

Correspondence.

Regarding Propagation.

CHICAGO, Oct. 8, 1901.

To the Editor:—In the discussion of Dr. George J. Englemann's interesting paper on the "Increasing Sterility of American Women," reported in *THE JOURNAL* for October 5, there are exhibited a depth of concern and a degree of alarm that do not seem to be warranted by those disclosures in the Doctor's paper which furnished the material for the greater part of the discussion.

The chief facts shown in the paper are, that sterility has increased rapidly during the last century; that the present average percentage of childless marriages in this country is about twenty; that the average number of children per married couple is 1.8, and that the chief causes of this increasing sterility and diminishing fecundity are the intentional prevention of conception and interruption of gestation.

These are intensely interesting facts, and the labor which their accumulation must have cost the author, entitles him to the highest praise. It may also be conceded without argument that the condemnation which the professional abortionist, the advertiser of abortifacients, and the male distributors of Neisser's diplococci, received at the hands of those who discussed the paper, was entirely just. But the mere facts that 20 per cent. of American marriages are childless, and that the number of children per married couple is only 1.8, do not seem to warrant the alarm that was exhibited in their discussion.

If these facts forebode a danger that constitutes sufficient grounds for alarm, this danger must be one which menaces either ourselves and our actual descendants, or those potential individuals of the future whose actual existence is prevented by our increasing infecundity. There can be no danger that threatens any one else.

What danger is there in these facts for us or our descendants? Would the struggle for existence be easier, or the joy of living greater, if there were more people in America or in the world? Is there any profession, trade, or calling that is not already enormously overcrowded? If we need more tillers of the soil, why has the exodus from the country to the town gone so swiftly forward that 47.1 per cent. of our present population is in incorporated towns and cities? If there is, on the other hand, a village, town, or city in America that needs more people than it has, why is it necessary for so great a part of the existing urban population to live in tenements (which, by courtesy, are called flats), and support families on \$6.00 a week? Every new child born into the world is a prospective competitor of those already here. It must elbow its unwelcome way into an already overcrowded world, in which it will find no nook or corner fit to live in that is not already occupied, and no vocation from whose representatives it will receive a welcome. Let us be frank and admit that, for us and our descendants, there is encouragement rather than peril in the alleged diminution of our rate of increase.

Taking the other horn of the dilemma, we shall find it equally ridiculous to talk of doing missionary work in the interests of possible children that have never even begun to be. It is here assumed that a child "begins to be" at the moment of conception.

According to Henle's estimate, every woman produces 72,000 ova, each one of which is susceptible of fecundation and capable of development into a mature human being. Every one of these ova that fails to become fecundated becomes a dead human possibility. Should we endeavor to bring about the fecundation of all? If not of all, who shall decide how many?

Let us again be frank and admit that, until we shall have ameliorated the condition of the actually existent, we need not concern ourselves with the fate of these shadowy hosts of the merely potentially existent. We may go still further and insist that it is not necessary to countenance abortion, to be able to say that a marriage which is comparatively barren of children, may still be prolific of happiness, and that to

make the propagation of the species the sole aim of marriage, is to degrade that institution to the spiritual level of a breeding farm.

Indeed, in normal cases, it is questionable whether the definite desire for children ever is a motive to marry. Love of the consort certainly long precedes the desire for children, and is a sufficient inducement to insure the perpetuation of the race. Desire for children comes later; for Nature has a way of accomplishing her mysterious purposes by appearing to let us do what pleases us, and then pleasing us with what she has enticed us into doing against our wishes.

A. C. McCLANAHAN, M.D.

Book Notices.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS OF THE SEPARATE FORMS OF GALLSTONE DISEASE, Based upon his own Experience Gained in 433 Laparotomies for Gallstones. By Professor Hans Kehr, Halberstadt. Authorized Translation by William Wotkyns Seymour, A.B. Yale, M.D. Harvard. Formerly Professor of Gynecology in the University of Vermont. With an introduction by Prof. Kehr. Cloth. Pp. 370. Price, \$2.50. Philadelphia: P. Blakiston's Sons & Co. 1901.

The literature of gallstone surgery in our language of late years has become quite considerable. Nevertheless, the addition of this translation from a leading German work on the subject will be of value to American readers. There is no question as to the importance of the subject and if the operative treatment of these conditions has not become so extensive in this country as it has in Germany, as hinted in the preface, the book will doubtless serve to bring about this desirable result. Professor Kehr has himself added a preface to this American edition in which he gives his views as revised from his latest experiences. In the selection of operative methods he employs cystectomy with drainage in this condition more and more. In this way he says we avoid more certainly true and false recurrences. Professor Seymour has given us an intelligent translation, but it contains a great many German constructions and can not be said to be quite as elegant English as it might be. Still, it is hard for a person who reads German much or little to avoid such slips occasionally in the translation of a language so difficult as German.

THE ESTIVO-AUTUMNAL (Remittent) MALARIAL FEVERS. By Charles F. Craig, M.D. (Yale), Acting Assistant-Surgeon, U. S. A. Illustrated by 2 Colored Plates and 21 Clinical Charts. Cloth. Pp. 221. Price, \$2.50. New York: William Wood & Co. 1901.

The author has given us in detail a description of certain fevers too little understood by the great mass of the profession. The opportunity presented to him while he was connected with military hospitals at home as well as in Cuba and the Philippines, was well utilized in a systematic and scientific study of the malarial diseases in their protean aspects, the result of which is published in this volume. He gives us an account of the estivo-autumnal parasites, describes them, giving their natural history, or life cycle within the mosquito, their varieties, method of staining, examination, etc. The etiology, pathology, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, methods of infection, etc., of malaria are fully considered. The book is a most interesting addition to the literature on the subject and will be found invaluable to those who are desirous of understanding and thoroughly mastering the facts in regard to malaria. The manner in which the author has presented the subject is commendable in that it is simple yet scientific.

MANUAL OF THE DISEASES OF CHILDREN. By John Madison Taylor, A.M., M.D., Professor of Diseases of Children, Philadelphia Polyclinic, and William H. Wells, M.D., Adjunct Professor of Obstetrics and Diseases of Infancy in the Philadelphia Polyclinic. Second Edition, Thoroughly Revised and Enlarged. Illustrated. Cloth. Pp. 859. Price, \$4.50. Philadelphia: P. Blakiston's Son & Co. 1901.

The authors have thoroughly rewritten their work, adding a number of new chapters and special articles. One of the points