

drates of carbon, is not an alimentary substance." Of course it is not. It was precisely on the principle of eliminating from the extract every particle of albumen, of fat, even of gelatine, that Liebig proceeded. And with what result? To produce, not an alimentary substance strictly so called, but a condiment which has a distinct and unique place in dietetics. The role of condiments in the complex action of nutrition is but partially appreciated, and the most natural condiments are usually neglected for others much coarser, more stimulating, but really less efficacious. Voit, the most recent experimenter in dietetics, confirmed the popular impression that the flow of gastric juice to the walls of the stomach may be accelerated even by the sight of meat, as when he witnessed in a fasting dog, in which he had established a stomachic fistula, the immediate rise of the juice when he offered, without giving, the animal a bit of meat. Bouillon, he further maintained—warm and well-boiled bouillon—is the simplest and best digestive, and it is from this premise that Pettenkofer vindicates for the extract its paramount claims as a condiment. These it owes to the mixture of salts, different, indeed, but combined in definite proportions, in a ratio which the organism imperatively demands, and the slightest deviation from which would constitute a veritable impurity. No amount of the best meat can take the role of the extract any more than milk can play the part of cheese or butter. The product of Liebig is neither a nutrient nor an alimentary substance capable of economising the albumen, the fat, or the carbohydrates; it is simply a condiment, but one of such efficacy that Pettenkofer does not hesitate to anticipate for it the chief place among such aids to digestion, not only in the sick-room, but in common every day life. It has served him as a text for a very instructive essay on nutrition in general, and though much that he says is a recapitulation of a kind that has a novelty of its own from the clear and discriminating eye he passes along the series of discoveries bearing on the physiology and application of food.

MEDICAL NEWS.

Enteric fever has broken out in several parts of Birmingham.

A movement has been initiated in London having for its object the promotion of a memorial to Von Graef.

A clergyman living at Wolverhampton has just lost a third child from enteric fever, presumably through the agency of infected milk.

Professor Czermak, the celebrated physiologist, whose work on the Laryngoscope was translated by the Sydenham Society, died on Monday, Sept. 3, at Leipzig.

The Town Council of Portsmouth have resolved to memorialise the Government against the erection of the Hospital for Contagious Diseases which has been commenced close to Portsea.

The prize of 2000 rupees offered in October, 1861, by the Government of India for the compilation of the best Manual of Family Medicine for India has been awarded to Surgeon-Major Moore, of the Rajpootana Political Agency.

We record with regret the death of William Barker, M.D., who died on the 11th Sept., at his residence in Hatch-street, Dublin, aged sixty-three. Dr. Barker held the posts of Professor of Experimental Physics to

the Royal College of Science, and the Lectureship on Chemistry to the Royal College of Surgeons. The deceased had a high reputation in various branches of medical science, and his funeral was largely attended by the medical community, who esteemed him highly.

An inquest was held a few days ago before Dr. Lankester on the body of a boy, aged six years, whose brain, according to the medical evidence, although healthy, weighed no less than fifty-three ounces. The cause of death was pulmonic apoplexy.

A club has been formed at Hamburg for promoting the heathen practice of incineration, in place of Christian orthodox inhumation. The club, it is said, already numbers upwards of eighty members, each of whom on entering has made a will, according to which his remains are to be burned.

It is the intention of the British Government to equip a large vessel as a hospital ship for the reception of the sick and wounded during the expedition against the Ashantees. It is probable that it will be very much after the pattern of the hospital ships stationed in the Red Sea during the Abyssinian war.

A London military journal states that some reduction in the personnel of the department is at present under consideration, and that Mr. Cardwell is intent on abolishing about thirty-five places in the surgeons' list. It is stated that it is the intention of the authorities in future to utilise the civil profession to a greater extent than heretofore for taking medical charge of small detachments in outlying districts, as a substitute for the services of medical officers. It is believed that a public saving will be effected in this way.

The topic of an International Pharmacopoeia occasioned at the Vienna Congress much animated and sometimes able argument. It was admitted that an English physician, unless acquainted with the German Pharmacopoeia, would be unable to write a prescription which an Austrian professional brother could understand. A new system was proposed, of which, it was suggested, the Latin should be the uniform language; while the adoption of a metrical scale of weights was further recommended. The subject was too vast, however, for a final conclusion, and its discussion was postponed till the next congress.

While the science of "preventive medicine" seems to be taking a firm and salutary hold of the medical profession and the public at large, there is a strong counterbalancing effect produced by the science of "procureative surgery," which seems to be so much encouraged by railway companies. From the returns recently issued we learn that during the year 1872, 1145 persons were killed and 3038 were injured upon railways. Of those killed, 127 were railway passengers, and 632 were railway officials. The rest are returned as "trespassers, suicides, and miscellaneous," a large and doubtful class, numbering 386.—[London Lancet.

