

received from other quarters, and from authority that certainly should be reliable, positive assurance that there is not any exaggeration in the book ; on the contrary, we are told that much has been kept back which might seem incredible. We are asked, what we should think of delicate patients confined in straight-jackets, through hot summer nights, in bed, without the power of lifting a hand to drive off mosquitoes, which are plentiful enough in summer? The lady in question is said to have long undergone this torture. Our opinion is a very definite one : that, whatever may be the merits of the particular case in question, such treatment as is described is sure to occur sooner or later in any asylum in which mechanical restraint is habitually used.

Chloral Hydrate.

We may take this opportunity of referring to the results of some enquiries by Dr. Richardson into the medical properties of chloral hydrate. He finds that the maximum quantity of the hydrate that can be borne at one dose bears some proportion to the weight of the animal, and that the human subject, weighing from 120 to 140 pounds, will be made by ninety grains to pass into deep sleep, and by one hundred and forty grains into a sleep that will be dangerous. Again, he finds that an adult person who has taken chloral hydrate in sufficient quantity to be influenced by it, gets rid of it at the rate of about seven grains per hour. In repeated doses, therefore, the hydrate might be given at the rate of twelve grains every two hours for twenty-four hours, with less danger than would occur from giving twelve times twelve (144) grains at once. Another important observation which has been made is that a reduction of the animal temperature is an early and marked effect of the chloral ; and when an animal is deeply under the influence of the agent, the temperature of the body, unless the external warmth be carefully sustained, will quickly descend seven or eight degrees below the natural standard. Such reduction of temperature, he rightly observes, is itself a source of danger ; it allows condensation of fluid on the bronchial pulmonary surface, and so induces apnæa, and it indicates a period when the convulsion of cold (a convulsion which sharply precedes death) is at hand.

The chronic symptoms of chloral poisoning are—sleepless-

ness, unless the narcotic be taken in very large doses ; great mental irritability and muscular prostration ; uncertainty of movement, with tendency to fall forward ; caprice of appetite and frequent nausea. In some cases there is injection of the conjunctivæ, and in other cases yellowness. The urine, in extreme cases, contains albumen, and the bowels are commonly constipated, the evacuations being white and hard. Chloral hydrate does not produce the ecstatic dream or delirium caused by opium or haschish ; on the contrary, it causes, through all the stages of its action, a sense rather of depression than of elevation of mental faculty.

These researches tend to prove the necessity of care in the administration of this drug. It certainly is not because a patient is quieted by it that he is necessarily benefited by it.

Modern Scepticism.

The papers of Feb. 3rd last contained two rather remarkable documents. The "Times" had a long review of a sceptical book by the Duke of Somerset ; the "Lancet" contained a report of Sir Wm. Gull's address at the Clinical Society. Both had this in common—that they were attacks on the old and established faith of the majority ; but, happily, there the resemblance ends. The odd coincidence of their appearing together suggests, however, some reflections on the altered position of "free thinking" within the last few years. Not long ago medical men were credited as a class with a tendency to unbelief, but the progress of events has left them far behind in the competition for such a distinction.

Now it is a Duke who feels a call to attack Christianity, to speak of the "educated Protestant no longer believing what the Evangelists believed and affirmed," and to assume that society is too advanced now to dream of attaching any importance to old beliefs.

Without entering into the theological questions involved, we may doubt whether the cause of truth or the interests of society are to be benefited by such an outburst. All that learning and research can do has been given to the world by men who are respected even by those who are unconvinced ; but to what purpose is an assertion that all sensible men have ceased to believe in revealed religion, and that it is only fit for "imaginative" minds ? &c., &c.