

only is the operation done without pain to the patient, but in this class of cases post-hypnotic suggestions are of great value in producing rest, quiet and relief from pain during convalescence. I am in the habit of letting my patients sleep for six hours after such an operation, when they awake at the appointed time feeling refreshed and easy without a trace of nervousness or nausea. This latter will be appreciated by all who have been doing perineal or rectal operations under chloroform, where the resulting nausea frequently puts the sutures to a severe strain.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

International Congress Against Abuse of Alcohol.

HARTFORD, CONN., May 6, 1899.

To the Editor:—In these times of great international gatherings it will be news to many persons that the alcoholic problem has been the theme of seven great continental meetings in Europe, held at intervals of two years, since 1885, the seventh having been held in Paris, April 4 to 9. From the first they have been made up of a large number of physicians, clergymen, teachers and reformers generally, and have steadily grown in interest and size until the Paris gathering, which assumed in reality the proportions of a great world's congress.

Sixteen hundred and forty members were registered, which included over one hundred physicians and six hundred professional men and women, government officials, laymen, reformers and society delegates.

The topics discussed have been very complete, ranging all the way from the most passionate appeals to give up alcohol, with terrifying pictures of its effects on body and mind, up to the most critic chemic analysis of different alcohols and the most exhaustive statistic balancing of figures and reports.

The Belgic minister of justice, whose position corresponds to that of the chief justice of the U. S. supreme court, presided at several sessions.

Dr. Legrand, a noted specialist and superintendent of lunatic asylums on the Seine, was the president; the French minister or secretary of State occupied the chair at two meetings, while a number of very high functionaries presided at the different meetings and expressed themselves with much earnestness.

Invitations to attend this congress were sent to every known leader and writer on any phase of the alcoholic problem in the world, responses being received from nearly two thousand persons. I was appointed to muster the American contributors and delegates to this meeting. Three physicians, two editors, one army officer, three teachers and clergymen appeared to represent America, and about twenty papers were offered. The congress committee seemed to be very cautious, and only gave abstracts in French of a few of the leading papers offered, and were clearly able to discriminate their value.

Among the American papers which attracted considerable attention were those of Drs. Davis, Mason, Brower, Kellogg, Sheperd, Manly, Hughes, and Crothers. The president announced that the American contributions and papers showed most positive proof that they led all the world in this field, as they did in other things. This was more than a compliment, as the forthcoming volume of Transactions will show. Of course, the moral and ethic sides of the subject were most prominent.

A cardinal and two bishops of the Roman Catholic Church made eloquent speeches, and official representatives of the governments of France, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland spoke at some length. The congress was divided into sections

which held separate meetings, and the general session was held in the afternoon and early evening. The meetings were all held in l'Ecole de Médecine, and the various halls and amphitheaters were crowded.

One very significant fact brought into prominence was that France consumes more spirits than any other nation in the world. The rate for 1898 was 13 liters to each person, including wines, beers and strong liquors. In one province of France there is a saloon for the sale of wines and spirits for every three male persons. Insanity, pauperism and crime are increasing so rapidly that the governments are alarmed.

The following table was given as authentic, to show the actual amount of spirits, including wine and beer, consumed by each person in the different countries:

Country.	Liters per capita.
France	14.19
Belgium	10.50
Germany	10.50
British Isles	9.25
Switzerland	8.75
Italy	6.50
Holland	6.25
United States	6.10
Sweden	4.50
Norway	3.50
Canada	2.50

To show the changes, Sweden in 1849 drank 21 liters a year to each male inhabitant; in 1898 this had fallen to 4½ liters to each man. This result has been attributed entirely to education and agitation, with government control.

Several of the Paris papers were very pronounced in their editorials on the need of this congress and the danger of alcohol. The *Figaro*, not a temperance paper, but one of the great influential dailies, announced in headlines the following:

Alcohol is death to the race. Alcohol will kill emperors, as it has killed the native tribes of every nation of the world. . . . Alcohol means disease, means tuberculosis, means decay, sterility, impotence; it is another word for wickedness, cruelty, vice, and insanity; it means misery and the downfall of nations, and the best way to prove patriotism and to be useful to one's country is to fight against alcoholism.

The medical journals made only brief references to the congress, and later some of the papers read will appear. A daily bulletin was published, giving abstracts of all the papers and some of the discussions. The Transactions will appear in a huge volume later.

One of the many new topics was the influence of climate on the poisonous action of alcohol. Some alcohols become rapidly intoxicating in certain climates, other climates repel the intoxicating action. Some drinks are dangerous at different seasons of the year, and so on. Another topic was the influence of food in early life, predisposing to alcoholism later. Tuberculosis following the injury from alcohol and its fatality was the theme of considerable discussion.

The subject of asylums for inebriates was treated at some length, the fact being brought out that Switzerland has more asylums of this class in proportion to its extent than any other country in the world. England has recently opened several asylums for the reception of criminal inebriates, and passed laws giving judges power to commit to them rather than to prisons. Hypnotism came in for a large share of attention, and the bath cures and other measures were mentioned at some length. A great deal of enthusiasm gathered about the instruction of the young in temperance physiology, and many papers and discussions followed.

It would be impossible to give any clear idea of the many topics presented and the intense enthusiasm of all the discussions which followed, and a great deal of it would have but little medical interest except physiologically. From this point of view the congress was really one of the most significant gatherings of the closing years of the century. It shows that Europe is becoming alarmed, and that a deep conviction is

growing that the evils from alcohol must be taken up as a great sanitary and medical topic. The recognition of the medical side of this evil, and the physical means required to cope with it, showed a great advance.

