REVIEWS OF
BRITISH AND FOREIGN LITERATURE.

Collected Contributions on Digestion and Diet, with an Appendix on the Opium Habit in India. By Sir William Roberts, M.D., F.R.S., etc. Second Edition. London: Smith, Elder, & Co. 1897.

The second edition of this admirable little work by Sir William Roberts requires little to be said about its merits, as far as the text of the original goes. It is an exact reproduction of the earlier edition. As is, or ought to be, well known, the author expounds in it his views as to the working of the different digestive ferments, and draws special attention to the action of alcohol and other food accessories on these processes. Perhaps the most striking suggestion brought forward in its pages is that which ascribes the universal use of accessories in the diet of man to a natural inclination towards retarding digestion. He points out that civilised man takes his nourishment in a form made more easily digestible and assimilable by artificial means than the natural food of the savage. To prevent the absorption of too great an amount of the proceeds of the digestion of such foods, owing to the increased rapidity with which it can be dealt with in the alimentary canal, civilised man has in course of time empirically added beverages which have the power of retarding his digestive processes, and thus of preventing too sudden an addition of nutriment to the blood, some of which may not be utilised before excretion, and may occasion disturbances of the chemical equilibrium of the bodily fluids. The more highly civilised the race, and the more digestible their food, it follows that their meals are smaller and more frequent, the food accessories taken more regularly and in larger quantities.

To the text of the original edition an appendix on the opium habit in India has been added, as a further contribution to the series of substances taken by man in addition to his ordinary food. It is actually a reprint of a Memorandum appended by the author to the Report of the Opium Commission appointed in 1893.

The Memorandum is of extreme value, as the presentment of the facts elicited by the Commission as they appeared to a skilled medical man, whose independent and unbiased views must carry great weight.

The author shows that only a small minority of the inhabitants of India are opium-eaters, and that it is only for its "euphoric" action, not for its hypnotic properties, that it is taken. In India the number of persons susceptible to this euphoric action is large, in Europe very small,
Most persons in Europe only experience the anodyne and hypnotic effects; very few taste the exhilarating pleasures so commonly produced by opium on Eastern peoples. If it were not so, opium-eating would soon be as much in vogue here as in India.

The average dose in men is 7, in women 5 grs. per diem. Though it was difficult to form very accurate conclusions as to the effect of the habit on longevity, the author inclines to the opinion that more lives are saved by it than destroyed, owing chiefly to the freedom from malaria and dysentery enjoyed by its votaries. He is inclined to agree with popular belief, that opium acts as a prophylactic against and mitigator of malaria, and attributes this property to a narcotine rather than to morphia. It is noteworthy that in many districts of India the amount of opium consumed varies directly with the prevalence of malaria in the locality.

A. Lockhart Gillespie.

Aphasia and the Cerebral Speech Mechanism. By William Elder, M.D., F.R.C.P.Ed. London: H. K. Lewis. 1897.

As stated in the preface, the scope of this work is limited to the central mechanism concerned in speech (written and spoken), the disturbances of that mechanism, and the localisation of the lesions which produce those disturbances; and special attention has been devoted to the differential diagnosis of the clinical varieties of aphasia.

A short historical introduction is followed by three chapters on the reception, retention, and production of speech, together with its different routes in the brain, and the mechanism by which speech and thought are received, stored up, and produced by the brain.

In the next six chapters the clinical varieties of aphasia are fully described, and illustrated by a valuable series of cases. The varieties of aphasia are grouped by the author into five clinical types, namely, Auditory, Motor, Visual, Graphie, and Conduction Aphasia.

The tenth chapter deals with disturbances of the music faculty; while the eleventh and concluding chapter treats of aphasia from a surgical point of view. There are, however, no remarks on the treatment of aphasia, and no reference is made to the important subject of testamentary capacity in relation to aphasia.

The book is well written, and contains many instructive diagrams and other illustrations. It will have a permanent value on account of the original cases, which are reported and analysed with much skill and care. One very interesting case, with clearly described post-mortem details, appears to afford convincing proof of Wyllie's view, that the foot of the third frontal convolution is the centre for the psycho-motor images of speech, lesion of which produces motor aphasia; whilst the oral articulative mechanism has its centre in the lower part of the ascending frontal and the lower part of the ascending parietal convolutions.

The author has made a special study of mirror-writing, and gives the results of tests of writing with the left hand in 451 persons. His figures show that a larger number of mirror-writers are to be found among persons over 15 years of age than amongst those under 15. Thus