

THE "STANDARD" UPON SCIENCE.

OUR respected contemporary, the *Standard* newspaper, is suddenly placed in the position of a middle-aged tradesman who retires from business, who purchases an estate in the country, and who cannot restrain an occasional outburst of petulance at the remarks made by his new neighbours upon his blunders among the turnips and at the cover side. To head the fox that is about to break, or to point his loaded gun at his fellow-sportsmen, seems to him to be a very venial error in a person of his consequence; and he cannot understand why either should call forth condemnation from others, or how, indeed, others should presume to condemn him at all. By reason of the collapse of the Tory Ministry, and of the pretty strongly expressed opinion of the country about them and their doings, the *Standard*, if indeed it cannot be credited with having "retired" from the "public line," has at least witnessed the departure of its proper business to the house over the way. Having apparently realised a competence, it now seeks to beguile the tedium of its unwelcome leisure by new pursuits, and aspires to enter upon them on terms of equality with those to whom they have been familiar for years. As a first effort, the *Standard* has taken to "Science," and its idea of "Science" was to report, for the delectation of families and railway travellers, a singularly crude and inconsequent essay that was read before the Medical Society of London. In response to our perfectly just and necessary observation, that matters proper to be brought before the Medical Society were not proper for discussion in a general newspaper, the *Standard* has flown into a rage, of which the impotence is only equalled by the absurdity. It devotes about a column and a half to the angry assertion of its claims to enlighten the world upon matters medical, and to denunciations of our immodesty in presuming to doubt its perfect wisdom. In support of its claims, however, only one argument is advanced—namely, "that the most ignorant boor in any out-of-the-way rural village could certainly understand, and contribute his quota of local knowledge as to, the prevalence or non-prevalence of any particular ailment in his own particular locality." Now, to argue from the powers of the ignorant boor to those of the *Standard*, is doubtless, as far as it goes, a piece of perfect reasoning; but in this particular case it does not go far enough to reach the desired conclusion. The question is about the geographical prevalence of cancer. How are the boor and the *Standard* to get at their facts? Who shall decide about the presence of cancer? If the *Standard*, will it favour us by taking a preliminary step, and by giving to the world a definition of the disease?

But, altogether apart from matters medical, the *Standard*, in the same article, claims to be "the grand source of information to the world;" and adds, "that no science, that is knowledge, can be perfected that is not publicly understandable and publicly understood." This seems to us a little ambiguous, not to say inelegant; and we are not quite sure whether the second "that" is intended to be a pronoun or a conjunction. But there is certainly an implied conception of "science" which brings to our minds a parallel conception of "education." A not very thriving grocer, living in a little country town, and with whom we were lately brought into accidental contact, confided to us his fixed resolve to give all his children "a fast-rate education." We commended him greatly; but, on hearing that his quiver was well filled, expressed fear that the resolve would entail a large expenditure. He thought otherwise. We hoped that he might be right, and inquired what branches of knowledge were comprised within his scheme. "Well," he said, "I'll have all of 'em taught to read." We assured him that he would thus be laying a good foundation, and we inquired whether there would be a superstructure? "Yes," was the answer; "I'll have all of 'em taught to write!" We still approved, and still questioned. "Oh yes! I'll have all of 'em taught to cipher!" "Anything more?" we asked. "More!" responded the grocer looking puzzled, "I didn't know as there was anything more as they

could be taught!" The *Standard* seems to us to have fathomed the depths of science much as the grocer had fathomed the depths of learning. It is commonly believed, and as an abstract proposition the *Standard* would probably admit, that some of the more active Fellows of the Royal Society are engaged, if not in perfecting science, at least in advancing it towards perfection. We wish the writer whom we criticise would test the "understandableness" of their work, by trying to read aloud a page of the "Philosophical Transactions."

We are bound to admit, however, that the tempest raised by our contemporary has produced one excellent result, in that it has occasioned the revelation of a fact which must otherwise have remained unknown, because not discoverable by unaided human efforts. This is, that the *Standard* possesses a "scientific correspondent." We should ourselves, however, prefer to describe the gentleman as one who corresponds about science. We venture, in all humbleness, to counsel him to avoid, for the future, things that are too high for him. He need not long be silent. Showers of frogs doubtless impend, and gigantic gooseberries will soon be here. The lambing season is often fruitful of prodigies. If we may judge of the attainments of the scientific correspondent by his appreciation of the paper to which we refer, and of our remarks upon it, we cannot but feel that his genius will find its most fitting scope in the observation and description of the natural phenomena that we have thus briefly indicated.

BROMIDE OF POTASSIUM IN THE NURSERY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I can corroborate the opinion of Mr. Moutard-Martin, referred to in the last number of THE LANCET, as to the efficacy of "bromide of potassium in the nursery," by the case of a child recently under my care.

A little girl, aged eighteen months, the daughter of a clergyman, had been from birth very restless at night, and this had increased so much of late that the nurse had been discovered giving chloroform to the child clandestinely, to ensure for herself a quiet night.

Not having before administered the bromide to one so young, I told the father the nature and effects of the remedy, and begged him to note the result. I gave it in doses of five grains at bedtime, to be repeated in two or four hours if necessary.

The effect was very marked from the first, and after taking it nightly for ten days, and then on alternate nights for another ten days, it was no longer required, and the child has had good nights' rest from that time, now five weeks ago.

There was no dentition or other ailment at the time to account for the increased wakefulness, but simply an abnormal irritability of the nervous system, such as I had seen relieved in adults by the same means. I am, yours, &c.,

Gillingham, Dorset, Dec. 17th, 1868.

E. J. MILES, M.D.

Medical News.

APOTHECARIES' HALL.—The following gentlemen passed their examination in the Science and Practice of Medicine, and received certificates to practise, on Dec. 17th:—

Balch, William Hope, Millman-street, W.C.
Greene, Walter, Boulogne-sur-Mer.
Hall, Francis de Havilland, Tottenham.
Holderness, William Brown, Windsor.
McCaun, Charles, Parliament-street, S.W.
Matthews, James Forrester, Royston, Herts.
Moore, Joseph, Upper Brook-street.
Vials, Edmund, Peckham.

The following gentlemen also on the same day passed their first examination:—

Hugh Adeock, W. E. Farnfield, Guy's Hospital; T. H. Hendley, St. Bartholomew's Hospital; George Salt, London Hospital.

As Assistants in Compounding and Dispensing Medicines:—

H. B. Ellis, Bideford, Devon; J. G. Jones, Newington, S.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY: NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS.

—Examiners: Osmond Fisher, M.A., Jesus College; George Henslow, M.A., Christ's College; Philip Thomas Main, M.A., St. John's College; J. B. Bradbury, M.B., Downing College.

Second Class.
Ds. Higgins, Down
Moore, Catherine
Cory, Pembroke }
Penny, Caius }
Roe, Downing }
Roe, Downing }
Roe, Downing }

Third Class.
Ds. Holditch (B.A.), St. John's }
Monckton, Caius }
Roe, Downing }