MERCURY IN THE HUMAN BODY.

A paragraph lately appeared in an evening contemporary to the effect that an illustration of the accumulation of mercury in the human system was furnished recently at a lecture in Vienna, by the exhibition of the leg-bone of a man whose death had been accelerated by the use of the metal. Professor Hatt struck the bone heavily upon his lecture table, and thousands of glittering little globules of quicksilver were forced out, and rolled into larger drops on the black surface before him. All this had been absorbed into the man's system during life.

Is this possible in these days? Do our Austrian confreres prescribe mercury so freely as to accelerate death? We confess to a little scepticism about the reduction of mercury to the metallic form in the body from any of its preparations. Perhaps it was administered in the liquid form, a plan that was sometimes adopted in old times as a means for the reduction of strangulated hernia. If not, the only preparation which could supply the metal itself is the ointment of mercury, in which the particles of mercury may be seen with the microscope, but the quantity used to produce the effect described must have been enormous.—[Lancet.

The Assistance Publique, or general administration of the Paris Hospitals, has just published its budget for 1874. The total amount of expenditure appointed for the year, namely, 28,150,000 francs, brings out the fact of the extraordinary importance of this administration. In the beginning of the year the amount fixed upon had been only about 26 millions and a half (francs), but nearly two additional millions have recently been voted through the general rise here in all the necessities of life. The number of beds to be supported in 1874 will be 20,161; of which 9311 are for the infirm and aged, 8227 for patients, and 2081 for lunatic subjects. It is reckoned that the number of individuals admitted into the hospitals, or assisted by the administration, will be about the same as during the present year. The number of patients admitted was this year 11,099; whilst 192,000 individuals received help in various shapes from the administration. Besides the above figures, the Assistance Publique has 5601 lunatic patients in the various asylums of the Department of the Seine or of France, and 26,000 infants or young children that it helps to bring up in the country. The total number of individuals of all categories succoured yearly by this vast administration of the Assistance Publique thus reached 338,200.—[Paris Letter.

DRUGGISTS AND THE PRESCRIPTIONS OF MEDICAL MEN.

The death of a tradesman from delirium tremens at Ramsgate under the following circumstances has excited much discussion. The facts were brought to light by a coroner's jury. The tradesman was attended by Mr. James Richard Leake, a retired army surgeon, L.R.C.P. Edin., M.R.C.S. Eng., and L.S.A. Mr. Leake finding his patient very excited, and not benefited by a dose of opium, prescribed half an ounce of tincture of digitalis, which the druggist refused to dispense, on the ground that digitalis was an uncertain medicine and the dose prescribed an excessive dose, being eight times that recognised by Squire's Pharmacopoeia. Mr. Leake before the coroner justified his prescription, and was ably supported in doing so by Mr. J. Pearson Cresswell, the ordinary attendant of the patient, who had been from home at the time of his death. He naturally threw the onus of the man's death on the druggist, of whose conduct the jury expressed their disapproval. There can be no doubt that the druggist in this case acted very wrongly. And the sooner it is understood that medical practice is not to be limited by a druggist's opinion of a prescription, even if it be backed by Squire, the better. If a druggist is in doubt about the accuracy of a prescription or the intention of a practitioner in regard to any given dose, it is his duty to take steps to ascertain whether the prescription is according to the wish and purpose of the writer. There, unless the dose is obviously poisonous, his responsibility ends. Here the druggist's refusal to dispense arose from his ignorance of medical science. He knew Squire very well; but he was ignorant of the fact that for years past it has been well known that large doses of digitalis, larger than Squire ever dreamt of, cured some bad cases of delirium tremens. Mr. Leake's prescription was quite in accordance with the practice of Mr. Jones, of Jersey, and of others. For example, Dr. Garrod, whose authority will not be disputed, says he has "seen many cases of delirium tremens rapidly recover under its influence, sleep being speedily produced; but the doses have been very large, from two to four fluid drachms, repeated every four hours for two or three times only." Of course such a prescription is a responsible one; but the case was a very responsible one—extremi morbi extrema remedia; and in the absence of the medicine the patient speedily died. A druggist who refuses to dispense a recognised prescription even in gentle terms does a great injury to a medical man; and the druggist's mode of refusal in this case was not gentle. We regret to see the names of some medical men attached to a "round robin" exonerating the druggist for not making up the medicine without further communication with the medical man prescribing. It was the druggist's business to have sought such communication. Mr. Leake may, however, be well satisfied with the expression of opinion on the part of the jury, and with what he will certainly have—the sympathy of the profession.—[Lancet.