

ASSYRIAN MEDICINE.

There appeared in *Edinburgh Medical Journal* of February, a very interesting article from the pen of Dr. John D. Comrie, on the subject of "Medicine Among the Assyrians." The Semitic races that supplanted the Scythians founded the Kingdom of Babylon about 3,000 B.C., and Assyria about 2,000 B.C.

Of about 20,000 tablets dealing with a great variety of subjects, somewhere from 500 to 1,000 treat of medical topics. Many diseases are mentioned, and in many instances quite fanciful lines of treatment are laid down. At Barsippa, near Babylon, there was a place of learning, and there are reasons for supposing that it was mainly for medical studies. A physician is mentioned as acting as a healer and a priest in Babylon as early as 2,700 B.C.

The code of Hammurabi, a king of the First Dynasty of Babylon, bearing the date of about 2,000 B. C., lays down many rules regarding the practice of medicine, and also says what the physicians' fees shall be. These laws go to show that at that very remote period in the history of Assyria, the physician enjoyed a high social position.

There were certain heavy penalties for careless acts on the part of a physician, or for malpractice. There was a fair advancement in surgery. Operations, such as that for cataract, appear to have been known, and the laws of refraction were in a fair stage of advancement and lenses were made use of to aid sight.

The court physician of those early Babylonian days was a person of marked distinction.

He had under him a number of other doctors. The Rab-mag, or court physician, records that in the case of nose bleeding the dressings had been applied wrongly on the outside. He says that the assistant should have applied the dressing inside of the nose. This looks like our tamponing.

About the same period in Egypt a court physician is spoken of as being in great favor with a king of the Fifth Dynasty, about 2,700 B.C. There are a number of ancient papyri dating from 1,000 to 2,000 B.C. In the Hermetic books of Egypt of very ancient date, there was a good deal of attention given to medicine. Six of these books dealt with the body, diseases, instruments, drugs, the eye, diseases of women.

Some very interesting copper surgical knives have been found in a tomb of about the date of 1,500 B. C. A number of strange formulæ are given, but the following for baldness is unique: Lion's fat, hippopotamus fat, crocodile fat, goose fat, snake's fat Nubian ibex fat, of each equal parts.