

Miscellaneous.

THE CONTRACTILITY OF THE SPLEEN.—From the benefit observed to arise in certain cases of splenic leukaemia from repeated electrization, Prof. Botkin of St. Petersburg was led to the conclusion that the nutritive disturbances in leukaemia can be explained by the increase of white blood corpuscles. Prof. Biesiadecki, of Cracow, lately propounded a similar view; but from other reasons (*vide Med. Times and Gazette*, page 552, vol. ii. 1875.) The relation of swelling of the liver to the contraction of the spleen has been lately made the subject of experimental investigation by Dr. Drosdoff and Dr. Botschetschkaroff, of St. Petersburg, with the following confirmatory results. They found (*Centralblatt*, Jan. 29, 1826) that in dogs (1) the spleen enlarges in all its diameters several centimetres, when the nerves of the splenic plexus are divided, and that it contracts again when the peripheral ends of these nerves are electrically excited; (2) that when the contraction of the spleen is produced by electrical stimulation the liver enlarges, its outlines become more definite, its color brighter, and its consistence firmer, and when the spleen again enlarges these signs disappear; (3) that if a prick be made in the liver when the spleen is swollen, scarcely any blood flows, but as soon as the spleen contracts it issues in abundance; (4) that with each contraction of the spleen there is a discharge of white blood-cells into the hepatic blood, as proved by counting the proportion of white to red corpuscles in blood drawn before and during the contraction. It seems probable that the spleen thus rids itself, so to speak, of the white corpuscles, which were stored up in it; (5) if a manometer is attached to the splenic vein, and the splenic nerves are stimulated, the pressure rises in the instrument in proportion to the extent to which the spleen contracts, and it again falls to its former level when the stimulus is intermitted. It does not immediately begin to enlarge on the withdrawal of the stimulus, but takes some minutes before it alters perceptibly in shape. Thus the contraction and enlargement depend not solely on vaso motor influences, but also on the presence of muscular

elements in its tissue, such as Müller and others have described; (6) the contractile power of the spleen is not completely destroyed by ligaturing all its vessels, but only considerably diminished. If the arteries alone are ligatured, the enlargement and diminution on stimulation are much less than in the normal state; if the veins alone are tied the organ swells up more, and contracts less powerfully.—*Med. Times and Gazette*.

THE PROFESSION AND THE DRINK QUESTION.—The President of the College of Physicians, we are glad to say, presided, on March 30th, at a conference of medical men and clergymen as to the medical aspects of intemperance, at which many very sensible suggestions were made by various members of the profession. We rejoice in every moderate and consistent protest against drunkenness from men who can lay any claim to representing the profession. We know that some of the best medical practitioners are fearful of taking any part in such a movement lest they should compromise their professional independence, or sanction fanatical or sensational views of this question. We share this feeling to a great extent, but we see very urgent reasons for not giving it too much weight. As medical men we know more than any other persons in the community of the physical evil that is being wrought by the large quantities of alcohol which, partly under mistaken notions, are being consumed by all classes of the people. We feel strongly, as we have said before, that a scientific statement of this evil ought to be made by the profession to the Government authoritatively. The very precision which recent labours in physiology and pathology have given to our knowledge will only be an additional guarantee of moderateness and accuracy, and therefore of force, in any statement of the kind we advocate. This is no question of rabid teetotalism, nor of dispute between the pathologist who thinks alcohol does its deadly business through the liver and another who thinks it does it through the kidney. Both these pathologists could agree in a statement that would impress both the public and public men. It is an urgent question both of pathology and of patriotism that needs to be taken out of the