

during exposure to cold, but beneficial when taken after the exposure is over, as it tends to prevent congestion of internal organs.

11. The symptoms of intoxication are due to paralysis of the nervous centres; the cerebrum and cerebellum being first affected, then the cord, and lastly the medulla oblongata. It is through paralysis of the medulla that alcohol usually causes death.

12. The apparent immunity which drunken men enjoy from the usual effects of serious accidents, is due to paralysis of the nervous mechanism, through which shock would be produced in a sober condition.—*American Journal Med. Science.*

#### EXPERIMENTS ON ERGOT OF RYE.

Dr. G. Leir, ('Le Sperimentale' Nos. 8, 9, and 10, 1875), concludes from experiments undertaken by him that it is to the phosphoric acid it contains that Ergot of Rye owes its properties. After having shown the effect obtained in three bitches by the employment of medicinal phosphoric acid he related two observations made at the Maternity of Pisa, by Dr. Garzella, on two women aged respectively twenty-five and twenty-eight years. The following are Dr. Leir's conclusions:—

(1) The therapeutic effects derived from Ergot of Rye are due to the phosphoric acid it contains.

(2) In diseases in which the employment of Ergot of Rye is useful, the employment of phosphoric acid renders identical service.

(3) Phosphoric acid acts with equal intensity and rapidity with Ergot of Rye.

(4) The quantity of soluble phosphoric acid found in recently powdered Ergot of Rye is in proportion to the activity of the drug.—*British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review.*

In two cases of diabetes mellitus, Von Hasse has seen great improvement resulting from the administration of ergot. His formula was as follows:

R. Ext. Secale Cœnitis.	
Ext. Hyoscyami.	aa. grs. xvi.
Liq. Potassæ Acetat	ʒi.
Aq. Fœniculi	ʒiil.

A large dessert-spoonful to be taken every three hours.

### Medical Jurisprudence.

#### THE EXAMINATION AND COMMITMENT OF THE INSANE.\*

BY A. E. MACDONALD, M. D.,

Medical Superintendent, New York City Asylum for the Insane.

The examination of patients, supposed to be insane, with a view to their commitment to an Asylum, is a duty, to the performance of which any gentleman in general practice is liable to be often summoned, and one for which he should be always prepared by a knowledge of his powers and duties, under the law of the State in which he resides, and by a knowledge of the disease and its manifestations. To deprive any person of his liberty for a greater or shorter period, to bring to his family the grief which their separation causes and to entail upon him and them the reproach which commonly, though improperly, attaches to the fact of such confinement, is certainly a serious matter, and the law very justly subjects to penalty any physician who makes any improper commitment.

The laws of the various States differ materially as to the manner of the commitment of the insane, and as to the part which the physician plays in the process. In some States he is not called upon at all, the parents or guardians, or near relatives of an insane person, being empowered to commit him, without medical evidence as to his insanity. In others, the certificate of but one physician is required; but in those States where legislation upon the subject is farthest advanced, no patient can be deprived of his liberty, save upon the sworn testimony of two reputable physicians, that he is insane, and unfit to be at large. The State of New York has, by recent revision and codification of its statutes, under the supervision of the State Commissioner in Lunacy, Dr. Ordronaux, placed them upon a very satisfactory footing. I shall refer to these statutes and the forms which they prescribe, in treating of the matter, as they sufficiently represent, in a general way, the legislation of other States upon the subject. I may tell you here, though, for

\* A Lecture delivered before the students of the University of the City of New York, Medical Department, March 10th, 1876.