

## HEALTH MATTERS.

## The Difficulties of the Medical Profession.

"AN Old Doctor" deplores the visible decadence of the profession in a long letter of lamentation in *The Lancet*. Among other things, he says, —

"In these advertising days, in medicine, as in every thing else, people who know little or nothing of a subject, who presume ignorantly to address the public in the daily and weekly press, attract more notice than those who have devoted their lives to their particular work. It is a misfortune that in this country (i.e., England) a very large amount of medical practice (and that the most easy and profitable) is lost to the profession by the fact that almost all chemists prescribe largely. This is a great and crying evil. The practice is, instead of diminishing, largely increasing. This should be stopped. The chemist nearly always prescribes, but generally says, to cover himself, 'If worse, take patient to a medical man.' And so the medical man reaps all the hard work (often without being paid), and the chemist most of the profits. Then, again, hospitals, both special and general, take away largely from the proper, legal, and rightful profits of the profession. The public have a notion that they get advice and medicine of the highest character from the hospitals for nothing, but, if they pay for it to the general practitioner, they get a second-rate article. This is a bad system. Why not set up legal dispensaries for free legal advice, free places to get married in, free clothing establishments, free meat-stores, etc., all paid for by subscriptions or rates?"

"The fact is, the medical profession is gradually and surely committing suicide, and its career on the downward path should be promptly arrested. If we were true to ourselves (which we are not, and never have been), the present increase in the profession would be insufficient to supply the needs of the public. But, if we go on working on the 'sweating system,' (for who sweats more, mentally and physically, than the hard-worked medical practitioner, night and day doing his best to preserve the health and life of the people?) often indeed without reward, then we shall be fools indeed. This idea, that medical services can be had for nothing, and so ought to be paid for at that price, is spreading. We are doing away with all professional reserve. We make every thing plain, and it is valued accordingly. The more a profession is lowered in the eyes of the public, the less respect it receives."

THE BACILLUS OF WARTS. — Dr. Kuhnemann has found, says *The Medical Record*, in sections of warts (*verruca vulgaris*) a bacillus which is always present in the prickly layer. It has distinctive qualities as regards its capacity for color, and is found both between and in the cells. Its form is that of exceedingly delicate, slender rods, the thickness bearing the proportion to the length of one to six. It is seldom found in the skin surrounding the warts, and is found most plentifully when the wart is recent.

MEMORY FOLLOWING CRANIAL INJURY. — The following case is reported by the patient, a distinguished member of the legal profession. The loss of memory has been permanent for certain subjects extending over a certain area of time preceding the accident. In all other respects, says *The Medical Analectic*, the mental faculties are of a very high order. "When twelve years and ten months old, I fell over a cliff at Howth, County Dublin. The cause of my accident was a kind of landslide, and I fell and rolled about thirty feet, when I caught a bush, which gave way with me, and I fell about thirty feet more on to rocks. I was picked up quite insensible. My jaw was broken in four places, but no other bones. I am told, however, that my appearance was like that of some one who had been beaten into a jelly from head to foot. I have no recollection of the accident beyond holding on to the bush or bramble which gave way with me. Nor do I remember being picked up, nor any thing which subsequently occurred, until about ten days after the accident, when I seemed to awake out of a long sleep, in great pain, and seeing Surgeon Butcher standing over me and setting my jaw, or doing something to it which caused me great pain. I was more or less incapable of doing any thing for seven or eight months, owing to the shock to my system. My father had died about seven months before the accident; and I am told that I used constantly to be with him, and that he was very fond of me, but I have not the smallest recollec-

tion of him, or what he was like, nor can I remember a single incident of my life before the accident; and, in fact, up to the time it occurred, every thing is a complete blank in my memory, both as regards individuals and events. I am told that I was practically insensible for about a week after the accident occurred."

INFLUENZA. — We are now passing through one of the periodic visitations of this annoying disease. For the last four centuries these attacks have come at varying intervals, those most pronounced being at intervals of forty or fifty years, although others have occurred at shorter intervals. These last, however, have been confined to smaller areas, where for some reason the conditions were favorable to the spread of the disease. A peculiarity of the great attacks has been their universality, spreading as they have from the equator to the poles. We are now inclined to connect some micro-organism with each disordered state of the human system. So it may be that this enemy of human comfort has his periods of activity, just as the seventeen-year locust has his. Influenza comes suddenly, and goes as quickly. The cause, whatever it may be, descends on a community with the result that the least robust, of whatever age, are afflicted most. The outbreak of epizootic among horses in 1870 has been connected by some with the influenza in man.

## NOTES AND NEWS.

THE government of Chili has had a committee of engineers examining the water-works of the principal European cities, with a view to establishing similar works, on a large scale, in some of the Chilian cities.

— Professor R. H. Thurston has received the university decoration, "*Officier de l'Instruction Publique de France*."

