 29th June, 1889.)—The case was that of a young man 29 years of age, who fell from a height of from 12 to 15 feet, striking his back. On returning to consciousness he found himself completely without sensation or power of motion in the parts below the ribs. A plaster splint was applied at once by his doctor, Dr. C. S. Collins, of Sing-Sing, who first moulded towards the median line two broken spinous processes which had been deflected towards the left; apparently these were the 11th and 12th. The splint was kept on for seven weeks, removed, and another applied for a couple of weeks. Faradique electricity was used from time to time. The patient remained practically in status quo for about six months, with some slight increase in muscle response, apparently due to the electricity. Trephining the spine was then decided upon. The operation was performed by an H-shaped incision, and the arches of the 10th, 11th, and 12th dorsal vertebrae were removed. Ten weeks after the operation the report states—"He is none the worse in any respect for his