

LITERARY NOTES.

WITH regard to the "emerods" of the Philistines referred to in a note published in the *JOURNAL* of February 9th, on an outbreak of epidemic disease recorded in the first book of Samuel, Dr. H. F. Parsons writes:

As throwing light on the nature of the "emerods" may I call attention to Psalm lxxviii, v. 66 (Authorised Version), a verse which the context shows to have reference to the events recorded in 1 Samuel v and vi. This verse "He smote his enemies in the hinder parts, and put them to a perpetual reproach" seems to indicate that the "emerods" were an anal rather than an inguinal affection.

In a recent number of the *Echo Médical du Nord*, Professor Follet, of Lille, gives an account of some early attempts at antiseptic treatment of wounds which he has unearthed in a very unlikely quarter, the works of Brantôme. The passage occurs in the *Œuvres de Brantôme*, Edition Elzévirienne, 1878; t. vi, p. 53, and is to the following effect:

Maître Doublet, surgeon to M. de Nemours, was at that time the most fashionable among the surgeons of France and wrought strange cures in Metz, and everyone went to him although Ambroise Paré, since so renowned and held to be the first of his time, was there. The said Doublet wrought all his cures by means of simple white linen and fine clean water from the fountain or the well. But in addition to this he sought help from spells and incantations, as many folk still alive who saw him can testify. Since then I have seen Saint Just d'Allègre, who also meddled with that kind of thing, and I saw how he presented himself before the late M. de Guzye when he received at Orleans the wound of which he died; and he staked his life that he would cure him. But never would that good, religious, and virtuous prince allow him to lay a hand on him, saying that he had liefer die than to try to get well by means of such devilish art and thereby offend God.

Elsewhere (tome v, p. 175) Brantôme refers again to the subject:

M. Saint Just d'Allègre being very skilful in such treatment of wounds by linen and water and incantations was presented to that good lord (the Duke of Guzye) that he might dress and cure him, for he had made experiments on a large scale on others. But he would never hear of it, saying that these were enchantments forbidden by God . . . and M. de Saint Just, who was my great friend, said that he would cure him, a thing very worthy of note.

It is evident that Doublet, although he may have believed in the efficacy of the charms of which he is said to have made use, was a surgeon who put his trust in cleanliness. His relatively aseptic methods of dealing with wounds was the secret of his success. Paré was at Metz with Doublet during the siege of that town by Charles V, and he refers to "many a marvellous cure" wrought by his *confère*. But Ambroise, unfortunately, having eyes yet saw not. He probably took no pains to do so, for he evidently regarded Doublet as a quack. This is how he speaks of him:

An empirical chirurgéon named Doublet has oftentimes wrought marvellous cures applying to such wounds (namely, gunshot wounds) a suppurative medicament composed of melted lard, yolk of egg, and turpentine, with a little saffron, and he kept this remedy a very great secret.

But on Paré's own showing Doublet made no secret of his use of clean dressings. What the dressings then applied to wounds were like we may learn from the worthy Ambroise himself, who says that in time of war it was necessary to wash the dressings so often that they became "dry like parchement."

P. Hanstein, of Bonn, has recently published a supplementary volume to J. K. Proksch's *Literature of the Venereal Diseases*. The original work contains notices of all the treatises and books on syphilis written from towards the end the fifteenth century down to the year 1889. The new volume comprises the whole literature on the subject that has appeared from 1889 to 1899. All the writings not mentioned in the original work are also mentioned.

Dr. George M. Gould, who as already stated in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* was lately ousted from the editorial chair of the *Philadelphia Medical Journal* of which he was the founder, has lost no time in starting another periodical. The title chosen for it is *American Medicine*, as being "one comprehensively indicating the character of the publication as representative of American professional thought and action." It is described as "founded, owned, and controlled by the medical profession of America." The prospectus states that "to test the earnestness of the profession for a journal conducted absolutely in the interests of medical science, regardless of cliques or schools or commercial interests, a preliminary letter was sent to about one-sixth of the physicians of America." We are pleased to read further that "thousands of generous responses and promises of enthusiastic support warrant the establishment of the periodical." Dr. Gould is the Bayard of American medical journalism, and we heartily wish him success in his new undertaking.

