

Selections.

The International Medical Congress.

FLORENCE, ITALY, October 6, 1869.

Editors Medical and Surgical Reporter :

The International Medical Congress, which has been holding its sittings in this city during the last ten days, and which has been attended by a considerable number of foreign physicians, and by some 160 medical men from all parts of Italy, has laboured under the disadvantage of taking place almost contemporaneously with the International Congress at the Hague. In the discussion of the latter body, questions of public hygiene are justly made to occupy a prominent place; and it is precisely questions of this class which, likewise, give to the proceedings of the Medical Congress their chief general interest. It can, therefore, scarcely excite surprise if many of the eminent men of science of Northern Europe, engaged in such studies, have not found their way to Florence, from the simple fact that they could find their way more easily to the Hague, and could secure, by their presence there, results identical with what they might hope to accomplish here. It is almost superfluous to observe, that the general and permanent causes which render it more difficult for members of the medical profession than for those of any other class to abandon, even temporarily, their associations, have not been without their necessary effect in limiting the number of foreign physicians and surgeons who have repaired to Florence, and, in some cases, hastening the departure of those who came. Still, in spite of these special and general impediments, the Congress can boast the presence of Professor Bouillaud, Professors Lazarevitch, Barth, Besse, Buttern, Dujardin, Ebstein, Furnikel, Girard, Jaderholm, Mendel, Pascal, Tolbry, Zimmermann, Lombard, Herzen.

The Florentines had not been wanting in all the necessary preparations to receive; they displayed an assiduous courtesy in the entertainment of their guests; government placed at their disposal, for the daily public discussions, the oratory of the Ministry of Public Instruction; the manager of the great hospital of Santa Maria Nuova caused a suit of apartments, attached to that establishment, to be most elegantly fitted up for the sojourn of the members; the Minister of Public Instruction, Bajoria, formally inaugurated the Congress in an admirable speech; the Prime Minister, Count Menabrea, hospitably entertained the more distinguished at his table; the Florence medical body entertained them all, without exception, at a magnificent banquet at the Hôtel de la Paix, the best hotel in Florence; Commandatore Perazzi did, in person, the honors of the city, in particular of the Florentine pantheon, Santa Croce; and the manager and concessionaire, MM. Damiani and Cesaica, of the renowned mineral baths and springs of Monté Catini—the Vichy of Italy—placed special trains at their disposal to convey them to that spot, and, on their arrival there, did, along with the local authorities, everything that good dinners, and wines, and speeches, and cheering, and military parades, and music, and illuminations, and fireworks, could ac-

complish to give them a hearty welcome. The demonstrative and dramatic side of such proceedings in Italy seldom leaves anything to complain of, but in the present instance the real value of the demonstration lay in the reflection of genuine hospitality and kindness; and I have heard but one voice as to their reception from the foreign visitors to the Congress—a voice of grateful recognition for the social courtesies which enlivened and gilded their serious work.

That work may be summed up as follows:—After De Rengi, of Naples, had been appointed the regular President, and two honorary Presidents had been united with him in the persons of Bouillaud, of Paris, and Bufalini, of Florence, the regular work began by the discussion of the various questions which had been placed on the order of the day. In order to save time, it was found advisable to suppress the readings of entire memoirs, and to give merely the conclusions on which the debates then took place. Accordingly, at the second meeting, the Congress occupied itself with the conclusions of the memoir presented by Roth, of London, on the causes of mortality in children in manufacturing cities, and on the remedies for the same. Lombard, of Geneva, brought forward in this discussion a mass of statistics, proving the greater mortality of infants in warm than in cold climates; a mortality greatly heightened in the south of Europe by two causes—by the custom of carrying new-born infants to church for the purpose of baptism, and by the particular influence of the malaria. His discussion was followed by one originating in a paper of Crispino, on hydrophobia, which passed into a general discussion on poison, and on the benefits derived in the treatment of poison, as bites, from the use of ammonia and of vapor baths.

Much of the remarks of the next speaker, Professor Tomaselli, of Catania, on the cachexia cardiaca, was lost from the low voice of the speaker, so that one could only give a guess at its character from the few critical remarks which it called forth from Bouillaud.

At the opening of the next day's meeting, the 25th, the President communicated a letter from professor Parlatore, the director of the Museum of Natural Science and History, inviting the members next day to that establishment, for the purpose of there witnessing certain experiments, and being made acquainted with certain researches closely bearing on their common object. The invitation was unanimously accepted. Then commenced a discussion on the papers presented by Profs. Pantaleoni and Salvagnolo, on marsh miasma; the second of these medical men holding the theory that the miasma originates in the mixture of fresh with salt water, whilst the first maintains that its cause must not be sought in that mixture, but rather in the putrefaction of vegetable substances thereby generated. This is an inquiry, I need scarcely say, of vital importance in Italy; but I am compelled to say that its treatment by the International Medical Congress was singularly inconclusive, no other result, after all, being secured, than the appointment of a commission to inquire into the whole matter. The discussion nearly took a very polemical, and even political, character, for Prof. Cipriani, of Florence, wished to extend it to the question of