

any rate, methylated spirit in any house than the saturated solutions of permanganate of potassium and of oxalic acid which are required in the method described. The book would be more generally useful if the authors did not make use of such a term as Henry's solution which the ordinary nurse does not understand, and if they had printed in the appendix the rules of the Central Midwives Board instead of the memorandum of the British Medical Association of the regulations proposed for adoption by the Obstetric Nurses Board, whatever body this may be intended to mean.

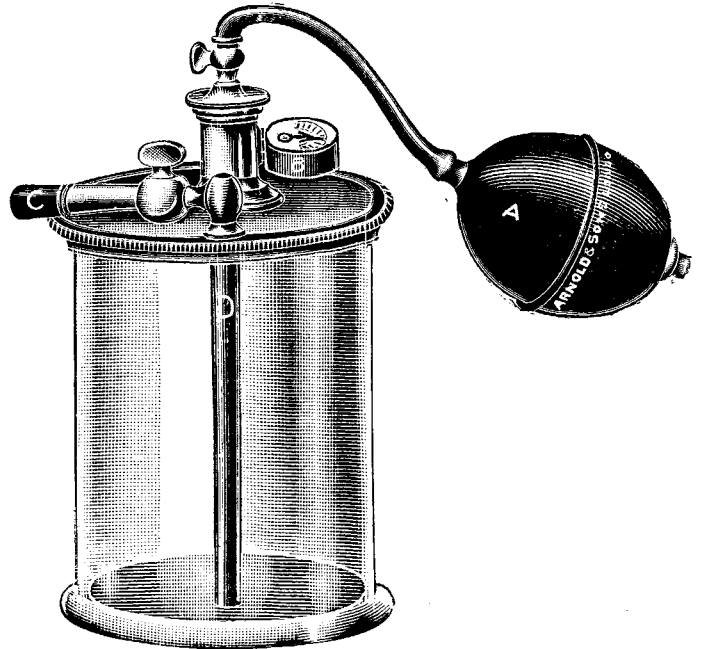
*Bantu Folk Lore.* By MATTHEW L. HEWAT, M.D. Capetown: T. Maskew Miller. Pp. 112. Price 7s. 6d.—This little book commences with a chapter on the Bantu race communicated by Mr. W. Hammond Tooke. The Bantu race extends "over all Central and South Africa, south of a line drawn roughly from the Kamerun to the Pokomo river, but excluding the south-west corner—Great Namaqua Land and Western Cape Colony—which from time immemorial has been occupied by Hottentots." Dr. Hewat has collected some very interesting information about Kaffir folk lore, mostly in its medical aspect. Apparently the native medicine men possess no mean knowledge of the healing properties of various plants, while their surgery, though crude in many instances, has sound ideas at bottom. For instance, the treatment of a burn is to scrub away the charred portions of the skin and other tissues until the wound is clean. The raw surface is then dressed with boiled leaves taken from certain plants and possibly some amount of sepsis is thereby prevented.

*Les Empoisonneuses: Étude Psychologique et Médico-Légale.* (*Female Poisoners: A Psychological and Medico-Legal Study.*) Par le Dr. RENÉ CHARPENTIER. Paris: G. Steinheil. 1906. Price 6 francs. Pp. 232.—Dr. Charpentier has given us a most interesting book. The crime with which his work is concerned has, he says, diminished progressively since 1860. It is more common in the country than in the town and among uneducated persons than among educated. He is, we presume, speaking of France but we fancy that the statements hold good for all civilised countries. The chief cause of the diminution is, he thinks, the remarkable advance in the science of toxicology which has occurred during the last 40 or 50 years, together with the fact that education is more widespread than formerly. But poison is above all the weapon of the female murderer and has been so from ancient times. The sum of Dr. Charpentier's book is to prove that "a historical and medico-legal study of female poisoners shows that a certain number of these criminals are hysterical degenerates and that there exists a definite relation between the mental condition of these unbalanced women (*déséquilibrées*) and the psychology of the crime of poisoning. Poison is the weapon of election of the hysterical woman who kills." This view, we think, is quite justifiable in so far as regards Western civilised nations but it fails when we consider Oriental nations. In India, for example, poison is the favourite and recognised method of "removing" anyone who may stand in the way of the "remover." It is, moreover, a much used method of killing the cattle of an enemy. Dr. Charpentier thinks that hysterical degenerates who employ poison should not be condemned to death or to lifelong imprisonment but should be interned in an "*asile de sûreté*" which should be an establishment intermediate between the prison and the lunatic asylum. After such persons had been interned for a certain time and a careful study had been made of their cases, it might be possible in some instances to let them out for a longer or shorter term, on the supposition that at any time when it became necessary they should be re-interned. The question is one which it is extremely difficult to decide but Dr. Charpentier's book is an interesting and valuable contribution to the literature at present existing on the matter.

