

We trust that all medical men will appreciate the work of this service, and by every proper means encourage and sustain its officers in their zealous efforts to bring its practical excellence up to the high standard which they have set before them as their ideal.

B. L. R.

ART. XXXIX.—*Medical Responsibility in the Choice of Anæsthetics, with a Table of the Anæsthetic employed, its Mode of Administration, and Results in nearly Fifty Large Hospitals in the United Kingdom.* By H. MACNAUGHTON JONES, M.D., M.Ch., etc. etc. pp. 37. London and Dublin, 1876.

THIS paper was read by its author before the Fellows of the Cork Medical-Chirurgical Association, in December, 1876. In that city, we are told, chloroform has been the anæsthetic generally employed; and from its first use in the various hospitals to the date of the essay before us, not a death has occurred from its effects. Do our readers at once jump at the conclusion that Dr. Jones is an advocate for chloroform? We will venture to assert the contrary for ninety-nine out of a hundred. No—that one word, Responsibility, conveyed at once the idea that no plea for that agent was to follow. That the men in whose hands it has heretofore proved so satisfactory should be wedded to its use, is very natural. But that the author, who is on the staff of four hospitals in that very place, and who has thus shared this immunity from fatal results, should, and does here, counsel the abandonment of the long trusted anæsthetic, is certainly powerfully suggestive.

In this discussion the writer asks three questions, which, put shortly, are these: Has experience shown any one anæsthetic to be safest? If so, has that conclusion been supported by physiological evidence, as to action on lower animals and on the human economy? Lastly, "can it be availed of in the vast majority of cases," and given with as great ease, and as favourable after-results to patients as any other anæsthetic? Affirmative replies, he believes, bind the respondent to act up to his convictions. For himself, he has "but quite recently determined to use ether exclusively whenever it can be availed of." Our readers will hardly need to be told by what arguments Dr. Jones has come to an affirmative decision upon his own questions. Chloroform and bichloride of methylene had been his favourite agents. The latter he still considers eminently adapted to eye operations, especially in children. At Moorfields Hospital it was the favourite anæsthetic, until recently two deaths occurred from its use; but is now abandoned for ether as a safer agent. Dr. Jones points out the underlying sense of danger, manifested even by the advocates of chloroform, as shown by the multifarious cautions and directions enjoined for its use. Having satisfied himself by statistics, by the testimony of friend and foe, and by personal experience, that one anæsthetic, ether, is safer than others, our author passes to his second question, as to the confirmation to be drawn from physiological evidence. The testimony in the paralyzing action of chloroform upon the heart is overwhelming. Ether seems rather to strengthen cardiac action. The ability of the heart to resist the depressing influence of chloroform cannot be predicted in particular cases. Ether and nitrous oxide can endanger life only by asphyxia. In the very extensive physiological experiments of Dr. Schiff, at Florence, upon the lower animals, the profoundest insensibility from ether did not endanger life if respiration continued, and if respiration ceased the animal recovered by use of artificial respiration. Chloroform, on the other hand, caused the death of many of the subjects of anaesthesia.

In answer to the question as to availability, Dr. Jones points to the past and

present records of American and British hospitals. As to the effects upon the patient, short of death, he claims that if chloroform be pleasanter to take, ether is the easier and quicker to recover from.

In conclusion, it is distinctly reiterated that the use of chloroform for purposes of anæsthesia, save under exceptional circumstances, is the needless assumption of a grave and awful responsibility.

The table showing the means employed in the different hospitals indicates a very great diversity in the anæsthetics, their combination, and the apparatus used. Out of forty-two institutions tabulated, fourteen mention only chloroform, and ten only ether. In two instances, ether, with or preceded by nitrous oxide gas, is alone mentioned. Out of fifteen hospitals naming ether and chloroform, employed separately or combined, about one-half speak indifferently of the two, or that the former is just coming into use, or that the latter is specially used for children, or in one or two cases express a decided preference for the more powerful agent. The other portion seem, so far as somewhat vague terms can be interpreted, to prefer ether, at least as to safety.

As a contribution to the cause of truth and humanity, we welcome this outspoken utterance from one whose position renders such frankness creditable, if not positively difficult.

B. L. R.

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ANT. XL.—*The Microscopist: A Manual of Microscopy and Compendium of the Microscopic Sciences.* Third edition; re-written and greatly enlarged. By J. H. WYTHE, A. M., M. D., Professor of Microscopy and Biology in the Medical College of the Pacific. 8vo. pp. 260. Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1877.

THIS is a work for the student of nature, and not for the medical student or practitioner. Although it contains some six chapters upon the microscope and its accessories, on the methods of examination, and on the mounting and preserving of microscopic objects, yet from their comparative brevity and lack of minute detail, the author presupposes considerable knowledge in the possession of the student. It is a handsome octavo volume of some 250 pages, well, and in some respects, profusely illustrated, and printed in large, clear type on fine, thick paper. The printer and publisher have done their work well, and have rendered great pleasure to the reader.

The book partakes somewhat of the nature of Beale's two works, "How to work with the Microscope," and "The Microscope in Medicine," from which many of the illustrations are taken; but there is nothing like the detail here which one finds in the two works mentioned. The author has also drawn largely from Stricker, Frey, Billroth, and Rindfleisch for his illustrations, and he could not have gone to better sources. One feels the lack of necessary detail in the chapter on the "Modern Methods of Examination" especially, but recalls the fact that the book is not for the absolute beginner. A very good representation of Lawson's dissecting microscope is given on page 60.

Chapter VII. is devoted to the use of the microscope in mineralogy and geology, and is sufficiently full for the purpose when we consider the size of the work, though of course it does not claim to be a complete consideration of the subject. The chapter on the use of the microscope in chemistry is a good one, considerable attention being given to the use of the microspectroscope, and the study of absorption bands. Mention is also made of the possibility of modifying in various ways the method of crystallization of the substances. The author in this chapter has