While this gathering was not particularly notable for new facts, it gave greater eminence to old theories and greater prominence to the need of more accurate study of this evil. There was something very stimulating in this hearty union of all classes for the study of the evils of alcohol; while many different societies and church associations have conflicting theories of the causes of and remedies for alcoholism, they all argue that certain general physical causes are traceable to it and can be removed.

The leading continental physicians and teachers are very emphatic in calling alcoholism a disease and urging medical treatment. The continental physicians appear to have much influence with laymen on matters of social and sanitary science, and hence are put forward prominently as leaders.

In the sectional meetings physicians were given a deferential hearing, more so than clergymen, and several French and Swiss physicians displayed unusual oratoric powers. A congress of this kind would be a great help to clear away the confusion which hangs over the subject in this country. Hundreds of physicians would welcome a general scientific study of this subject, and a public sentiment that would encourage efforts to find causes and remedies for this evil.

The foolish unfounded theories which cling to this topic are fast disappearing in Europe, and wine and beer drinking is as freely condemned as the excessive use of stronger spirits. Physicians, above all others, should teach the facts, and not be taught by laymen, or fear the popular opinions of persons who have little or no accurate knowledge.

T. D. CROTHERS, M.D.

Competitive Examinations.

CINCINNATI, OHIO, May 2, 1899.

To the Editor:—The letter of Dr. Bayard Holmes in last week's JOURNAL (see April 29, p. 927) meets with my hearty approval. I am and long have been convinced that a written examination, as an exclusive means of determining qualifications in any department, is fallacious. As a means of determining the ability of candidates for hospital internships, it is strikingly defective. I have no objection to written examinations as one way of finding out what a person may know, but they ought to occupy a subordinate place in the general plan of investigation. The reform method should embrace all that is now included in the written examinations, plus test exercises in the laboratories, in the mortuary and at the bedside of the sick. When this comprehensive plan is adopted, examining bodies may ascertain approximately what candidates may or may not know, and that is more than can be said of the present method.

Another pernicious feature of the present system is the preliminary coaching to which intending applicants for hospital positions are subjected. If the mere cramming process were all of it, it would be bad enough, but it is not. In more than one city of my knowledge students are requested at the time of matriculation to declare their intention of going in for internships, and great rivalry exists between schools to score the largest winnings before these more or less farcical concerns. Students who enter for the race are coached from the beginning, not with the object of giving them a broad, symmetric and logic medical education, but with the object of making them familiar with the peculiar views of individual members of the examining body. Lists of old questions are a part of the stock in trade of professional coaches. Students are encouraged to miss regular lectures that may not have a direct and apparent bearing on the prospective examination. They are then permitted, in certain cities, to go up for the examinations at the

end of their junior year, returning to their respective schools for the finals, a twelvemonth later. They then get their diplomas after an actual attendance at the colleges, of probably less than two years, all told. When they go to their State licensing bodies for registration they all present certificates of actual attendance on four full courses of lectures in four separate years! How can these things be? Who knows? But what it is, and this that is, is a matter for the licensing bodies. It would not be in the least malapropos on the program of the coming meeting of the Confederation of State Examining and Licensing Bodies. It might not be amiss if Dr. Bayard Holmes' own organization, the Association of American Medical Colleges, would also throw its search-light in this direction. It would certainly be fruitful of better results than the recent endeavor to ostracize first-class medical college men who conducted three-year schools and were honest enough to say so. R.

Revision of Pharmacopeia.

PHILADELPHIA, May 1, 1899.

To the Editor:—In accordance with instructions given by resolutions passed at the National Convention for Revision of the Pharmacopeia of the United States of America, held in Washington, in 1890, I herewith give notice that a general convention for the revision of the pharmacopeia of the United States of America will be held in the City of Washington, D. C., beginning on the first Wednesday in May, 1900. It is requested that the several bodies represented in the convention of 1880 and 1890, and also such other incorporated State medical and pharmaceutic associations, and incorporated colleges of medicine and pharmacy, as shall have been in continuous operation for at least five years immediately preceding this notice, shall each elect delegates, not exceeding three in number; and that the surgeon-general of the army, the surgeon-general of the navy, and the surgeon-general of the marine-hospital service shall appoint, each, not exceeding three medical officers to attend the aforesaid convention.

It is desired that the several medical and pharmaceutic bodies, and the medical departments of the Army, Navy and Marine-Hospital Service, shall transmit to me the names and residences of their respective delegates, so soon as said delegates shall have been appointed, so that a list of the delegates to the convention may be published, in accordance with the resolutions passed at the 1890 convention for the revision of the pharmacopeia, in the newspapers and medical journals in the month of March, 1900.

Finally, it is further requested that the several medical and pharmaceutic bodies concerned, as well as the medical departments of the army, navy and marine-hospital service, shall submit the present pharmacopeia to a careful revision, and that their delegates shall transmit the result of their labors to Dr. Frederick A. Castle, 51 West Fifty-eighth Street, New York City, secretary of the Committee of Revision and Publication of the U. S. Pharmacopeia, at least three months before May 2, 1900, the date fixed for the meeting of the convention.

H. C. WOOD, M.D.

President of the National Convention for Revising the U. S. Pharmacopeia, held in Washington, D. C., A. D. 1890.

No Smallpox in Uniontown.

UNIONTOWN, PA., May 6, 1899.

To the Editor:—Under the caption of "Medical News," in the JOURNAL of May 6, you state Uniontown has eight cases of smallpox and that the government has ordered all mail fumigated, and that the freight and traffic business has been suspended.

I have been practicing medicine at this place for the past fifteen years and during all that time this is the first that I have ever heard that we had any smallpox. Allow me to correct