

duced; but merely to evacuate so much fluid as would relieve the spina bifida of its state of tension.

In the three following lectures the author considers at great length the important subjects of disease and injuries of the brain and spinal cord, and points out the necessity of rest and the way in which it acts beneficially. His remarks on concussion of the brain, if containing nothing particularly new, are full of sound sense and practical value.

Lectures VI. and VII. are devoted mainly to the consideration of abscesses and their treatment. Mr. Hilton's method of opening deep-seated abscesses near large bloodvessels is described at length. Instead of plunging in a sharp bistoury, he makes a cut through the skin and fascia; then, introducing a director down to the site of the abscess, runs a pair of blunt dressing forceps along the groove, and thus tears open the abscess. In this way any serious injury to deep-seated vessels is prevented.

In the three following lectures the highly important subject of joint disease is discussed. The most interesting part of this is the minute detail of the anatomical distribution of the nerves to the various joints and to the tissues surrounding them; and Mr. Hilton fails not to point out, with especial emphasis, that there is a great design manifested by the same nerves being distributed to a joint, to the muscular apparatus used for its motion, and to the skin over the insertion of the muscles.

In Lectures XI. and XII. are described the cutaneous and muscular nerve distribution in relation to the pleura, and the influence of mechanical and physiological rest in diseases of the pleura and pericardium; and in the same manner reference is made to the anatomy of the nerves of the urino-genital organs and rectum, and the effect of rest in the treatment of diseases attacking those parts. The remarks regarding the painful ulcer of the rectum are extremely good and practical.

Nearly the whole of the remainder of the work is taken up with the consideration of diseases of joints and the osseous structures; and most of the important points connected with their pathology and treatment are discussed fully, ably, and, we think, fairly. We may, for instance, refer to the highly important question of the propriety of opening abscesses connected with diseased joints. This subject is discussed in no spirit of dogmatism; but, after employing sound argument, Mr. Hilton comes to the conclusion, which most surgeons of experience will endorse, that, as a rule, the opening of abscesses connected with diseased joints should be deferred as late as possible.

It is difficult to overrate the importance of the subject treated of in these lectures; for, as we before stated, although most surgeons recognise in theory the value of rest, and reliance on the efforts of nature in the most serious diseases and injuries, it seems necessary that from time to time they should be forcibly reminded of this great truth. Mr. Hilton has done so in a manner which cannot fail to be of great use to the present generation of surgeons, and which is highly creditable to himself.

The views propounded by Mr. Hilton might, at first sight, appear to be a kind of protest against the practice so frequently adopted now-a-days of excising joints; but, in reality, excision of the joint ends of bones affected with long continued and intractable disease is merely a part and parcel of the treatment so energetically recommended by the author, when such operation is adopted in proper cases. The removal of a portion of necrosed bone, or the excising of the carious surfaces of an articulation, is, after all, nothing but the withdrawal of a source of irritation both to the joint and to the system at large; and the subsequent adaptation of the two healthy cut surfaces, with the substitution of perfect repose of the operated limb for a period of several weeks or months, is simply the carrying out of those principles which Mr. Hilton enforces, and which the profession now generally recognises.

We can commend the work in the highest terms. It is most carefully written, beautifully illustrated, and well suited to the daily wants of the busy practitioner.

Topics of the Day, Medical, Social, and Scientific. By JAMES ANSLEY HINGESTON, M.R.C.S., &c. London: Churchill and Sons. 1863.

In this book we have very many subjects touched upon in a lucid, straightforward manner. The several essays appear to us to have been collected from journals and serials. It may be that some are here printed for the first time; others we well remember to have read before in the pages of the *Psychological Review*. The most important essays are those "On Atmospheric Phenomena in Relation to the Prevalence of Asiatic Cholera," "On the History and Practice of Vaccination," "On Hypochondriasis," and "On Ethnological Psychology." These titles, however, give but a faint idea of the scope of the author's lucubrations, which touch upon "Cleopatra's Death," "The Death of Horace," "The Indian Rebellion," &c. We can recommend the book for perusal by such as are in want of a volume of instructive but desultory reading.

THE TRICHINA SPIRALIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your number of the 23rd ultimo I read with much interest Dr. Müller's contribution, and your remarks on the disease produced by the above worm. A question has often arisen in my mind in connexion with this subject, which I think deserves examination—namely, Is "measly pork" the only article of human food which may produce this condition in the human subject?

When engaged six or seven years ago in the examination of the nervous system of the haddock I was much struck by an appearance I frequently met with in the larger nerve trunks. These at different points were slightly enlarged and flattened; the enlargements being oval in shape and irregularly scattered along the course of the nerve. On examining these enlargements with the microscope I found them to consist of groups of worms, from six to twelve in number, similar in many respects to the *Trichina spiralis*, but more highly organized, presenting, besides many other differences, a distinct oral and anal aperture and intestinal tract. They were enclosed in a fibrous-looking capsule, which could be readily burst by slight pressure. They were confined to the nerve trunks and principal branches, at least I failed to detect them either in the spinal cord or muscular system. Should these be similar in their habits to the *Trichina spiralis*, it is evident we may have here another source of danger, as haddocks dried and smoked are very often eaten raw.

While on this subject I would beg to make one more remark. Professor Owen, in describing the habits of the *Trichina spiralis*, says, "The fully developed trichina is a filiform worm occupying the alimentary canal, and giving birth to young trichinae, which pierce the walls of the intestines, and on reaching the muscles become capsulated."

This, I humbly think, is scarcely a satisfactory explanation. I am rather of opinion that the ova or germs of the worm get into the blood, probably through the absorbents, and on reaching the muscular system, and there finding material suitable for their growth, become gradually developed into the capsulated and free trichinae. Of course this is purely theoretical, but I think it is only by some explanation similar to the above that we can account for the *Trichina spiralis* being confined to the muscular system, and the one above described to the larger nerve trunks.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Dundee, Feb. 1864. JAMES RORIE, M.D.

OXYGEN GAS.—At a recent meeting of the Academy of Sciences at Munich, Baron Liebig recounted various experiments which proved clearly that oxygen is not only evolved from the atmosphere by plants, but also in tolerably large quantities by decomposition of water in the bodies of flesh-eating animals. He thinks that a knowledge of this fact will throw quite a new light on the processes of nutrition and digestion.