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Original Communications.

COCAINE POISONING.

By J. B. MATTISON, M.D., *Medical Director, Brooklyn Home for Habitues.*

It is "ancient history" more or less since the writer began to present the record of toxic effects from cocaine.

During the nearly nine years past dozens of deaths and hundreds of non-fatal cases from untoward effect of this drug have been placed before the profession, so that one is at a loss to know whether he who at this late day says, "it has hardly been reasonable to call it a poison in any ordinary quantity," is ignorant of this toxæmia, or is blinded by a feeling in its favor that prompts him to question this fact, and prevents him counselling that caution in its use which prudence undoubtedly demands.

A Boston oculist, Dr. J. A. Tenney,

* Read before the Kings County Medical Society, October 16th, 1894.

writing recently about "mishaps with cocaine," used the language we have quoted, and in so doing may have intended to limit his statement regarding its non-toxic effect to his special field. If so, he might better have been more explicit, for, surely it was not wise to disclaim, in a general way, its power as a *poison*, for *poison it truly is*.

In November, 1886, at a meeting of the New York Neurological Society, Doctor William A. Hammond, speaking of cocaine, said "he did not believe any dose that could be taken was dangerous." Before that meeting ended, the writer challenged such a dangerous statement, and warned the members against accepting it, and, during the next year, presented such convincing proof that Hammond was wrong as to impel the *British Medical Journal* to assert, editorially,—"if it were more needful to produce more proof of the unsoundness of Dr. Hammond's opinion, Dr. Mattison has effectually done this."

Dr. Hammond has lived to see the day that he regrets, quite likely, having expressed such dangerous doctrine. He