

Reviews and Notices of Books.

Clinical Lectures on the Diseases of Women and Children. By GUNNING S. BEDFORD, A.M., M.D., Professor of Obstetrics, the Diseases of Women and Children, and Clinical Midwifery, in the University of New York. Fourth Edition, carefully revised and enlarged. New York: 1856. pp. 602.

WHEN four editions of a work of above 600 pages are required within a period of fifteen months, ample proof is at once given that value of some considerable amount must attach to such publication. It is true reputation may be but of ephemeral character, high as it rises for the time being, and fifteen months in themselves constitute but a narrow foundation for a basis of permanent popularity. But a careful perusal of Dr. Bedford's work has led us to believe its value will continue to be acknowledged, and himself to be recognised as a most able teacher and acute practitioner of medicine. The book before us is, in some respects, unlike any other we are acquainted with, though a near approach is made to some of the writings of the senior Dr. Meigs. It consists of a series (xxx.) of clinical lectures, each lecture composed of practical remarks on, and illustrations of, different diseases, cases of which have, on certain days, presented themselves at the "*New York Obstetric Clinic*," before Dr. Bedford and his pupils. This "clinic" was founded by the author, in 1850; since which time more than 8000 cases of disease have come before the "class," the present volume exhibiting a general but unsystematic exposition of the doctrines and practice there inculcated and followed. Dr. Bedford's treatise is of the most practical character; everything is made to tend towards the relief and treatment of disorders, and, at the same time, remarkable acuteness is shown in quickly arriving at a good diagnosis. To go at once to the point, it may be said to be the pervading characteristic of the teaching of the author. His prelections constitute most admirable reading for students, and it is in relation to the latter that we deem the chief value of the work before us to lie. Practical hints of great utility can, no doubt, be gleaned from it by practitioners of experience, but it is rather as a clinical text-book and guide for the student that its popularity must be explained. With this praise we must mix some censure for the style in which many of the lectures have been delivered. Two great faults have been committed in this respect. In the first place, the conversations and dialogues, which are supposed to be carried on between the "Professor" and patient, are overdone, exaggerated, and often unnatural. A certain amount of aid to clinical exposition might have been attained by their occasional adoption; but their employment, as followed by Dr. Bedford, is ridiculous in the extreme—e. g., under the title of "Falling of the Bladder, in a married woman, aged twenty-five years," the following dialogue occurs:—

" 'Why do you think you have falling of the womb, Mrs. C.?' 'Because one of my neighbours told me so, sir.' 'Is that neighbour a doctor, or a woman?' 'Oh, her name is Mrs. Mulligan; but the doctor told me so too.' 'What is Mrs. Mulligan's business?' 'She takes in washing, sir?' 'Does she practise medicine?' 'Oh, no, sir.' 'What does she know about falling of the womb?' 'I don't know, sir; but she told me that her cousin, Mrs. Higgins, had falling of the womb, and she knew I had it too.' Well, gentlemen, this is one species of logic, and you will often meet with it in practice. 'When the doctor told you that you had falling of the womb, did he examine you before giving his opinion?' 'No, sir; he was Mrs. Mulligan's doctor, and he called over one day and said that Mrs. Mulligan was right, and that I had falling of the womb.' 'Did he order you to do anything?' 'Yes, sir; he told me to put a plaster on my back.' 'Did Mrs. Mulligan know that the doctor ordered the plaster?' 'Yes, sir; and she said it would cure me, as it did Mrs. Higgins.' 'Did you use the plaster?' 'No, sir; because I don't see how a plaster on my back could draw my womb up.' 'Nor do I either, my good woman.'"—p. 277.

The other fault we have to complain of is the rather too frequent interruption of the history of the case for the utterance of some moral platitude or exhortation. To call the attention of the students to the moral aspects of their relation with their patients, and particularly with female ones, is fit and proper; but once or twice done, surely that is sufficient, without repeating the tale.

The unsystematic character of Dr. Bedford's work does not permit our making any general analysis of its contents; but we would, in concluding our notice of it, cordially recommend it to all practitioners generally, and to the senior student of medicine in particular.

POOR-LAW MEDICAL REFORM.

THE STUDENTS OF KING'S COLLEGE.

At a meeting of the Medical Students of King's College, held in the operating theatre of the hospital, J. W. Hulke, Esq., in the chair, the following resolutions were unanimously passed:

1st. Proposed by Mr. Way, seconded by Mr. Wood—"That the meeting regards the existing regulations affecting union medical practice as imperatively demanding readjustment; sympathises with the movement set on foot by Richard Griffin, Esq.; and receives the principles adopted by the Poor-law Medical Reform Association."

2nd. Proposed by Mr. Meadows, seconded by Mr. Walters—"That amongst the regulations especially requiring revision, are those affecting the present rates of remuneration afforded to medical officers; and that the system which leaves the fixing of these rates under the control of district boards of guardians, and the entire management of the appointments in the hands of non-professional authorities, is radically defective, and detrimental alike to the welfare of the medical profession and the public at large."

3rd. Proposed by Mr. Griffin, seconded by Mr. Mason—"That this meeting views with deep regret and unfeigned displeasure the unprofessional conduct of those who, forgetful of the broad interests of their profession, have unmanfully accepted offices thrown up by others on principle, thus selfishly helping to perpetuate the existing grievances, and clog the exertions of those who seek their redress."

4th. Proposed by Mr. Swain, seconded by Mr. Day—"That this meeting is of opinion that a general conference of the students of the medical schools in the kingdom should be held, and that it take place in London, at the earliest practicable period."

5th. Proposed by Mr. Hartley, seconded by Mr. Liddon—"That a shilling subscription be opened for the purpose of assisting in carrying out these resolutions."

6th. Proposed by Mr. Anstie, seconded by Mr. Watson—"That a committee be formed of the following gentlemen: Messrs. Lawrence, Way, Meadows, Wood, Swain, and Griffin: who shall co-operate on behalf of the medical students of King's College, with those of other schools, and with the Poor-law Medical Reform Association."

MEDICAL CERTIFICATES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—At a meeting of the Tynemouth Medical Club, held on Tuesday last, it was resolved—"That the Registrar-General be memorialized on the practice prevalent in this district of registering certificates of the cause of death, given by persons without any qualification."

It was also resolved—"That petitions be forwarded to the local members for presentation so soon as the proposed Medical Reform Bill is introduced into Parliament, praying for the insertion of a clause rendering the giving of a certificate of the cause of death by an illegal practitioner a penal offence."

And, further,—“Praying that power be given by the said Bill to all duly-qualified medical practitioners to claim a fee for every medical certificate furnished to a patient, or, in the case of death, to his representatives.”

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

(Signed, on behalf of the meeting.)

North Shields, February, 1857.

W. L. EMMERSON, M.D.