

Recent Literature.

The Nature and Treatment of Syphilis and the Other So-Called "Contagious Diseases." By CHARLES ROBERT DRYSDALE. Fourth edition. London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox. Pp. 172.

A little book, published in 1863, with the title, *On the Treatment of Syphilis without Mercury*, being a Collection of Evidence to prove that Mercury is a Cause of Disease, not a Remedy, was, to the best of our knowledge, the first edition of the present volume. In the same year Dr. Drysdale read a paper on the same subject before the Harveian Society, which gave rise to a discussion which lasted over two meetings and was the cause of several communications in the medical journals. In this first edition utterance was given to the sentiment that "mercury now holds its place among the list of remedies solely from its having been used by the practitioners of the past, without any sufficient evidence that it is ever of the slightest service." During the intervening years the author has come to hold a somewhat different — certainly a modified — opinion. On page 88 he says, "As I had found syphilitic sarcocele, tertiary sore throat, ozæna, and ulcers of the skin occur frequently enough in my own non-mercurial treatment, I resolved to give the mercurial treatment a fair trial, and see whether it would prevent the dreaded tertiary stage." Had he then proceeded to give us his own conclusions or a detailed account of his cases, treated with and without mercury, from which the reader could draw his own inferences, he would have produced a book whose value would far exceed that of the present volume. Unfortunately, however, he "hopes that any honest student will be able to make up his mind from the evidence before him without any need of dogmatic assertion" on the author's part. The chapters on treatment are made up for the most part of undigested extracts from various authorities of their opinions, *pro* and *con*, in regard to the use of mercury. The opinion of the author himself is apparently summed up in the following somewhat indefinite extract taken from the last page: "It is now well known that hosts of cases do well without mercury. At the same time it is now clear that mercury in very small doses does not damage the health, and as there is a very great consensus of opinion as to its antidotal value in hard sore and in true syphilis, the rational solution of this question would seem to be that mercury is only to be administered in these very small doses, and never pushed as it used to be. . . . In short, the mercurial treatment of syphilis, is one which, in many cases, is of doubtful benefit, and which, if made use of, must not be expected to do too much."

He has used for the past three years at the Rescue Society a pill of one centigramme of the iodide of mercury twice a day. There have been no unpleasant symptoms from this dose. Patients have done well, and there have been few cases of severe complications.

The book is in general a compact history of venereal, with extensive references to a very wide circle of writers, and would prove a very valuable guide to any one desiring to acquaint himself with the literature of the subject, though scarcely intended for a text-book. The glimpses we obtain of the author make us wish he had shown himself more freely and at greater length.

P.

Miscellany.

LETTER FROM LOUISVILLE.

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

Societies in Louisville.—*Revival of the College of Physicians and Surgeons.*—*Reminiscences of an Ethical Period.*—*No Pharmacists need Apply.*—*Low-Fee Culprits.*—*The Biggest Fee taken in Kentucky.*—*Charges that Miscarried.*—*A Lively School Fight.*—*Stormy Petrel.*—*Reformation and Good Resolves for the Future, etc., etc.*

LOUISVILLE is well provided with medical societies. There is the Medical Section of the Polytechnic, which meets every now and then, and talks to the short-hand reporter; the Medico-Chirurgical (limited), which convenes every fortnight at members' houses, and discusses supper and physics with much earnestness, I am told; the Pathological, which sits with closed doors; and there is, or was at some time, the Obstetrical Society of Louisville. I have not seen it, nor seen anybody yet who has seen it, but now and then, coming across its name in the inverted pyramids of title-page honors which accompany the names of several foreign and domestic specialists, I judge that it must be somewhere hereabouts. Greatest of Louisville societies, however, is the College of Physicians and Surgeons. The other bodies are more or less limited in scope and membership, and are all of comparatively modern date. The college has been the common rendezvous of the profession for nearly these fifty years, — that is, barring the intervals when its doors have been closed. It is a champion sleeper. Its last drowse extended through a period of more than three years, — the longest slumber that it has ever indulged in, though on sundry occasions it has taken a twelve months' nap. But the society, when it does live, lives lively, — drains the wine of life to the bottom; and its periods of rest follow not unnaturally upon debauch. My earliest recollections of the profession are connected with the revival of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and I learned then that this was only one of a series of such occurrences. A crack speaker was up, and, growing eloquent upon his theme, said, "Mr. President, I do not want this society to die. I was present at its birth; I witnessed the throes of its delivery; I saw it christened and dedicated to its work; I" — But here a painfully statistical member interrupted him, and showed him the date of its charter, — some time in the thirties, — at a time when the orator himself was not far removed from obstetrical procedure. Abashed for a moment only, however, the gentleman added, "It is evident, Mr. President, I was not present at the birth of the college." We laughed a great deal, but the speaker was not wholly wrong in what he had said. It was simply a previous revival which he had in remembrance, — one of the periodic new births which the society had been going through. Since the event referred to, the college has had two additional revivals: one after the lapse of a year, and the other which took place last week, when it was called together for the first time since the spring of 1877. Two meetings have been held, with fair attendance and excellent debates, and I have no doubt that I shall have occasion to send you interesting items from the future work of the society; but it occurs to me just now that an account of some of the past episodes of the college may prove