

appearance of one or more of the restricted collection of signs. These considerations afford good grounds for a belief in the invariable structural alteration attendant on disease, leaving aside the grossness of that change, which may be minute or profound. Dr. Jamieson contributed a valuable paper on Acute Circumscribed Cutaneous Oedema. Dr. John Duncan read a paper on Germs and Spray, the chief burden of which was the comparative inefficiency of the latter. Dr. Byrom Bramwell exhibited during the session several interesting microscopical specimens illustrating the development of the tracts of the spinal cord.

*Lectures on Practical Pharmacy.* By BARNARD S. PROCTOR, formerly Lecturer on Pharmacy at the College of Medicine, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Second Edition, with Additions and Corrections. London: J. and A. Churchill. 1883.—This work is the outcome of a course of lectures which Mr. Proctor has been in the habit of delivering in the College of Medicine at Newcastle-on-Tyne. The matter is of necessity adapted to the requirements of pharmaceutical rather than of medical students. The author deals at considerable length with such subjects as crystallisation, precipitation, distillation and sublimation, filtration and percolation, dispensing and the preparation of ointments, suppositories and medicated lozenges. To medical students, probably, the most interesting chapter is that devoted to autographic prescriptions. The author has lithographed a selection of difficult prescriptions, which will serve as a capital exercise in reading diverse writings and in clearing up ambiguities of all kinds. The work has been carefully prepared and will, we trust, be of use to those engaged in pharmacy.

*A Pharmacopœia of Selected Remedies, with Therapeutic Annotations.* By EDMUND A. KIRBY, M.D., M.R.C.S. Sixth Edition. London: H. K. Lewis. 1883.—It may be objected that this is nothing more than a trade circular; but it is an excellent work for all that. The author or compiler manages to give in a very small compass a great deal of useful information. The "Pharmacopœia of Selected Remedies" may be regarded as a kind of supplement to the British Pharmacopœia, and owes its existence to the shortcomings of the authorised version.

*The Newer Materia Medica.* Detroit: Park, Davis, and Co. 1883.—This work has been compiled under the direction of a well-known firm of druggists in America, with the view of affording information respecting some of the more recently introduced remedies. That many of the drugs mentioned in the Newer Materia Medica are of great value cannot be doubted for a moment. Many of them have been fairly tried in this country, and are likely to take a permanent place as remedial agents. The book is beautifully illustrated and reflects much credit on the publishers.

*Whitaker's Almanack, 1884.*—We have received a copy of Whitaker's Almanack, the best book of its kind published. The useful and varied information which has rendered it valuable in former years is again included, and the supplementary portion contains a historical sketch of the sanitary laws, of the history of small-pox, of the Corporation of London, of the fisheries of the world, &c. Errors, which in a work of this kind are to a certain extent inevitable, seem very few in number, one being the statement that A. Freire-Marreco, M.A., is the Professor of Chemistry in the University of Durham Medical School and College of Physical Science. Mr. Marreco has been dead many months.

THE SURGICAL AID SOCIETY.—The annual meeting of this Society was held on the 12th inst. The report stated that the expenditure for the year had been £728 in excess of the income. During the year 4632 persons were relieved and 7280 surgical appliances given to the poor, making a total number of 53,543 supplied during the twenty-one years of the Society's existence.

## "SPORADIC CRETINISM."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—After carefully reading the letter of Mr. Robert Jones on the above subject in your last number, one is driven to the conclusion that in it he is confounding two entirely distinct types of idiocy, the sporadic cretin and the Mongol or Kalmuc idiot. To the latter the late Dr. Séguin rather unfortunately applied the term furfuraceous cretin; hence probably arises the confusion. Sporadic cretinism is much the less common of the two, and very few complete cases have as yet been recorded, the majority of them by Mr. Curling and Drs. Hilton Fagge and Fletcher Beach, the latter of whom has, I believe, made a post-mortem examination in seven cases. If, as Mr. Jones says, he has made a number of post-mortems on sporadic cretins whilst at Earlswood, he could not fail to have added considerably to our knowledge on the subject by publishing them. Mr. Jones's experience that the presence of tumours above the clavicles and the absence of the normal thyroid are the exception rather than the rule is totally contrary to that of other observers, as I believe I am correct in saying that in every recorded case of sporadic cretinism there has been found either absence, atrophy, or degeneration of the thyroid gland; and Dr. Beach believes that the presence of supraclavicular fatty tumours is a constant feature. I feel sure, however, that Mr. Jones, in writing the letter, had in his mind cases of idiocy of the Mongol type, as his remarks on etiology in the latter part of the letter are true of Mongol idiocy, not of sporadic cretinism. We have hardly a sufficient number of histories of cases of sporadic cretinism to establish any general conclusions as to etiology. These two forms of idiocy are quite distinct; the resemblances between them are few and unimportant, whilst the differences are striking. Both are stunted in their growth, but the sporadic cretin to a much greater extent than the Mongol. Their physiognomy is quite different: the swollen, puffy features, thick lips, and protruding tongue of the sporadic cretin distinguish him at a glance; whilst the obliquity of the eyes, the rugose and transversely fissured tongue and scurfy skin of the Mongol idiot form an equally striking picture to anyone accustomed to see these cases.

In reading descriptions of cases of myxœdema, one cannot help remarking the points of resemblance between them and cases of sporadic cretinism, and suspecting that there may be some common factor in their etiology.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

HAROLD G. TAYLOR, M.D. Lond.,

Assistant Medical Officer, Royal Albert Asylum,  
December 18th, 1883. Lancaster.

## BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My attention has been drawn to a paragraph in your last issue upon the subject of the recent election of a lady to the office of extra acting physician, in which the writer says: "But according to the experience of the same institution with regard to house-surgeons, the plan cannot be said to have worked well for the interests of the hospital or the comfort of the residents of the other sex."

I think it due to the institution to explain that if any discomfort was caused to the "residents of the other sex," it was due to the fact that the internal arrangements of the building did not permit of the committee providing a sitting-room for each officer; but I am bound to say that the house-surgeons of both sexes submitted to the inconvenience, and appeared to work comfortably together under the arrangements that existed; while I am not aware that the interests of the hospital suffered in any way. The appointment of extra acting physician is one, however, where no such question arises, as the officer does not reside in the hospital, and the duties are confined to attendance at the out-patient department.

I am glad to acknowledge that the lady appointed to this office on the 10th held the house surgeonship for some time, and that the institution never had a more able or conscientious officer; and that her tact and judgment enabled her to work pleasantly with all her colleagues.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

LAWLEY PARKER,

Chairman of the Managing Committee  
Birmingham, Dec. 18th, 1883.