

genious pathologic præstigiator. At any rate, Dr. Goodfellow seems to know how to conjure with them, and to us, what he does with them is really most like pathologic legerdemain. We rise from the perusal of these Lectures as we do from a *soirée fantastique* of M. Houdin, satisfied that everything appears to be as it is said to be, but knowing, nevertheless, it is all in appearance. If indeed one-half only of what Dr. Goodfellow gives as the "why and because," could be demonstrated to be correct, we should regard this series of Lectures as one of the most satisfactory productions of the English school of medicine. As it is, we can only say that they indicate their author to be not devoid of some reading and of considerable ingenuity.

The Mineral Springs of Aix-la-Chapelle and of Borcette. By ALEX. REUMONT, M.D., Resident Physician in Aix-la-Chapelle. pp. 95. London and Aix: Williams & Norgate.

AIX-LA-CHAPELLE possesses mineral springs of different qualities,—namely, *hot sulphureous* and *chalybeate*. The former were known to the Romans, and have remained in repute up to the present day in diseases affecting the skin, chronic rheumatism, portal congestion, and certain affections of the bones and joints. The latter are serviceable particularly in those conditions of the system of the female connected with disturbance of the menstrual function. The Reumont family have been long known as medical advisers at Aix, and the present little volume by Dr. Reumont junior will not detract from its reputation.

Household Medicine, containing a familiar Description of Diseases, the most approved Methods of Treatment, &c. &c. Expressly adapted for Family Use. By JOHN GARDNER, M.D., of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, &c. With numerous Illustrations. pp. 520. London: Smith, Elder, and Co.

THOUGH this is a carefully-prepared volume, and contains very much useful information, it is, in our opinion, impaired by some serious blemishes, which prevent us recommending it to the class of persons for whom it has been specially designed. What these faults are, the professional reader will begin to have an inkling of before he has got through the preface.

Historical Records of the various Affections Cured by Means of the Electro-Chemical Bath. Preceded by an Introduction on the *Modus Operandi* of this Mode of Treatment, and a *Rationale* of each Case. By Monsieur J. F. J. CAPLIN, M.D., Licentiate of the Metropolitan College of New York, U.S. pp. 284. London: Baillière.

THE electro-chemical bath is so called because the patient is immersed in a liquid; but it is not as a mere bath that the latter acts as a therapeutic means. The water in which the patient is placed is only for the purpose of making the skin permeable to the passage of electricity passing from within to without, the skin when dry being a bad conductor of electricity. The active agent is, therefore, asserted to be this wonderful force—"the kind of electricity employed in the operation being the electricity of decomposition." (p. 28.) The therapeutic result is believed to be the elimination or removal of noxious substances deposited in the deep-seated tissues. To those curious on the subject we may recommend the perusal of these sixty-one cases of wonderful cures; the style of recital of which, however, we cannot particularly praise.

Memorandums and Recollections of Gout and Rheumatism, and their Treatment; with a few Practical Remarks on Sciatica and Lumbago. By EDWARD DUKE MOORE, L.R.C.P.E., &c.; formerly Apothecary-in-Ordinary to H. M. William IV., Queen Adelaide, and Household. pp. 38. London: Churchill.

A PAMPHLET containing some sensible remarks, by one who has evidently had his due share in the treatment of a very troublesome malady.

British Wild Flowers. By J. E. SOWERBY. Parts I. to V. London: Van Voorst.

THIS elegant work is now being re-issued in monthly parts for the convenience of purchasers. It justly deserves the support and encouragement of every student of botany. The illustrations and letterpress are highly creditable to both author and publisher.

THE DEGENERATION OF RACE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The letter of Dr. K. Corbet of August 17th on the above subject, in reference to mine of February 23rd, demands a reply from me. In proof of the correctness of my assertions respecting the inhabitants north of the Friths, I refer him to Holinshed's "Chronological History of Scotland," p. 132; and Macaulay's "History of England," vol. iii., pp. 300 to 360.

I must, however, confess I was as little prepared to hear that the Gaelic custom of wife-stealing had for its object the production of the genus *homo* in the highest state of perfection, as I should have been had I been told that the Highland practice of herd-driving—"I will down to the Lowlands, and there steal a cow"—resulted from a laudable desire to improve the genus *bos* by cross-breeding. But probably few of the mongrel worthies of Sheriffmuir could have outmatched in valour and intellect that king in whose veins flowed the blood of three brothers.

Dr. Corbet, not led by the foolish tinklings of a name, says, "A clan is not a consanguineous community," animated by a love for kith and kin; but, as one must infer, rather a club, united by *esprit de corps*, of which members can be admitted on the performance of certain initiatory rites; and as an English mechanic may become a Forester, so he may after a dip in the Beaulieu emerge a Fraser—one of those gentlemen of the North of whom Buchanan remarks, "*Fraserii, hominum fortissimorum in illis gentibus familia*." Now this idea of a clan being granted for argument's sake, the extinction of the chiefs and landed proprietors, to whatever cause ascribed, certainly cannot be attributed to descent from consanguineous ancestors.

As regards the population of St. Kilda remaining stationary, according to the late Census the country population of all Scotland during the ten years from 1851 to 1861 has increased scarcely one per cent., and during the same period the entire population of Ireland has decreased considerably.

Undoubtedly the production of unhealthy semen is a great cause of degeneracy in offspring, and that this is a consequence both of town life and also genius is not questioned. Dr. Corbet states consanguinity has the same injurious tendency; but if, as he conceives, the secretion of unhealthy semen be the cause and origin of all the evil, this view applies exclusively to the male, as if he were the sole agent in producing a degenerate race. It would be interesting to learn why the other sex is to be shut out so completely from exerting any hereditary influence, whether deleterious or otherwise, on her offspring.

As I have for the last fifteen years, in those patients who have come under my notice suffering from diseases said to be the result of consanguineous marriage, sought in vain to discover this as a cause (for even in those cases which *primâ facie* have appeared to favour this opinion a closer investigation has adduced evidence of causes which would have operated equally injuriously on those presumed to be more favourably circumstanced), this fact, combined with other medical as well as ethnological and historical reasons, I must offer as an apology for my scepticism on that particular imputed cause of degeneracy, the establishment of which I consider not proven.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

August, 1861.

S. ANDERSON SMITH, F.R.C.S.

THE LEGION OF HONOUR AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.—On the occasion of the Emperor's fête day (August 15th), a great number of crosses of the Legion of Honour were granted to members of our profession. Our readers are aware that the Order has four grades, the lowest being that of Knight; above which is the Officer; then the Commander; and, finally, the Grand Cross. Some, as M. Milne-Edwards and M. Velpéau, have been raised to the rank of Commander; some, as M. Laugier and M. Cullerier, have become Officers; and many others have been created Knights. Though we may call these things *baubles*, they are certainly great incentives and flattering rewards.