— The canal to connect the North Sea, at the mouth of the Elbe, with the Gulf of Kiel on the Baltic, which was begun two or three years ago, is making fair progress. It will be 61 miles long, 85 feet broad at the bottom, and nearly 200 at the water-level, and of sufficient depth to take the largest German war-vessels. It will have only two locks, one at each end.

— The sixth annual meeting of the American Historical Association was begun in Washington, Dec. 28. Among those present were President Charles K. Adams of Cornell University; the Hon. John Jay of New York; John F. King, president of the New York Historical Society; Dr. Justin Winsor of Cambridge, Mass.; Mrs. Martha J. Lamb, editor of the *Magazine of American History*; Gen. James Grant Wilson of New York; Horatio King, Washington; Gen. George W. Cullom, William F. Poole, Chicago; Senator Hoar, President Gallaudet, of Washington; Judge Chamberlin of Boston; and Gen. Charles Darling of Utica, N.Y. Professor George L. Burr of Cornell University delivered an address on the literature of witchcraft. Ex-President Andrew D. White of Cornell followed in a paper entitled "A Catechism of Revolutionary Reaction." It calls attention to the fact, that, while there are so many histories of the French Revolution, there is as yet no history of the re-actions which have followed it. The next paper was on the "French Revolution in San Domingo," by Herbert Elmer Mills, instructor in history, Cornell University. Clarence Winthrop Bowen, Ph.D., read a paper entitled "A Newly Discovered Manuscript: Reminiscences of the American War of Independence, by Ludwig, Baron von Closen, Aide to Count de Rochambeau." This contained a description of the movements of the allied armies in the neighborhood of Manhattan Island in the summer of 1781, of the meeting of Washington and Rochambeau, and of the scenes following Cornwallis's surrender. The writer gives many interesting personal reminiscences of the Washington family and of early American society. The subject of President Charles K. Adams's inaugural address was "The Recent Advancement of Historical Studies in the Colleges and Universities of America and Europe." Mr. Talcott Williams of Philadelphia read an interesting paper on "Historical Survivals in Morocco." The full programme has already been published.

— A careful computation of the speed of a routing-machine cutter, made recently in Chicago by mechanical experts, showed it to be making 23,466 revolutions per minute. This was the regular

working speed, but the machine is sometimes speeded up to 28,000 revolutions per minute. The magnolia anti-friction metal, mentioned recently in these columns, is used for bearings, which permits this high speed to be maintained for ten hours a day without heating the journals.

— In a recent pamphlet on petroleum-fields, Mr. Charles Marvin states that the oil-fields of Canada cover upward of a hundred thousand square miles. There are also extensive oil-fields, comparatively undeveloped, in South Africa, New Zealand, South Australia, and Burmah. As the South African oil-fields underlie the diamond and gold mining districts, it would seem to be assured of a speedy development, fuel costing nearly a hundred dollars a ton there.

— Mr. Loubat, a member of the New York Historical Society, as we have already noted, has given to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres of Paris, a fund with an annual income of 1,000 francs for the giving of a prize of 3,000 francs every third year. This prize is to be given to the best printed work on history, geography, archæology, ethnography, linguistics, or numismatics of North America. The academy fixes 1776 as the latest date to which the works are to apply. The prize will be awarded in 1892, and any work will be open to the prize if published after July 1, 1889, whether in Latin, French, English, Spanish, or Italian.

— In the manufacture of one or two proprietary articles, Mr. James Gresham of Brooklyn has found it necessary, according to the *Oil, Paint, and Drug Reporter*, to use beeswax, from which he extracts the saccharine and gelatine matters, leaving a fine powder containing all of the other principles of beeswax. This latter substance has always been considered a waste product until lately, when experiments demonstrated its value for polishing fine surfaces, such as furniture, silver, glass, etc. The discovery is considered important, and will no doubt be turned to industrial account instead of the by-product being destroyed, as formerly.

— The Maryland Historical Society has published in a handsome volume the first instalment of the "Calvert Papers," recovered after years of fruitless search, and acquired by the society somewhat more than a year ago. These papers consist of about one thousand documents relating to the Calvert family and to the province of Maryland; and they extend chronologically from the reign of Elizabeth to about ten years before the American Revolution. A large number are of great historical importance and interest. This volume, besides a selection from these documents, gives an account of their recovery and presentation to the society, and a complete calendar, carefully prepared by Mr. J. W. M. Lee, of all the papers recovered. A handsome blazon, in colors, of the arms of Cecilius Calvert, as given in Gwillim, forms the frontispiece.

