

Medical Matters.

AUSTRALIAN LIFE.



A VALUABLE paper upon the causes of death amongst Australians has recently been published by Dr. Steele Robertson, of Melbourne. The conclusions at which he has arrived are of great interest. In the first place he shows that the healthiness of Australia is somewhat remarkable. Taking the average death-rate of the seven colonies for ten years, it is proved that the mortality varies from 16.85 per thousand in West Australia, to 10.10 per thousand in New Zealand—giving an average on the whole of the colonies of rather less than 14 per thousand. When it is remembered that the average death-rate of the United Kingdom is 19 per thousand, and that the other countries of Europe, with the sole exception of Scandinavia, have a much higher death-rate still, the greater healthiness of Australia must be admitted. In discussing the causes of death, the author points out that local diseases are much more common causes of death in every colony, than those arising either from constitutional causes, from fevers, or from violence. Tasmania appears to be recognised as the sanatorium of Australia, perhaps from the fact that it is surrounded by the ocean, and is of such small size. Coming to the particular diseases from which the population die, it is pointed out that diseases of the lungs are most common, then those of the nerves, then those of digestion, then fevers, while diseases of the heart and kidneys are comparatively infrequently met with. As might have been expected, from the general healthiness of the climate, the mortality amongst infants is remarkably small, and is lower than in any part of Europe except, perhaps, Norway. On the other hand, old age seems conspicuous by its presence in Australia, and the returns show that the colonies have considerably more than their fair share of centenarians. From the accounts given, it would appear that a man of 80 years of age is regarded as comparatively youthful, and no inconsiderable number lived beyond the hundred; the last belated veteran, amongst those who died between 1882 and 1891, having reached, in good health and strength, the respectable age of 112. Amongst the

children's complaints, measles and scarlet fever are the most destructive. Small-pox, it seems, has never occurred as an epidemic, a fact which the anti-vaccinationists will be pleased to hear, seeing that vaccination is most carefully and compulsorily carried out. Lepers are found in all the colonies except Tasmania, to the number of forty-five in all, and they are quarantined and carefully isolated. Only nine of them are Europeans, about twenty-two are Chinese, and the rest are South Sea Islanders. Cancer seems to be increasing in frequency in Australia, as it is elsewhere, and suicides are comparatively rare. The conclusion is that Australia must not only be regarded as an extremely healthy part of the earth's surface, but as its development and population increases, and better systems of drainage and water supply are instituted, there is every probability that its healthiness will become still greater.

BLEEDING IN MEASLES.

THE author whom we have quoted above gives a most interesting illustration of the usefulness of bleeding in cases of fever. He was seized in boyhood with an attack of measles, of a particularly virulent type, and in the irritation of the onset of the disease quarrelled with a fellow schoolboy, and received a blow on the nose, which caused profuse bleeding. He passed through a very severe attack—from which a large number of his contemporaries died—with comparative facility, and has in the practice of his older years applied the schoolboy's lesson with much success in such cases. It is an interesting contribution to the literature of blood-letting in the treatment of disease, which is rapidly accumulating, and which proves the benefit of the removal of blood, even in small quantities, in many inflammatory conditions. In the Australian colonies, the infectious fevers seem to be of a more acute type than are usually met with in this country, and it is a well-known fact that an epidemic of measles, which in England is looked upon somewhat contemptuously, may kill a whole tribe of aborigines.

Notice.

WE are requested to state that there will be a special reception of Nurses at the Bovril Manufactory, 63, Bath Street, City Road, E.C., by Lord Playfair, the Chairman of the Company, on Tuesday, June 30th, from 3 to 6 p.m.

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