

of science will allow, rules for diagnosis and treatment. Infantile syphilis is not forgotten, and either work may be consulted with considerable benefit. Mr. Acton's is fuller in some respects, presenting nearly 200 pages more than Mr. Parker's; but the difference is taken up by the surgical subjects to which we have alluded above, and the transcription of a considerable portion of Ricord's lectures.

We shall not attempt to follow our authors through the multiplicity of subjects which they had to treat, and shall be content to pass a few of these in review.

And first, as to the general tenets respecting venereal diseases, it should be recollected that Mr. Acton is a staunch adherent of Ricord: strict partition between gonorrhœa and chancre—the soft harmless to the constitution, the hard infecting it; one virus; secondary symptoms distinct from chancre, and not capable of generating the latter or any other secondary symptoms, &c. Mr. Parker is far less Ricordian: he suspects gonorrhœa of now and then generating secondaries, and the simple non-indurated chancre of “occasionally, but rarely” (page 110) giving rise to constitutional symptoms. He believes secondary ulcers inoculable; and as to the unicity or duality of the syphilitic virus, he is in doubt, as seen by the following passage:—

“Whether the different symptoms which are to follow the application of the syphilitic poison upon different persons are due to the nature of the poison itself being different; or whether the difference is produced by the constitution of the individual to whom it has been applied; or whether, again, the variations are due to a mere local pathological condition on the part of the recipient, is difficult to say, each of these theories having found supporters in writers of great experience on the disease in question.”—p. 109.

And here Mr. Parker very fairly places, in a foot-note, the latest opinions of Ricord on the subject. We cannot but feel great respect for our author, who, not being able conscientiously to come to a decided opinion, keeps in the background, and candidly mentions the various theories which have been offered. Indeed we find, in the present edition of Mr. Parker's book, evidence of a full appreciation of the efforts which have been made to throw light on the difficulties besetting the study of venereal diseases. We shall just quote one example referring to Ricord, being corresponding passages of the edition of 1854 and the one before us.

1854.

“Hunter proved the existence of a specific ‘morbid animal poison,’ or ‘virus,’ by inoculation, which doctrine, revived in the present day by M. Ricord, has added little to what Hunter had already taught on the subject.”—p. 2.

1860.

“Hunter proved the existence of a specific ‘morbid animal poison,’ or ‘virus,’ by inoculation. M. Ricord has revived this practice, and, from a most extended series of experiments, has laid the foundation of a pathology which has removed from the study of syphilis much of the confusion by which it was formerly surrounded.”—p. 2.

(To be concluded.)

## New Inventions

IN AID OF THE

## PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY.

### IMPROVEMENT IN THE SPECULUM.

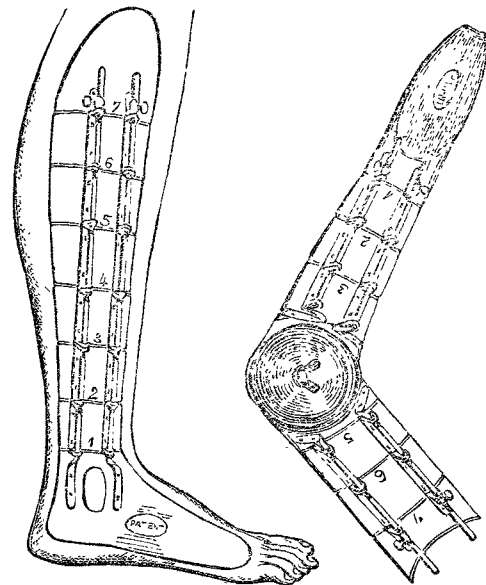
MESSRS. WEISS have brought out a useful improvement of the vaginal speculum. A serious inconvenience in the use of the bivalve speculum is the liability to pinch up folds of skin or hair between the blades. The practised obstetrice no doubt easily avoids this accident; but it does not fall to every one to use the instrument so frequently as to be able to guard against it. The speculum is shielded by a thin

caoutchouc sheath. The speculum itself is materially improved by the action being what is mechanically termed direct, and the mouth of the instrument is bell-shaped. Greater power and perfect inability to strain the instrument are thus gained, as well as a much wider opening to admit light and favour manipulation. Another improvement consists in the form of the tampon used to facilitate the introduction of the speculum. A caoutchouc bag, attached to a stem, is made to expand so as to overlap the edges of the blades. The inflation is effected by pressing with the thumb upon a communicating bag containing water. The pressure removed, the tampon collapses, and is easily withdrawn when the speculum is *in situ*. We have tried the instrument, and are much pleased with its construction and action.

### AN IMPROVED SPLINT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Permit me to bring to your notice, and that of the profession through your columns, an improved splint for gunshot or other compound fractures of the limbs. It consists of the common splint cut into transverse strips, which are retained in their places by slightly raised longitudinal bars at the back. The material may be iron or other metal, or even wood, though



this last I should not recommend on account of its liability to split. The advantages which this interrupted splint possesses above all others, in addition to its simplicity, are:—

1st, and most important, that while the splint is applied in the usual manner, the site of the wound may be left exposed for the application of the requisite dressings beneath the raised bars, at the same time securing the cleanliness of the pads and bandages.

2nd. That—as, with a regiment on service in the field, our resources as regards the available number of the various sizes of splints may be somewhat limited—this same splint may be made use of for a tall man, or, by removing one or more of the transverse strips off the longitudinal bars, for a growing lad.

3rd. The same splint may be used for simple fractures, and any objection as to the extra weight, which after all is but slight, may be obviated by removing one or more of the transverse strips, and replacing the others with small spaces between them.

From my own personal experience, and that of others in the Army Medical Department, in our hospitals at Scutari and in the Crimea in 1854–55, and in India in 1857–58, the necessity for such a splint was urgently felt. I have had the honour to submit this splint to the Director-General of the Army Medical Department, who has manifested his approval of it by issuing an immediate order for the supply of the Chinese expedition.

With regard to the extra expense of these splints, I have been given to understand by the firm of Savigny and Co., of St. James's-street, that, the right of sole manufacturers being secured to them, and thus encouraging them to establish machinery for their production, they will be enabled to supply them at a very trifling charge above that of the common splint now in use.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

S. STACY SKIPTON, M.D.,  
The Castle, Edinburgh, April, 1861. Assist.-Surg. 78th Highlanders.