

librarians, Mr. Lloyd Owen and Dr. Saundby, it appears that the library is now a fairly representative collection of medical books and periodicals, and that it is patronised at present by a large and increasing number of borrowers. The library contains 9,650 volumes, as against 9,300 at the end of the previous year. That the value of the library is growing in the appreciation of professional readers is shown by the fact that, last year 813 volumes were issued to 100 borrowers, as compared with 450 volumes issued to 73 borrowers in the preceding year. The reading-room is well supplied with British and foreign periodical literature. During the year several valuable gifts of books were received. The chief local professional societies, namely, the Birmingham and Midland Branch of the Association, the Midland Medical Society, and the Birmingham Medical Benevolent Society, continue to hold their meetings in the Institute.

#### DUPUYTREN'S ENTEROTOME.

LAST October, a very stout woman was admitted into St. Bartholomew's Hospital, under the care of Mr. Willett, suffering from a strangulated ventral hernia, situated midway between the umbilicus and the pubes—a very unusual situation. The patient had delayed long before applying to the hospital; and, when herniotomy was performed, the gut was found to be gangrenous, and an artificial anus resulted. The condition of the woman was thus very serious, as the portion of bowel which had sloughed was a knuckle of the small intestine, probably rather high up. All fæces passed by the artificial anus, and the woman steadily emaciated. After delaying long enough to preclude the hope of spontaneous cure, Mr. Willett determined to resort to Dupuytren's operation, which consists in applying a clamp of peculiar construction to the piece of intestinal wall, called by Dupuytren the *éperon* or spur, which intervenes between the upper and lower portions of gut at the artificial anus. After considerable delay, two enterotomes were procured from Paris; and one of these, a modification of Dupuytren's original instrument, was applied on February 23rd. The patient experienced no pain or inconvenience, and the enterotome came away on March 1st, holding in its jaws a piece of shrivelled tissue. Up to the present time, no benefit has apparently resulted from the operation; but it is gratifying to find that the gloomy forebodings, with which the proposal to apply the enterotome was received by some, have not been fulfilled.

#### MEDICINE IN JAPAN.

M. CHARLES RÉMY writes from Tokio that a German medical school is established there, concerning which, owing to the courtesy of its professors, he has been able to gather some new facts in medicine. He has observed that illnesses common to both Europeans and Japanese present their special differences. In enteric fever, there is an absence of stupor; neither do bed-sores appear. Phthisis there as often declares itself by adhesive peritonitis (*peritonite exsudative*), which is cured for a time, as it does among us by pleurisy. Distomata of the liver and lungs are pathological conditions frequently met with. Dr. Rémy believes that he knows at least a dozen medical students who daily expectorate ova of pulmonary distoma. Filaria is sometimes observed; among dogs, it is occasionally present in the coats of the aorta, where it causes aneurysm. M. Rémy also sends some interesting information concerning the Japanese method of rearing children. Mothers suckle their children until they reach four five, and six years of age. M. Rémy remarks that Japanese women are small, but have an astonishing faculty of producing milk (*une puissance galactogène étonnante*). Rickets is unknown in Japan. This fact invalidates M. Parrot's theory concerning rickets, inasmuch as syphilis, and consequently hereditary syphilis, are very general in Japan. Dr. Rémy bears testimony to the skill with which Japanese doctors practise acupuncture, though now it is rarely done. Dr. Rémy underwent a personal experience of it, which proved perfectly painless. He saw the needle penetrate the

skin, or would not have believed that acupuncture had been performed. When it was done through his clothes, he searched for the mark of the needle, to assure himself that the operation was effected. Last summer, Japan was visited by a severe epidemic of cholera. At Tokio, four hundred persons died from it in a week, but only two Europeans during the entire year.

#### PRESCRIBING DRUGGISTS.

A CASE of suicide, of somewhat exceptional details as to its method, which happened in Birmingham last week, draws attention once more to the perilous facility with which, in spite of restrictive legislation, poisons may be purchased, and to the fatal danger to which the public is exposed by unqualified persons undertaking the treatment of disease. A man, aged 32, who had suffered for months from some chronic nervous affection and insomnia, was found dead in his bed; a letter which he left, and other evidence, showed that he had committed suicide by taking at once a quantity of "sleeping draughts" which had been supplied to him. Pretending to take a draught every night, he saved his doses until he had collected the supply for a fortnight, when he swallowed the whole of the fourteen draughts at once, and death resulted. It appears that the mother of the deceased consulted a druggist about her son's sleeplessness, whereupon the druggist forthwith undertook the management of the case, and prescribed, and continued regularly to supply, a nightly draught containing twenty grains of hydrate of chloral and five drops of tincture of opium. Without any medical authority at any time, the druggist continued to supply these draughts for several weeks, and the friends of the deceased did not secure skilled professional assistance for him. The suicide effected his purpose by taking in one dose 280 grains of hydrate of chloral and 70 drops of laudanum.

#### PARALDEHYDE.

AT the last meeting of the Pharmaceutical Society, Mr. Holmes called attention to a specimen of the very curious body known as paraldehyde, which has lately been described in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL (February 3rd, p. 215) as a new hypnotic possessing the advantage over chloral of strengthening the action of the heart. Specimens of pure aldehyde, aldehyde ammonia and aldehyde resin had been sent at the same time by Mr. Williams to illustrate some remarks which he had intended to make, but he was unable to be present. In his absence, Mr. Holmes, whose remarks are reported in the *Pharmaceutical Journal*, said that paraldehyde had the formula  $C_6H_{12}O_3$ , and might be regarded as three molecules of aldehyde grouped into one, the formula of aldehyde being  $C_2H_4O$ . The vapour density of paraldehyde was three times greater, and the boiling point more than three times higher, than that of aldehyde. It was very remarkable, therefore, that this body differed entirely in its chemical, physical, and therapeutic properties from aldehyde. Thus aldehyde formed with ammoniacal gas the crystalline compound aldehyde ammonia, and when mixed with alcohol and heated with caustic potash, formed aldehyde resin; but neither of these substances was formed by paraldehyde, nor had it the power of reducing nitrate of silver like aldehyde. Paraldehyde had an odour resembling that of acetal, and was soluble in about eight parts of cold, and less of hot water, while aldehyde possessed a very suffocating odour, and was freely miscible with water and alcohol in all proportions. Yet the same substances which caused the molecular changes by which paraldehyde was produced, would at a lower temperature, gave rise to the very different crystalline body, metaldehyde. The difference in the therapeutical properties caused by slight molecular changes, must be a subject of great interest to medical men. The group of aldehydes also possessed a considerable importance from the point of view of botany and materia medica, since they were intimately connected, as recently shown by Messrs. Cross and Bevan, with the formation of vegetable products, and