humiliating one for both the victim and the profession, and even the newspapers are pointing to it as a sample of the jealousy and spitefulness of doctors toward each other. We can only console ourselves with the hope that some good may come of it both in the promotion of a broader and more tolerant spirit and in the reform of existing absurdities.

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Plea for Alcohol.

HARTFORD, CONN., Feb. 23, 1899.

To the Editor:—In the JOURNAL of February 11, Dr. D. E. Mattison has in a very courteous way expressed his opinion on the value of alcohol and referred to the decreasing number of persons who suffer keenly when asked to give up theories long held as facts. Some physicians, like theologians, dread the arrival of new facts and new truths, which necessitate change or readjustment. To them it is dangerous to reopen an old subject for new evidence. It is more pleasant to believe that the final truths have been reached and the last word said. Fortunately doubts, denials, and pleas for present theories are neither obstructive nor destructive, but stimulating to new inquiries; at the same time they are literal protests against old theories and welcomes for new truths. Theories of alcohol and its physiologic and medicinal action are as ancient and numerous as its defenders. No other chemic agent has been supposed to have as many and diametrically opposite effects. Recently the modern methods of research have been turned on alcohol and its current theories, and a new field of facts has appeared. The theory of its food value rests on the fact that a small percentage of alcohol is lost or absorbed in the body. The latest researches show that alcohol is almost wholly eliminated as a foreign body, especially in large doses. If a small part is a chemic food or tonic it is by inference and not apparent by any accurate tests. The tonic theory rests on the increased heart's action and appetite following its use in small doses. This is not confirmed by tests of muscular and mental activity. The stimulant theory on the same basis is disproved. Increasing the heart's action is increasing expenditure of force, always followed by reaction. This is measurable by instruments of precision, and can be expressed in units. The irritation manifest by the increased heart's action is not stimulation, because followed by reaction and exhaustion. The action of alcohol on digestion is obstructive above 4 per cent.; below that the inference is that it is helpful. But this can not be sustained by other evidence, and the question is still unsettled. Measurements of the senses both before and after the use of alcohol show a constant depression and lowering of all activities. In doses of one ounce of alcohol, a measurable diminution is apparent. Larger doses increase this effect up to partial and total paralysis. The effects of alcohol on the temperature, reducing it even when given in small doses, are demonstrated facts. Unconscious experiments on a large scale in many ways have shown that alcohol increases muscular fatigue and lessens power of endurance; in the same way experience has proved that no work requiring accuracy and steadiness or brain and nerve force can be done well under the use of alcohol. Psychologic measurements of the activities of the brain and nervous system all show a steady slowing up and lessening of force and power when alcohol is used in small doses. From an increasing variety of evidence the fact becomes more and more apparent that alcohol is an anesthetic and paralyzant. In large doses this is evident. In small doses instruments of precision make this clear. From this point of view its value in disease and in medicine can not be questioned. Clinically a rapidly increasing number of learned physicians who have no

sentiment in the question report better results and lessened mortality in the treatment of many diseases without alcohol. The teachings of physiologists, or the opinions of eminent men, can not decide the accuracy of current theories; nor can we put aside the researches of psychologic and chemic laboratories or minimize their conclusions, and say they only explain the effects of large doses of alcohol, which are very different in small amounts. If alcohol is a food, tonic, and stimulant in any dose or form, the evidence of this from modern methods of research should be clear. It is the spirit of the age to question every theory and demand the reasons for its acceptance. At this bar of inquiry alcohol is proven to be an anesthetic and not a tonic or stimulant. Whatever may be ascertained in future investigations, this conclusion is fully supported by a large, increasing mass of evidence beyond all moral considerations. A critic study of cases in the practice of every physician will reveal many facts to support these conclusions, and a little experiment will show how much of the current theories of the action of alcohol are delusions. The evident decline of medical faith in alcohol is not a change of pastime or sentiment in the movement of medicine. It is the slow recognition of new truths supported by a wider range of evidence. The experience of the country physician, who finds that alcohol can be replaced by other remedies with equal and better results, and of the employers of labor, who learn by sad experience to distrust men who use alcohol, are unmistakable signs of a great awakening. To call alcohol a food, tonic, or a stimulant, is to deny the facts of science and to adhere to the theories of the past. To recognize alcohol as an anesthetic and paralyzant of nerve-cells and tissue, is to explain the most puzzling phenomena of its action, and show why its fascination is so intense and widespread. All the facts are not known, and only a few conclusions appear from the present study, but these conclusions show the trend of research and the vast fields of new facts, and wider, more exact explanation of the action of alcohol on the body. T. D. CROTHERS, M.D.