In the fourth volume of the *Medical Repository*, which first began to appear in New York in 1798, there is as we learn from an article by Dr. George K. Welch in a recent number of the *Medical Record*, a paper entitled, *The Improvements, Progress and State of Medicine in the Eighteenth Century*, read on the first day of the Nineteenth Century before the Medical Society of South Carolina. The author's list of discoveries and developments during the eighteenth century is as follows: "Improvements in anatomy in the preparation of specimens, new operations in surgery, instruction of the deaf, experiments with poison on living animals, establishment of humane societies, cool regimen in fevers and small-pox, establishment of medical societies, hospitals and infirmaries, improvement and simplification of the materia medica, discoveries in chemistry, triumph of physis over small-pox by inoculation and over scurvy by vegetable diet and oxygen, and the abatement of plague and pestilential fevers." This is the record for one hundred years previous to 1800.

In an article entitled "Medicine in the Nineteenth Century," contributed by Dr. W. Osler (Baltimore) to the *New York Sun* of January 27th, he gives emphatic expression to the opinion that, whether measured materially or sociologically, there is no progress that can compare with the decrease of physical suffering in man, woman, and child when stricken with disease. The most distinguishing feature of the scientific medicine of the century just past has been the marvellous results that have followed experimental investigation along lines which have determined the condition of the organs in health and the conditions under which perversions of these functions occur in disease. In conclusion, Dr. Osler refers to the tendency at the decline of the century to return to psychical methods of cure in which the active principle is faith made operative by suggestion. "After all," he says, "faith in us, faith in our drugs and methods is the great stock-in-trade of the profession. In one pan of the balance put the pharmacopœias of the world, all the editions from Dioscorides to the last edition of the *United States Dispensatory*, heap them on the scales as did Euripides his books in the celebrated contest in the Frogs, in the other put the simple faith with which from the days of the Pharaohs until now the children of men have swallowed the mixtures these works describe, and the bulky tomes will kick the beam."

The establishment of the causative relation of mosquitos to malaria is recognised to be one of the greatest of modern discoveries. But the idea that the disease is of parasitic origin is a very old one. In Lancisi's work *De Noxiis Paludum Effluviis*, published in 1718, it is stated that Varro, Columella, and others attributed the causation of paludal fevers to swarms of minute insects rising out of marshes. M. Varro, in his treatise *De Re Rusticâ*, lib. 1, cap. 12, says:

Advertendum etiam si qua erunt loca palustria, et propter easdem causas, et quod arseunt, crescunt animalia quedam minuta que non possunt oculi consequi, et per aëra intus in corpora per os ac nares perveniunt, atque efficiunt difficiles morbos.

Columella, in his treatise bearing the same title, says (lib. 1, cap. 5):

Nec paludem vicinam oportet esse ædificiis, nec junctam militarem viam quod illa caloribus noxiarum virus eructat, et infestis aculeis armata gignit animalia, que in nos densissimis examinibus involant. Tum etiam natricum serpentiumque pestes hybernâ destitutas uligine, cœno et fermentatâ colluvie venenatas emittit, ex quibus sæpe contrahuntur cæci morbi, quorum causas ne medici quidem perspicere queunt.

Palladius, in his *De Re Rusticâ*, lib. 1, tit. 7, has something to the same effect:

Palus omni modo vitanda est, præcipue quæ ab austro, vel occidente, et siccarei consuevit æstate, propter pestilentiam, vel animalia inimica, que generat.

Varro's theory was revived in the seventeenth century by the celebrated Jesuit, Athanasius Kircher, who in his *Pestis Scrutinium*, speaking of the putrid exhalations of marshes, says these consist of respirable particles in which are generated innumerable tiny maggots. A similar theory was held by Christianus Langius. Lancisi himself states that the exhalations from marshes are of different kinds, and contain both living organisms and inorganic matters. He describes how the "animata paludum effluvia" are carried into the human body in the air, food, and water. He points out that marsh waters in summer are "a most fertile nest of insects," and that in places where these swarm in the air this may be taken as a sign that an epidemic of fever will follow.