— At a largely attended meeting in Edinburgh on Tuesday, Dec. 3, it was resolved, we learn from *Nature*, that Mr. George Reid, R.S.A., should be commissioned to paint a portrait of Professor P. G. Tait, to be placed permanently in the rooms of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. A committee was appointed to carry out the resolution, including, among others, Mr. John Murray ("Challenger" expedition), convener; Mr. Gillies Smith, honorary treasurer; Lord President Inglis; Lord Kingsburgh; Lord Maclaren; Sir William Thomson; Sir Arthur Mitchell; Professor Robertson Smith; Professor Chiene; Dr. Alexander Buchan; Mr. Robert Cox; and Mr. William Peddie. It was proposed that an etched engraving of the portrait be prepared for distribution among the subscribers, the plate to be destroyed after the required number of copies have been thrown off. It was further resolved that all the fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the professor's old pupils, and others, be afforded an opportunity of taking part in this public recognition of Professor Tait's eminent services to science.

— Italy, France, and the United States of America were represented in the elections to foreign membership of the Royal Society of London on Thursday, Dec. 5, according to *Nature*. Professor Stanislaw Cannizzaro of Rome was elected on the ground of his researches on molecular and atomic weights; Professor Chauveau of Paris, for his researches on the mechanism of the circulation, animal heat, nutrition, and the pathology of infectious diseases;

and Professor Rowland of Baltimore, for his determination in absolute measure of the magnetic susceptibilities of iron, nickel, and cobalt, for his accurate measurements of fundamental physical constants, for the experimental proof of the electro-magnetic effect of electric convection, for the theory and construction of curved diffraction-gratings of very great dispersive power, and for the effectual aid which he has given to the progress of physics in America and other countries.

— French colonization and development companies are making encouraging progress in creating new oases in the Algerian part of the Desert of Sahara. One company have sunk nine artesian wells, reaching water-bearing strata at a depth of 230 feet, giving a steady flow of about five thousand gallons per minute. The water is brackish, and unfit for drinking, but it answers very well for irrigation. This company have about fifty thousand palm-trees under cultivation, the date-palm being the principal variety. Henna and madder are also cultivated profitably, and experiments are in progress with cotton, flax, tobacco, grape-vines, wheat, and barley. Rye-grass and lucern grow abundantly, the latter especially flourishing in the palm-tree plantations. This company began operations in 1882, and they now have upwards of nine hundred acres of productive land reclaimed from the desert, watered by twenty-five miles of irrigating canals. These are very interesting experiments, and it is to be hoped they will be commercially successful, if not extremely profitable.

— The committee on building fund of the Natural Science Association of Staten Island, appointed to consider the possibility of obtaining a fund for a meeting hall, museum, and library, state that they have succeeded, by informal personal solicitation, in obtaining a pledged subscription for that purpose of \$100 from each of the following gentlemen: Capt. A. L. King, Eberhard Faber, L. F. Whitin, Dr. N. L. Britton, Aaron Vanderbilt, Henry R. Kunhardt, L. P. Gratacap, Arthur Hollick, and K. B. Newell. The following active members have agreed to become life members (by the payment of \$50 each) in order to assist the fund: Dr. Frederick Hollick, Dr. William C. Walser, W. B. Kunhardt. From the above it will be seen that more than \$1,000 is definitely pledged at the present time. It was thought best to secure some such amount, as a guaranty of earnestness and good faith, before making a general appeal to the public. The gratifying success has determined the committee to push on with the work, and to publish and distribute a general appeal to the public at an early date, probably during the first part of next month. The sum estimated as necessary to be raised is \$7,000.

— A street-railway about a mile and a half in length, on an entirely new principle, is being constructed in Washington, D.C., by the Judson Pneumatic Railway Company of this city. In this system, power is to be transmitted by compressed air from a central station to a series of motors placed beneath the track at intervals of about fifteen hundred feet. In a conduit between the rails, similar in construction to a cable-railway conduit, revolves a smooth cylinder, or series of cylinders coupled together at the ends about six inches in diameter. These cylinders are to be kept in continuous rotation by the compressed-air motors. An adjustable blade or arm projecting from the bottom of the car, and passing through the narrow slot into the conduit, carries at its end a group of friction-wheels, which may be pressed down forcibly upon the upper quarter of the revolving cylinder. The plane of revolution of these friction-wheels may be changed by an ingenious device controlled by a lever, to be operated by the driver of the car. While the friction-wheels revolve in the same plane as the cylinder, the frame supporting them is at rest, but the moment the axes of the wheels are thrown out of line with that of the cylinder, by a movement of the lever, the frame is driven along the cylinder by the diagonal travel of the wheels, which is similar to that of the travelling ink-distributor on some of the old-fashioned printing-presses. The speed of the car is regulated by the angle of inclination of the friction-wheel axes, the cylinder revolving continuously in one direction at a uniform speed. The feasibility of this system, which at first glance would seem doubtful, has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of those interested by the successful working of a full-size model on a two-hundred-foot track in this city.