

the last being a higher number than in any previous week since July, 1872. The editorial further says, "the statistics we have given leave no room for doubting that we are in the beginning of a new epidemic of small-pox, or, in other words, of one of those cyclical increases that recur with such irregular regularity as to remind us how imperfectly we still employ the known means of preventing the recurrence and spread of the disease, which means are isolation and vaccination and revaccination."

— The Surgical Notes of the War in the East, by William MacCormac, F. R. C. S., published in *The Lancet* of October 14, 1876, contain many points of interest. In speaking of the Belgrade hospitals the writer says, "One case serves to illustrate the antipathy to operation entertained by the Servians. . . . I found, in the hospital of the Serbische Frauen Verein, a nice-looking lad of eighteen years, with a gunshot fracture of the head of the humerus, caused by a fragment of a shell. A considerable wound existed on the front of the joint; the head of the humerus was shattered; some fragments of the bone were quite loose; counter openings had been made behind; the upper end of the broken shaft was drawn up and pressing against the brachial plexus, thus causing excessive suffering. The suppuration was profuse, yet neither the poor lad himself, nor his father and mother, who were with him, would hear of anything being done."

In Semendria two interesting cases are reported to have been seen. One was a considerable gunshot depressed fracture of the anterior superior angle of the right parietal bone. The depression amounted to more than half an inch; but when Dr. MacCormac saw the patient, ten days subsequent to the injury, there had been no symptoms. The surgeon thought he might be blamed for not having trephined, but Dr. MacCormac very much commended him for not doing so, and not yielding to his inclination to operate. It was difficult, however, to persuade him to syringe out the wound with some cleansing lotion. He was afraid he might thus injure the brain, and preferred getting the man to hang out of bed with his head downwards, and so permit the very bad-smelling pus to escape from the rather deep wound.

Another case was one in which the bullet entered through the right temple behind the eye, and was believed to have traversed the posterior part of the floors of both orbits. The vision in the right eye was impaired, but the left eye was in a condition of exophthalmos, and the cornea opaque. The direction and depth of the wound appeared to indicate that the bullet, which had not emerged, lay somewhere behind the left eye, in which it had excited destructive inflammation.

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON.

MESSRS. EDITORS, — We are now in the midst of lovely fall weather, welcoming the return of our residents from their summerings, counseling those whom Centennial experience has used up, who find themselves with their digestive organs out of order and with vague, and to them unaccountable, muscular

pains, which they fear may be the precursors of that terrible typhoid fever so talked of outside of Philadelphia. We are also busying ourselves with college, hospital, and society work, all of which is now in running order. In politics, the absorbing topic of the hour, we must perforce take interest, but it is purely selfish, and resolves itself into the question, Shall we gain or lose patients by the change? With no vote, no representation, and, in the main, with no part whatever in the political discussions of the day, the Washingtonian catches the contagion only from outside influences. On the other hand, during the term of an administration, he learns to appreciate the attractive personal qualities of those in place for the time being, without the obtrusion of political principles, so that a change is always to be regretted. A practitioner of recent date advocates a change for the reason that when he commenced practice the office holders by whom he was surrounded all had their family physicians. Now in a new deal he may stand a better chance.

Whilst referring to Centennial malaise we might mention a case in that connection with some peculiar symptoms, namely: A married man, about fifty, a generous liver, but not dissipated or under suspicion of syphilitic taint, some three days after his return from a visit to the Exhibition, is affected with diffused redness of the forehead and upper part of the face, with swelling most marked under the eyes, accompanied by a burning sensation, restlessness, fever, and loss of appetite. After an apparent incubation of two days longer, an eruption appears first upon the forehead, then along the border of the hair around the back of the neck, over the scalp and upon the face, in free and successive crops of pustules resembling those of variola so closely that at first precautions were taken to guard against contagion. Two or three isolated pustules appeared upon the hands and arms, about the elbows, and two upon the nates, but none upon the body elsewhere. The back, breast, abdomen, thighs, legs, and forearms were free from them. Some of these pustules matured, and were of full size, comparable to those of variola, while others aborted. There was no marked umbilication, and some partook of the nature of furuncles. Two or three, those on the elbows, took on the character of broad ecchymotic spots. These successive crops were over four weeks in making their appearance, maturing in three days and subsiding, leaving behind a slight bluish elevation, which wore away only after the lapse of considerable time. Even at the end of the fifth week a few of these pustules appeared. During the prevalence of the eruption there was little or no constitutional disturbance, the fever subsided entirely, and marked debility was the only sequel. This occurred in the summer time, and a new straw-hat had been purchased during the visit. The straw rim irritated the forehead, abrading the skin slightly; perspiration was free, and the lining band was of colored leather. The favorite seat of the pustules exactly corresponded to the pressure of this lining around the head. Unfortunately, no examination was made of the lining, as it had been thrown away by the hatter to whom it had been sent for alteration.

