

LITERARY NOTES.

In the *Bristol Medico-Chirurgical Journal* for March, 1910, there appeared an interesting paper by Captain V. B. Green-Armytage, I.M.S., entitled "Oriental Medicine—Stray Jottings." As usual in medical folklore, the first appearance of a new member of the human family in the world is surrounded with superstitious rites and observances. In Northern India the following method of foretelling the sex of an unborn child is adopted: At the seventh month a number of relations gather at the house of the expecting mother, and a few drops of milk are squeezed out of her breasts on to a piece of yellow cloth; when it dries, if it is white, the offspring will be a girl; if yellow, a boy.

Immediately after the birth of the child the mother is given a small piece of metal copper to swallow, called "dumree," which is supposed to expel the placenta. After this she is given a dose of asafoetida, to prevent her catching cold and to relieve the after-pains; this drug being also affirmed to be a stimulant. The midwife, like the gipsy of the West, is wise in her generation, for she demands at this stage something shining, such as a silver or gold coin, just to touch the umbilical cord with "for luck"; and then she proceeds to deal with it in the usual way—appropriating the coin for herself. In the East—unlike the West—the placenta is not a thing despised, but is buried with due state, along with a sacred leaf and small coin, to propitiate the gods; and the knife that cut the cord is kept sacredly for forty days, alongside the mother and child wherever they go or move, for it has a certain power against all ghosts and evil spirits.

During the puerperium the mother is looked after with great care. For forty days she is only allowed to drink boiled water in which a red-hot horseshoe has been cooled. No dog or cat is suffered to come near her; the influence of the cat in particular is dreaded as it is regarded as a witch. Any stranger coming to the house has to throw myrrh on the fire to ward off evil spirits. Muslim boys are circumcised between the ages of 7 and 14. The boy is placed on an earthen drum and *bhang* (cannabis indica) is administered. After the operation a peacock's feather and a copper ring are tied round the boy's neck as a safeguard against evil spirits and the wound is dressed with powdered benzoin. Of the native "hakim" in whom the uneducated Indians put their trust, Captain Green-Armytage says that it is difficult to describe his methods, for his eye and his conversation elicit the information he requires. He once asked a "hakim" how he proposed to make a diagnosis, as the patient was delirious. The reply was: "Sir, God knows his disease; we only know whether it is a hot or a cold disease, and according to which I find or think it, I shall give him of my drugs." Captain Green-Armytage admits, however, that the hakim's treatment has often excellent results; we venture to think that suggestion is the most potent remedy in his pharmacopoeia. The hakim sends his surgical cases and others in which his treatment has failed to the Civil Surgeon. Among curious methods of treatment are mentioned the application of an oil expressed from the head of a cobra to a septic ulcer; and in cases of impotence the administration of a powder made from the penis of a crocodile which has been dried in the sun. A compress of sugar and soap is a very common local remedy for sores and boils. It is almost superfluous to say that charms play a large part in native Indian medicine. Captain Green-Armytage particularly mentions an amulet consisting of a metal disc inscribed with figures which added up vertically, diagonally, or horizontally make up the same total. This is believed to be a sovereign remedy for piles and confluent small-pox; all that is required is to wash the disc two or three times a day in water, drink the water, and mutter: "La-il-la-hah, il-lul-ha-ho, Mohamed, oor Rasul-Ullahah" (there is no other God but the true God, and Mohamed is the prophet of God). Among the lower classes in India surgery, except the use of the bluntest knife, is unknown; cases of compound fracture or peripheral gangrene are left untreated, except for the application of neem oil, till they are past all cure, and then they are sent to hospital.

The November number of *L'Hygiène* should receive special attention from its English readers, if only on account of a most interesting article it contains in which Professor Ehrlich's famous "606" is discussed from the French point of view. The writer of this

article, who simply signs himself "Dr. V. C.," freely gives the great German scientist the praise which is justly due to him, but he himself has more confidence in the French preparation "hectine" than in the more widely known German remedy. Moreover, he claims the right of seniority for the French invention. "Hectine," which is composed, amongst other things, of arsenic, was invented two or three years ago by Dr. Mouneyrat, and it was employed with great success in several cases in France before the announcement of Ehrlich's discovery took the scientific world by storm. Though the latter is much more rapid in its effects, "hectine" and another and similar preparation, called "hectargyre" (the invention of Dr. Salmon, a young French physician), are, according to "V. C.," at once equally efficacious and far less dangerous. No deaths have ever resulted from the application of either of the latter remedies, whereas it is alleged that the former has already killed some dozen persons; and whilst treatment by "606" is extremely painful and necessitates a week in bed under close medical supervision, "hectine," on the contrary, causes so little bodily inconvenience that the patient is able to carry on his usual occupation. It must be remembered, however, that it needs twenty injections of hectine to produce an effect similar to that brought about by a single dose of "606." *L'Hygiène* contains several other items of interest besides this discussion of a most important question. A long article on the care of the eyes has been contributed by Drs. E. and Marc Landolt; whilst Dr. E. Agasse-Lafont has written an interesting account of the diseases to which workers in felt factories are peculiarly liable, amongst which mercury poisoning may be reckoned as the most deadly. Some little space is likewise devoted to that charming pleasure resort, "Les Terrasses," which has been built on the coast between Le Tréport and Dieppe, and which appears to offer every possible attraction to the visitor, whether he is in search of health or of amusement; and Drs. Lucien Jacquet and P. Jourdanet offer some valuable advice on the care and prevention of chilblains, principally by means of massage and gymnastic exercises for the hands and feet. The illustrations are, as usual, beautifully reproduced. In response to several inquiries we may state that the price of this most attractive magazine, which is published by Messrs. Goupi, and Co., 25, Bedford Street, Strand, W.C., is 2s. a number.

AUSTRALASIAN MEDICAL CONGRESS.

THE ninth session of the Australasian Medical Congress will be held in Sydney from September 18th to the 23rd, 1911, under the Presidency of Dr. F. Antill Pockley. The Senate of the University of Sydney has granted the use of its buildings and grounds, and the Government of New South Wales has given its countenance and support to the Congress. Lord Dudley, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth of Australia; Lord Chelmsford, Governor of New South Wales; Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Poore, Bart., Naval Commander-in-Chief of the Australasian Station; Lord Islington, Governor of the Dominion of New Zealand; Sir Thomas D. Gibson-Carmichael, Bart., Governor of Victoria; Sir William MacGregor, Governor of Queensland; Admiral Sir Day Bosanquet, Governor of South Australia; Sir Gerald Strickland, Governor of Western Australia; Major-General Sir Harry Barron, Governor of Tasmania; Sir Everard F. Im Thurm, Governor of Fiji, High Commissioner of the Pacific Islands; The Honourable J. H. P. Murray, Lieutenant-Governor and Chief Judicial Officer of New Guinea; the Honourable W. P. Cullen, LL.D., Chief Justice of New South Wales; Lord Plunkett, late Governor of New Zealand; Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, late Governor of New South Wales; and Sir Norman MacLaurin, Chancellor of the University of Sydney, are patrons of the Congress.

Officers of the Congress.

In addition to Dr. Antill Pockley, the following are the officers of the Congress: Treasurer, Dr. S. H. MacCulloch, Sydney; General Secretary, Dr. Arthur Palmer, Elizabeth Bay; Associate Secretary, Dr. A. J. Brady, Sydney; Vice-Presidents, Dr. J. C. Verco, President Adelaide Congress, 1887; Sir P. Sydney Jones, President Sydney Congress,