

The Nature and Treatment of Gout. By WILLIAM HENRY ROBERTSON, M.D., Physician to the Buxton Bath-Charity. London. 8vo. pp. 372.

This work is evidently the production of a physician practically acquainted with the subject on which he writes, and the result of much experience and reflection. It contains, after a brief introductory notice, a series of chapters on the remote and predisposing causes of gout; on the exciting causes; the nature of gout; the history of the disease; its treatment; the treatment and management of the gouty habit of body; and lastly, on the means of preventing gout. The arrangement of the subject therefore, is on the plan followed by the older writers, and the mode of treating it very similar to that which would have been adopted half a century back, but the knowledge acquired during the half century is not lost sight of, and the light which modern chemistry and modern researches generally have thrown on various questions in physiology and pathology, is clearly traceable in the pages of Dr. Robertson's work.

Without at all undervaluing the observations on the causes and nature of gout, we cannot but remark, that the chapters on the history and treatment of the disease are decidedly the best. It is here that the acquirements and experience of the well-informed practical physician are most evident, while the ample means of observation which the author has evidently enjoyed and made use of, invest this portion of his subject with an interest and authority which cannot fail to render it generally useful to those who are less favourably situated.

We cannot, of course, attempt to go through this portion of the work, or to transfer to our columns the instructive information which it conveys. We must be content with a brief indication of the treatment generally recommended in the paroxysm, and such cursory observations on other subjects as casually occur.

Dr. Robertson is evidently exceedingly averse to interfere with the progress of the gouty paroxysm, when located in the extremities. He considers the local affection as a kind of safety-valve through which the explosion of the fit may take place, until the elimination of the gouty material shall have been otherwise effected. Accordingly we hear nothing of the heroic practice of at once cutting short the paroxysm by cold water, and the insane practices of certain hydropaths are very summarily disposed of. "As to cold applications to the parts affected with gouty inflammation, no language," says the author, "can be too strong to deprecate their use. We have never yet seen a case of gout, in which they were justifiable,—nor even met with a case in which they had been used, where there was not sufficient to warrant the belief that they had done harm; and the single duty is to dismiss them with the most positive interdiction against their

use." In like manner the employment of evaporating lotions, as such, is objected to on the same grounds. "Nothing," it is elsewhere observed, "that is calculated to repress or check the local inflammation, should, under common circumstances be applied. Even the accidental contact of the part affected with cold air, has repressed the fit of gout." To obviate this risk, light cotton, silk, or flannel coverings, are recommended; but it is evident that the author thinks the less the local inflammation is interfered with the better.

Purgatives with calomel to commence with, followed by diaphoretic salines and aperients, are what are chiefly trusted to in the more simple forms of the disease, and at the commencement of the paroxysm, and indeed at all times in the earlier attacks of gout, the use of colchicum, often so largely and so empirically given, is discouraged. In cases of confirmed or advanced gout colchicum is indispensable, and it becomes "rather a question of deferring" its use, "than of doing without it altogether." But even in such cases it is recommended to make use of the "smallest quantity that is found to answer the purpose," aiding at the same time its action "by such evacuants as may be best borne, and be most efficacious."

The observations on the effects of colchicum on the fibrous tissues, on its use in gout, and on the general principles of treatment of the disease, and the remarks on the diagnosis of gout from rheumatism, and on the connection of the former disorder with cachectic and disordered states of the system, will well repay a careful perusal, and we cannot conclude this notice of Dr. Robertson's treatise without cordially recommending it as a sound and practical work, fitted for reference both as a work of information on the subject, and as a guide to practice.

THE CARLISLE DISPENSARY.

This institution, the oldest of the medical charities of the town, and one which, by the number of the annual recipients of its benefits, amounting last year to 3143, would seem to be of considerable importance, is apparently threatened with a premature dissolution from the want of a medical staff. At some recent elections to the Cumberland Infirmary, the governors were so unwise as to overlook the claims of the resident medical practitioners of the city, and though in one of these elections two of the physicians of the Dispensary, Dr. Tinniswood and Dr. Atkinson, were candidates, a physician, of high respectability it is true, but still a stranger, and previously a non-resident, was brought down from the metropolis, and appointed to the office of physician, then vacant by the retirement of Dr. Barnes.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Governors of the Carlisle Dispensary, held at the Town Hall, February 17th, the Mayor in the chair, after the reading of the report, and the transaction of the customary business of the meeting, the following proceedings took place:—