The profession here has sustained a severe loss in the death of Dr. William P. Johnston, who died October 24th in his sixty-fifth year. He was a physician of upwards of forty years' practice in this district, educated in Paris, and

unceasingly active in the practice of his profession ; indeed, in the opinion of his associates he wore himself out in the service, dying of an affection of the heart. He probably had the largest and best practice, for the two do not always go together, of any physician in Washington at the time of his death. He was for a number of years professor of obstetrics in the National Medical College, and was personally interested in the various hospitals and benevolent institutions of the city. When this can be said of a man it naturally follows that he must have had many friends outside of the profession who feel his loss keenly ; and one, in giving expression to his feelings in the daily papers, while emphasizing the confidence patients had in laying their most secret matters before Dr. Johnston, unfortunately so worded his expressions as to convey an apparently unfavorable impression of other medical men. This led to a long and very pleasant article on the doctors, in an editorial of another of our newspapers in their defense, which concludes with the remark that their only failure to advance lay in the collection of fees, they being too remiss in collecting or charging enough. If this be a sincere expression from one of the laity, we may hope for better days pecuniarily. Dr. Johnston, like many of our over-busy men, has left but little behind him in our pages of medical literature. He leaves a son, who from his thorough education and assiduous attention to his profession gives full promise of rivaling his father in professional ability, but it would be hard to rival his ready smile, courteous manner, and sympathetic attention.

Dr. Billings has left us for a short trip in Europe, to look after the interests of his library (that is the most satisfactory way of putting it as the outgrowth of his efforts, although it is called the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office), and of his projected course of lectures in the Johns Hopkins University. He is receiving attentions from the profession in England which are highly flattering to him and to those whom he represents. It is to be hoped that the medical press will benefit by his foreign observations.

The colleges have opened for the winter with a fair showing of students in attendance, not sufficient to make one wildly enthusiastic, perhaps, but yet encouraging. The medical department of the Columbian University remains unchanged. The medical department of Georgetown University commences anew, as it were, all the members of its faculty being new men. We are to have a fourth medical college for our benefit, a Woman's Medical College, the faculty of which, it would seem, have not yet been selected. Dr. Mary Walker, who is practicing here, is not connected with it, and so far we know but little of its *personnel*.

A step of considerable importance has recently been taken by the medical association in re-admitting Dr. Bliss to membership. The association claims the right to govern the relations of members with each other as to consultations, etc., and some years ago saw fit to dismiss Dr. Bliss on grounds which it is not necessary to recapitulate here. The doctor admitted the justice and force of the discipline, acknowledged his errors, and asked to be restored to his former privileges, which, by this act, was granted. This relieves one member at least from personal embarrassment, but it goes beyond this simple personal-ity in its principle. At the time Dr. Bliss was re-admitted to membership he

was, and is still, a member of the board of health, in affiliation with Dr. Cox, who is not recognized by the association, and with Dr. Verdi, who is a homœopath, both being also members of the board of health. This, then, puts the present board of health upon a different footing from that which it before held.

Since our last letter the published extracts from the report of the committee of investigation referring to Dr. Nichols and his management of the Government Hospital for the Insane have so fully vindicated that gentleman and fulfilled our predictions that it seems scarcely necessary to refer to it.

The medical society has resumed its meetings with matters of interest before it, but as it publishes its bulletin at such regular and short intervals it would seem improper to anticipate it in any way. The society has, however, made an attempt, by appointing a committee for the purpose, to secure some representation before the congressional district committees, oftentimes a very useful and important precaution. Bills are sometimes brought up before Congress, and are upon the eve of their passage before we are made aware of their existence, that are of great importance to us as a profession, as for instance the recent attempt of the so-called surgical institute; had it not been that its wide scope affected the whole profession outside of the district, it is a question as to how far we could have restrained its influence.

HOMO.

COMPARATIVE MORTALITY-RATES FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 18, 1876.

| | Estimated Population, July 1, 1876. | Total Mortality for the Week. | Annual Death-Rate per 1000 for the Week. | Death-Rate for the Year 1875. |
|--------------|--|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| New York | 1,061,244 | 415 | 20.33 | 29.35 |
| Philadelphia | 825,594 | 324 | 20.41 | 22.24 |
| Brooklyn . | 506,233 | 171 | 17.37 | 24.92 |
| Chicago . . | 420,000 | 187 | 23.15 | 19.75 |
| Boston . . | 352,758 | 126 | 18.58 | 26.20 |
| Providence | 101,500 | 29 | 14.86 | 19.02 |
| Worcester . | 51,087 | 15 | 15.26 | 20.91 |
| Lowell . . | 51,639 | 16 | 16.11 | 20.55 |
| Cambridge | 49,670 | 16 | 16.75 | 23.31 |
| Fall River | 50,372 | 13 | 13.42 | 23.99 |
| Lawrence . | 36,240 | 11 | 15.78 | 25.96 |
| Lynn . . . | 33,548 | 14 | 21.70 | 19.23 |
| Springfield | 32,000 | 4 | 6.50 | 20.93 |
| Salem . . . | 26,344 | 8 | 15.79 | 22.92 |

Normal Death-Rate, 17 per 1000.

BOSTON SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL OBSERVATION. — A regular meeting of the society will be held at its rooms, No. 36 Temple Place, on Monday evening next, at eight o'clock. Dr. Fisher will read a paper on Delusion, of a Week's Duration, induced by Heat-Stroke.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS RECEIVED. — *The Functions of the Brain.* By David Ferrier, M. D., F. R. S. With numerous Illustrations. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1876. (For sale by A. Williams & Co.)