

cholera poison is in the new language an *endogen*, an *ectogen* or an *amphigen*, and whether place, season, and personal susceptibility govern its development outside the individual or its influence inside of him, are matters of opinion which still admit of argument and still await demonstrative proof.

NURSING IN INDIAN MILITARY HOSPITALS.

BRIGADE-SURGEON J. B. HAMILTON has made this the subject of an interesting pamphlet, with the tenor and object of which we are in entire accord. He shows what benefit has been conferred upon the British soldier, in times both of peace and war, by the services of the nursing sisterhoods, which have been organized for the purpose of attending upon the sick and wounded. In these days it does not need argument or illustration to prove that nursing is a special function of woman; that man is by nature and habit unfit for the delicate and assiduous offices which nursing entails, and the experience of hospitals, civil and military, and of sick-rooms everywhere, have established this truth on a basis of absolute certainty. Dr. Hamilton is equally successful in his contention that the nursing agencies which are available in this country for sick officers and soldiers are not satisfactory. The agencies are the men of the army hospital native corps, untrained orderlies summoned from the ranks to the hospital or sick-room on occasion, and nurses of a nondescript kind picked up anyhow under pressure of an emergency. He gives reasons and illustrations in proof of the unfitness of these agencies for the delicate duties appertaining to nursing the sick. The present, he urges, is an opportune time for raising and dealing with the question, inasmuch as the question of training women for ministering to the sick in this country has been so warmly and vigorously taken up. The material for a service of female nurses for Indian military hospitals is procurable both from England and in this country, and the matter merely requires organization and attention for its satisfactory realization.

Dr. Hamilton's proposals are as follow:—A nursing branch of the medical service should be established for each presidency. A Lady Superintendent, imported from England, to be attached to the station hospital at the head-quarters of each division, and to serve under the senior medical officer subject to the authority of the Deputy Surgeon-General. These ladies would train sisters for general service in the presidency. Recruiting for this nursing service would be carried on in India under orders of the Surgeon-General, and as the agency increased and improved, its members would be allotted to hospitals for both men and women, while supernumeraries might be held available for emergent duties. These suggestions are of necessity vague and general, but the subject is one of extreme importance; and the movement deserves the sympathy, encouragement, and support of all who know the value of skilful nursing and the preeminent adaptation of women for this work; and what medical man is there in these days who has not had plentiful and strong experience in affirmation of both these positions? We wish the movement complete success.

Current Medical Topics.

THE HEALTH OF CALCUTTA.

THE second quarter of 1886 has been an almost unprecedentedly healthy one. The death-rate was 20.3 per 1,000 of population. The total mortality of the quarter was 2,243 against a mean mortality of 3,139 during the preceding decade. The only year which showed smaller figures was 1880. The years intervening between 1880 and 1886 exhibit high figures. Cholera which contributes largely to the death-rate of the second quarter, is conspicuously moderate in both years, the figures being 129 and 213 against a mean of 632. Smallpox contributed only 26 and 6 deaths against a mean of 177. There is a decided but less substantial fall under fevers, bowel complaints, and other causes. The Health Officer does not assign any cause for the diminished mortality of the period. There was nothing very remarkable in the meteorology, and the decrease is probably but an illustration of the remarkable fluctuations which death-rates undergo in India. It is sometimes possible to account for these fluctuations—a famine, a cyclone, an inundation,