## New Inventions.

### A NEW IRRIGATING APPARATUS.

THE accompanying illustration shows an instrument I have used for some years, chiefly for urinary work. It is, however, useful for many purposes, such as for syringing the ear. I use it largely for the irrigation treatment of urethritis and by its use I claim this useful aid is carried out in a more scientific way than was hitherto possible. Not only is the stream from the nozzle C (which allows of various attachments) continuous when the ball A is used, but there is a pressure gauge B which is the distinct novelty



of the instrument. By it we can register the pressure we use to overcome the resistance in the urethra—chiefly the compressor muscle—which I find to vary much not only in different persons but in the same person. Hence by the use of this instrument the irrigation treatment is robbed of its chief drawbacks, abruptness of action and want of registration of force, which want I often knew to lead to disagreeable results. The fluid ascends through the tube D. I often use the instrument for filling the bladder with or without a catheter. The instrument is now made by Messrs. Arnold and Sons.

Finsbury-pavement.

JAMES MACMUNN.

**LEICESTER BOROUGH ASYLUM**—The thirty-sixth annual report of the visiting committee of the Leicester borough lunatic asylum shows that on March 31st last there were 813 patients in the institution—viz., 341 men and 472 women. During the year 57 patients were discharged as recovered, 45 were committed to the care of friends or removed to other asylums, and 79 died. Dr. J. E. M. Finch, the medical superintendent, in his report to the committee, states that 101 women and 78 men were admitted to the asylum during the year 1905. The rate of mortality, estimated upon the average number resident, was 9.1 males and 8.5 females. The death-rate, although somewhat higher than in the previous year, was still below the average in public asylums. The chief causes of death were cerebral lesions 22 (including 14 from general paralysis), pulmonary tuberculosis seven, and senile decay 11. The total number of epileptic patients under treatment during the year was 146 and 11,660 fits were recorded. The chief causes of insanity predisposing or exciting among those admitted, excluding transfers, were hereditary tendency 40, intemperance in drink 28, domestic trouble and adverse circumstances 19, congenital defect 10, and old age 10. The number of admissions was four less than in the previous year and statistics for the past six years showed that there had been no increase of occurring insanity in Leicester during that period.

# THE LANCET.

LONDON: SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 1906.