A Third Cataractous Family.

WHEELING, W. VA., Feb. 25, 1899.

To the Editor:—There is no known reason why cataract should be classed among the hereditary diseases. But cases occasionally occur which cause us to pause and think, though they may really belong to the realm of coincidence and not heredity.

In the *New York Medical Journal* of Feb. 8, 1896, I reported "A Cataractous Family," in which the mother, three daughters, and probably two sons, had double cataract at about the age of 40 years. The only other member of the family, a sister, is about 57 and has no symptom of the family failing.

In the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, of Oct. 22, 1898, I reported "Another Cataractous Family," in which my patient, aged 67 years, had double cataract; his father had double cataract when he died, at 68; a sister had double cataract and had been operated on when about 50; another sister, about 60, has a mature cataract in the right eye; and two cousins, sons of the father's brother, had double cataract when about 60 years old.

Yesterday I operated on J. C. Secrist, aged 44 years, of Sherodsville, Ohio. He was blind from double cataract. I removed a hard, fully matured lens from the right eye, in which he had first noticed failing vision about two years ago. Within the last year he had become blind in the left eye, and the lens is evidently ripening rapidly. The patient told me his brother had gone blind from cataract when about 40 and had been successfully operated on, dying at 49 years, of an acute disease. His only other brother is now about 40 and has perfect vision, although in constant fear of cataract. His two

sisters, aged 38 and 48, have good vision. His mother died at 70 years, never having had any failure of sight, and his father is living, at 73, with good vision; but his father's sister had double cataract when 70 years old.

JOHN L. DICKEY, A.M., M.D.

Correction in "A Few Clinical Pictures."

ANN ARBOR, MICH., Feb. 27, 1899.

To the Editor:—In my article published in the *JOURNAL* of Feb. 18, 1899, (p. 360), in the report of Case No. 5 the statement is made that "she has had local medical treatment for two years with no improvement." Since writing this, the physician who treated the patient before I saw her, and who last saw her about a year before she came to me, informs me that when the patient first came under his observation she was the subject of a marked uterine subinvolution, the fundus reaching as high as the umbilicus. I know the physician to be an accurate observer, and therefore feel it just to say that so far as this condition is concerned, "the local medical treatment" had improved the patient, as involution was complete when she came to my notice. Under report of Case No. 6, in the eighth line from the bottom, read "interrupted" instead of "interrupted," and in the sixth line from the bottom, read "hernial" instead of "perineal."

JOHN A. WESSINGER, M.D.

ASSOCIATION NEWS.

American Medical Association.—The AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION will hold its next annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio, June 6, 7, 8 and 9, 1899. As customary in connection with these meetings, there will be an exhibit. For this purpose a special building, 190 feet long by 44 feet wide, will be erected adjacent to the State House. It will be well lighted and ventilated, and will be supplied with electric current. The rotunda of the State House will be used for registration, for a post-office, and for endorsing railroad certificates. A wide hallway leads directly from the rotunda into the exhibition hall. The Section meeting-places are all located on the square surrounding the State House. No pains will be spared to make the exhibition hall suit the convenience of those who occupy it. It is the determination of the profession of Ohio to make this meeting surpass all previous meetings of the Association, and all indications point to a very large attendance. The exhibitors will thus come in contact with a large number of physicians who are not delegates or permanent members of the Association, but who will embrace this opportunity of visiting the Association and of making observations of the various lines of goods represented in the exhibit.

N. R. COLEMAN, chairman, Sub Com. on Exhibits, 264 E. Town St., Columbus, Ohio.

SOCIETY NEWS.

Medical Association of Georgia.—The fiftieth annual meeting of this Association will be held in Macon, Ga., on April 19, 1899. Titles of papers should be sent to Dr. R. B. Barron, Macon, Ga.

