

Editorials.

FRIGHT AND CHLOROFORM DEATHS.

An important leader in the *British Medical Journal* of February 21st last calls attention, under the above heading, to a lecture recently delivered at the New York Polyclinic, by Dr. J. A. Bodine, upon this subject. It appears that Dr. Bodine considers that most deaths which take place during the administration of chloroform, are due, not to poisoning by the drug, but to fright. He quotes an interesting case in support of this view: "The patient, a very nervous individual, became so frightened before the operation that the rhythm of his breathing was seriously disturbed; the anesthetist, in consequence of this, gave him some preliminary training in deep breathing before the administration of the chloroform; the cone was placed over his face, and he was told to breathe deeply; after a few gasps he ceased to breathe and could not be resuscitated. Not a single drop of chloroform had been administered." Dr. Bodine thinks that "if death from fright could be eliminated chloroform would be a much safer anesthetic."

His views thus coincide with those of Dr. R. D. Rudolf, of this city, who, in a pamphlet entitled "Observations on Blood Pressure," with special reference to chloroform (published in 1901, as a Toronto University study), wrote as follows: "When the blood pressure falls greatly from chloroform and remains low, life must be endangered, but in my experience animals do not die more easily from chloroform administered in the vertical than in the horizontal position, and it is decidedly harder to kill a dog with chloroform when the pressure is very low from hemorrhage than when this is not the case. . . . If then it is harder to kill a dog by chloroform when the pressure is low than when it is not so, why should it be that all anesthetists are agreed upon the danger of giving anesthetics when the patient is sitting up? The answer I believe lies in the fact that most deaths, which occur in practice during the administration of chloroform, are *not* cases of