## The Illegal Practice of Medicine in France.

OF late years the relations between this country and France have been established upon the firm footing of friendliness, a development of that respect which must surely arise between persons who for some 500 years have been constantly fighting one another in every part of the world. The two nations have now found out that many institutions exist in the country of each which are worthy of imitation by the other. And to pass from the general to the particular, a striking instance of how our neighbours do better in certain circumstances than we ourselves is given by our report in another column of the proceedings of the recent Congress for the Repression of the Illegal Practice of Medicine held in Paris at the end of last month. It must be premised that in this country there is no such thing as what is known in France as *exercice illégale*. In this country a duly qualified man may be prosecuted and fined for malpraxis, but any non-qualified person, however ignorant, may prescribe, may attempt to treat diseases, or even to perform operations, supposing that he can find anyone foolish enough to pose as a patient, with the proviso that the non-qualified practitioner does not use any title implying that he is registered under the Medical Acts. The Paris Congress, it will be seen, was no mere meeting of the members of the medical profession, for it was attended by two Cabinet Ministers and by the Prefect of the Paris police. There are twin evils which have afflicted this world from the earliest times and probably will always continue to do so—they are quackery and prostitution. In pagan times prostitution was a source of revenue to the existing "church," and even in mediæval times the revenues of certain sees were enhanced by the profits of the "stews," notably that of Winchester, the Bishop of which see farmed the "stews" in Southwark. Nowadays to make money out of prostitution is rightly considered to be the lowest form of infamy. But the making of money out of quackery has become a great source of revenue to various magazines, to many newspapers, and in a small degree to the Government, for the Government stamp on patent medicines is considered by many who buy these preparations to be a Government guarantee. We do not desire the whole world to be forever throwing stones at the Magdalen, nor do we desire to ring medicine around with an absolute barrier of professional privilege, but we do look forward to the time when traffic with the rampant charlatan will be regarded as an infamy—an infamy comparable to the maintenance of a brothel.

Quackery will probably never be forbidden as such by law in these islands. While leaders of society aid and abet the remarkable heresy known as "Christian Science"; while

Members of Parliament maintain that all deaths are due primarily or secondarily to vaccination; while benediced clergymen of the Church of England issue leaflets saying that three doses of three drops of carbolic acid will cure any fever and members of religious houses belonging to the Roman Catholic communion sell wonderful salves, it is too much to hope that any interdictory legislation will be passed. But there is one way in which the evils of quackery might be greatly minimised and before very long practically abolished. It is one which has been urged over and over again and which has been in certain directions supported by ourselves. At present the quack does nothing illegal in practising. The Government stamps his nostrums and incidentally abets his procedure. Newspapers and magazines from the highest to the lowest flaunt his advertisements before their readers' eyes and draw a large income by doing so. If the law cannot prevent these things—and we are sure that in the present state of public ignorance it cannot—the profits of traffic in quackery might be so cut down that the game would not be worth practising. If no unqualified person pretending to cure diseases were allowed to practise unless he paid for a licence many ardent charlatans would pause in their careers. If the licence were renewable yearly and cost a large sum a real check would undoubtedly be put upon the evil. Such licence would be no more a guarantee of the quack's honesty or ability than is a public-house licence of the purity of the liquor sold therein or a licence to sell tobacco of the quality of the goods sold. It has been suggested that the income drawn by the proprietors of any magazine or newspaper for the advertisement of any quack remedy of any kind should be heavily taxed or should be impounded and paid over to a fund to be distributed among the hospitals of the United Kingdom. If this were done, in a few years' time the number of quacks would have greatly diminished while their advertisements would be practically *nil*, but those who suggest the scheme are unaware of its difficulties, of the interference with private discretion that it would involve, and of the intolerable surveillance that it would imply. For a system of licences there is much to be said, but the cause of reform is not really assisted by proposing a police inspection of advertisements.

We have said that the conference recently held in Paris deserves imitation on this side of the Channel and we should much like to see a similar meeting held in London. Legislation is not all that is wanted; people must be educated to see that they, when they apply to quacks, waste their money and, what is still more important, that health which is so precious to all of us. It is true that we of the medical profession object to quackery because for one reason it deprives us of a means of livelihood for which we spent many long and arduous years to fit ourselves, but chiefly we object because we know so well what incomparable harm men and women do to their bodies by allowing them to be exploited by quacks. We do not agree with all that was put forward at the Paris Congress but in the main the speakers asked for nothing which a sensible public would not ask for if supplied with the proper information. The ventilation and discussion of such questions are of the greatest use both to the public and to the medical profession. The medical profession has nothing to fear from a