

*A Manual of the Medical Botany of North America.* By LAURENCE JOHNSON, A.M., M.D. New York: William Wood & Co.

The December number (1884) of Wood's Library, is an attempt to supply that "long felt want" of a text book, suited to the needs of American medical students. Part I. Treats of the elements of Botany, and gives a concise and well illustrated summary of what a medical student ought to know of the life history of plants. The coloured plates of familiar American plants are excellent. The author's views as to the medicinal properties of certain plants will not of course meet with general approval. He states, however, in his preface that a "judicious scepticism is wiser than a blind credulity." Referring to Gelsemium, (page 227) he says: "Regarding its therapeutic applications, rejecting as we reasonably may all its specific effects in certain diseases, there seems to remain no other just place for it except in febrile and inflammatory affections of a decided sthenic type. That in such cases it may moderate or subdue febrile action, through its powerfully depressent effect is very evident, but that the desired result can be obtained more readily and more safely by this drug than by some other and more certain agents certainly requires demonstration." Meanwhile the judicious physician will suspend judgment, and at least experiment with great caution.

*Insanity and Allied Neuroses.* By GEORGE H. SAVAGE, M.D., M.R.C.P. Henry C. Lea's Son & Co., Philadelphia.

We have read this book with very great pleasure, and can confidently recommend it to the profession as a work containing in a small compass all that is necessary for a general practitioner to know of insanity. It is written in an easy, pleasant style, and many of the chapters are as interesting as a romance.

Dr. Savage holds what appear to us to be very common-sense views on the more debatable points connected with insanity, and they are of the greater value as they are doubtless the result of many years' experience and observation. We quote the following remarks on the unsatisfactory nature of the *post-mortem* observations which have so far been made of the brains of insane patients:

"One of the greatest difficulties which has ever presented itself to the student of insanity has been the fact that *post-mortem* so little has been found visible to the naked eye. I may say that, with my experience of years, and after seeing many hundreds of *post-mortem* examinations of the bodies of the insane, I have met with few coarse changes within the skull, and even with the higher powers of the microscope all that can often be detected may be evidences of change in the nutrition of the connective tissue of the brain. This may seem unsatisfactory; but the time will come when the inter-relations between the million of nerve cells with their manifold processes, and their dependence for healthy action upon healthy blood and pure air, will be better understood. The brain, like a kaleidoscope, consists of innumerable parts, which adapt themselves to varying patterns. A shake occurs, the pattern changes, but each one of the pieces still exists as it did before; no change in shape, no change in colour, only change in relationship. So, I believe, it will be found to be with many forms of insanity, change in one faculty changing the mental pattern."

We give among the selections a greater part of his chapter on education as a predisposing cause of insanity, as we think it of especial value.

The following sensible remarks are made on self-education:

"Another common example of over-work is that seen in the self-educated man, who so frequently has an unbounded desire for knowledge, but does not know how to acquire it. He has a great idea that knowledge of facts is education, and looks with contempt upon the older universities and schools as mere excuses for passing time for the *jeunesse dorée*. He cannot see that education literally and really means the development of all sides of his character, and that mere special culture will fail to make a learned man. The effects of solitary self-culture are worse if begun after the plastic youthful nervous system has taken its form, as it is hard to change its figure after it has once hardened into habit."

We must close our review of this valuable book, and wish that not only the medical profession, but also the intelligent laity, may have an opportunity of reading it.