

CONSAUQUINITY AND MENTAL UNSOUNDNESS.—From the physician's point of view, the evidence from the animal world is important. Here there is almost consensus, that, while the effect of "in-and-in breeding" is to intensify *points*, in the long run it is opposed to vigor of constitution. It is to be remembered that every breeder takes care to exclude any animals with any known morbid tendency, while, on the contrary, in the genus *Homo*, as Dr. Clouston remarks, there seems to be "a special tendency for members of *neurotic* families to intermarry." The result of this will be that in some portions of the population the offspring of such marriage will show the evil results of it to an unusual extent. And thus we find, that in rural and especially in mountainous districts, where the population is small and fixed, the comparative amount of idiocy is greater than elsewhere. Statistical information is inadequate on the subject; the motion to include it in the census returns of England was rejected "amidst the scornful laughter of the House, on the ground that the idle curiosity of speculative philosophers was not to be gratified." In France the returns had given rise to various estimates (varying from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 per cent.) of the frequency of consanguineous marriages. Mr. G. H. Darwin came to the conclusion that in London $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of all marriages were between first-cousins, in urban districts 2 per cent., and in rural districts $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.

If, now, we ascertain the ratio of idiots and insane patients that are the offspring of such marriages to the total number of patients in the asylums, we will have some means of estimating the results of consanguinity. From quite an extended series of records, it is concluded that the ratio just referred to in the idiot-asylum is from 3 to 5 per cent: hence "first-cousin marriages, at any rate, are to some extent favorable to the production of idiot children." But this conclusion must be tempered by the consideration that in a large amount of such cases of idiocy and imbecility other causes for this condition are present; and this consideration leads Dr. A. Mitchell to the opinion that "under favorable conditions of life the apparent ill effects of consanguineous marriages were frequently almost *nil*, while, if the children were ill fed, badly housed and clothed, the evil might become more marked." From such facts and figures we may conclude that first-cousin marriages should, as a rule, be discouraged; but that, if a close scrutiny reveals no heritable weakness, neurotic or otherwise, the bans need not invariably be forbidden.—*Science*.

BRAIN INJURY IN FORCEPS DELIVERY.—At a recent meeting of the Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Society, Byron Bramwell showed a boy suffering with left hemiplegia, which he attributed to an injury received at birth. The delivery of

the patient's mother was tedious, and had been finally effected with the forceps. Since infancy the child had been subject to epileptiform seizures, but at the time of observation there was no mark of injury of the cranium. The surgical aspect of the case involved the question of operative interference, suggested by the fact that the patient could localize a painful point over the motor area of the left arm. The judgment of the Society was adverse to it, and we do not see how it could have been different.

This case, however, is not cited so much on account of its surgical aspects as on account of its bearing upon the question of the effect upon an infant of the compression of the head by the forceps. That decided compression of the child's head often takes place in forceps delivery, in spite of the greatest care on the part of the accoucheur, and notwithstanding the use of the most suitable form of forceps, cannot be doubted, and it would be interesting to have some collection of the proportion of cases in which subsequent manifestations of brain disturbance could be reasonably attributed to the accidents of such delivery.

One of the ablest neurologists of this city entertains the opinion that very many cases of impaired brain function are due to compression at the time of birth; and his opinion seems reasonable enough. The case related by Bramwell is one in point, and others might be cited. Although it is not perfectly clear, it may be, however, that those who think that the remote dangers to the child in forceps delivery are much greater than is generally supposed, may speak more from a general impression than from a careful study of the subject. Still, their views are so plausible *à priori*, that it is desirable that enough evidence be collected to settle the question definitely for the benefit of the many accoucheurs who apply the forceps frequently.—*Medical News*.

MEDIAEVAL NASTINESS.—We have received a volume which claims to be the *American Homœopathic Pharmacopœia*. It does not appear to be published by the authority of any convention or body of men, and we suppose it to be a private effort to meet a commercial demand. We have been very much amused by noticing in it a survival of mediæval remedies comparable to the survival of the strange gar fish of the Chesapeake which remains as almost the sole representative of the monstrous misshapen ganoid fishes which have been swept out of existence by the successful cataclysms of geologic ages. Thus, in this Homœopathic Pharmacopœia uric acid is directed to be prepared from human urine by concentration, or from excrements of serpents; guano is obtained from the accumulated excrement of sea birds; lava from the overflow of Mount Hecla in Iceland. Hippomanes is a glutinous mucous substance sep-