up a patient in the "lithotomy position," but with anæsthetics the need for this mostly lies in a dearth of assistants, and it might perhaps be pointed out with advantage that the same conditions which have made the practice unnecessary, have also made it a positive source of danger.

Another picture calls for comment, that namely of "lithotomy tube with plugging." The packing of a cavity here or elsewhere, where bleeding is to be controlled, should be done, not with a chunk of material such as is shown, but with strips of lint which can be disposed so as to make properly distributed pressure, and which can be removed gently.

Dissolution and Evolution and the Science of Medicine: An Attempt to co-ordinate the necessary facts of Pathology, and to establish the First Principles of Treatment. By C. PITFIELD MITCHELL, M.R.C.S., author of *The Treatment of Wounds as based on Evolutionary Laws*. London: Longmans, Green & Co. 1888.

In *The Monastery* Scott has introduced us to a pedant in the Euphuist, whose vice of language is that of the masher of the period, and is not such as to deceive any one or do any real harm. In the book before us we have an example of scientific pedantry, a much more obnoxious variety of this vice, and one which is more characteristic of the present century. Mr. Pitfield Mitchell has been a diligent student of Herbert Spencer, and he here seeks "to disseminate some new applications of Mr. Herbert Spencer's leading generalisations. The sustaining elements of the Synthetic Philosophy are the doctrines of evolution and dissolution. The design is to enquire whether these may not be made fertilising principles for large collections of the data of pathology, and thus the means of practice for the physician and surgeon. . . . A multitude of facts will be seen to acquire a remarkable concinnity, unity, and order. The unification of truths so voluminous and diverse as those constituting pathology is undoubtedly of educational value. To make all diseases, from a whitlow to mania, one in principle by cause and effect is an aid to practical thought. . . . Only among leading physicians is it appreciated that a knowledge of the intimate changes of diseases, and our manner of viewing them, are more than practice. They are its very mainsprings, and, still more, have the governance or direction of it; not only do they supply the motive power, but they make practice

good or bad. Let us suppose that the case for which advice is sought is one of croup, where laryngeal obstruction threatens to induce death. One skilled in practice, but imperfectly acquainted with the recondite and interdependent chemical and physical tissue-changes which are the essence of the disease, will advise and perform tracheotomy, or intubation of the larynx; or pin himself to medication, poultices, and steam inhalations. But such an one will be heedless of the remote causes of the asphyxia. The urine may be examined and albumen discovered, but beyond adding to the gravity of the case, the albuminuria will not have much significance; it will not serve as a clue to the antecedents of the laryngeal obstruction. These are not known; they will not be thought of; and no steps will be taken to deal with them, either by removing the conditions on which they depend, or by furthering the natural processes of functional adjustment. The case will probably terminate fatally by extension of the disease to the bronchi, by septicæmia, or nephritis. . . ."

These extracts from a copious preface will serve to indicate generally the aim that the author has in view, and the last of them will show that he has not a high appreciation of the medical practitioner, whose ignorance of general principles will, however, hereafter be inexcusable.

Mr. Mitchell discusses inflammation and suppuration, and the retrograde metamorphoses, as dissolutional changes, and resolution and repair as evolutionary changes, and also various special diseases, such as nephritis and cirrhosis of the liver, from similar points of view. His last chapter is devoted to the practical deductions. We have made our way through the greater number of his pages, and the conclusion forced upon us is that all he has done is to clothe well known facts in a garb which almost completely disguises them, and to explain the general facts of disease by explanations more obscure than the facts themselves. His practical conclusions result in the one well worn instruction in regard to treatment—viz., Remove the cause. Our estimate of this book may be summed up in few words—*Vox et præterea nihil*.

Recherches Cliniques et Therapeutiques sur l'Epilepsie l'Hysterie et l'Idiotie. Par BOURNEVILLE, COURBARIEN, RAOULT, SOLLIER. Paris, 1889.

M. BOURNEVILLE'S annual volume affords ample evidence of the steady prosecution of medical work in his department of