Kalamazoo Academy of Medicine.—At the regular meeting of the Academy, February 21, Dr. A. H. Rockwell read a paper on "Brachycardia," and Dr. Rush McNair one on "Cranial Surgery."

Washington Microscopic Society.—At the recent meeting of the Society, Washington, D. C., Dr. H. H. Doubleday read a paper entitled "The Psychic Life of Micro-organisms." An interesting discussion followed.

Conference for Prophylaxis of Venereal Diseases.—An international conference to study and discuss measures to arrest the spread

of syphilis and venereal diseases, will be held in Brussels in the first two weeks of next September.—*Semaine Méd.*, February 1.

Luzerne County Medical Society.—At the recent meeting of this Society, Wilkesbarre, Pa., Dr. L. H. Taylor read a paper on "Mastoid Diseases." The discussion was led by Dr. McFadden. The next meeting will be held March 15, when Dr. Barton of Plains will read a paper on "Puerperal Sepsis."

Toledo Medical Association.—At the meeting February 24, an address was delivered by Dr. Henage Gibbes of Detroit, assisted by Dr. E. H. Troy, on "Inflammatory and Tubercular Phthisis," illustrated with lantern slides on pathologic tissue. A banquet at the University Club followed.

National Sanitary Association.—This association, in session in New York City, February 5 and 6, will meet in Atlanta, Ga., in October. The following officers were elected: Charles S. Benedict, New York, president; T. B. Sales, Raleigh, S. C., first vice-president; Andrew Young, Chicago, second vice-president; Eugene Monteith, Atlanta, secretary and treasurer.

American Neurological Association.—At a meeting of the Council of the Association held in Philadelphia recently, it was decided to hold the next annual meeting of the Association at Atlantic City, N. J., on June 14, 15 and 16. The president is Dr. James Hendrie Lloyd, Philadelphia, and the secretary and treasurer, Dr. G. M. Hammond of New York.

New York County Medico-Pharmaceutical League.—This new association was organized February 24, in New York City, its object being "the encouragement of operations at home where practicable, the regulation of lodge-contracting, of dispensaries, hospitals and other medical charities, and the discussion and regulation of other matters of mutual interest to the medical and pharmaceutical professions."

International Congress of Insurance Medical Examiners.—The first international congress of physicians connected with life and accident insurance companies will convene at Brussels, Sept. 25 to 30, 1899. Among the subjects announced for discussion, we note: Insurability in glycosuria, albuminuria, syphilis, neurasthenia, progressive paralysis, traumatic neuroses; the necessity of a uniform formula for examination, professional secrecy and the insurance companies.

Wilson Medical Society.—The annual meeting of this Society, an inside organization of Jefferson Medical College, formed some years ago in honor of, and fostered with tender care by Prof. J. C. Wilson, was held February 21, in Philadelphia, Pa. S. Macy Cowgill, president of the Society, acted as toastmaster, toasts being responded to by Prof. J. C. Wilson, F. X. Dereum, H. A. Hare, H. A. Wilson, W. M. L. Coplin, and E. P. Davis.

Washington Medical Society.—At the recent meeting of this Society, Washington, D. C., Dr. A. F. A. King read a paper on "The Mosquito and the Malarial Parasite." Dr. C. L. Allen reported a case of edema in hemiplegia and a case illustrating early degeneration of the pyramidal tracts, as shown by the Marchi method. Dr. W. Prentiss read a paper on "Bermuda as a Winter Resort." He illustrated his subject by lantern-slides and specimens of natural history.

Lackawanna County Medical Society.—This Society recently held its twentieth annual dinner at Scranton, Pa. C. L. Frey was toastmaster and toasts were responded to as follows: "Mythical Medicine," John C. Bateson; "Medical Education in the United States," L. S. Barnes; "The Doctor at War," Walter M. Reedy; "Medical Education Abroad," L. Wehlau; "Famous Men in Medicine," R. H. Gibbons; "Our Absent Members," D. A. Capwell; "Why Doctors Disagree," F. L. Van Sickle.

Union Medical Association.—The one hundred and tenth quarterly session of the Union Medical Association of Northwest-