reality of this effect the following sentences in a letter just received from a correspondent in Florence bear witness:—"... e sapendo, d'altra parte, che l'Inghilterra sta fortemente sostenendo la sua bella lotta, senza perdere il tradizionale sangue freddo; per modo che la vita continua costà quasi inalterata. La regolarità, con la quale i periodici scientifici continuano ad apparire ne è la prova migliore." F. A. B.

THE CARE OF THE WOUNDED.

A FURTHER paper by Medical Inspector-General Delorme was read before the Paris Academy of Sciences on September 28, on the general subject of the treatment of wounds in war (*Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Sciences*, October 5, 1914).

The paper begins with a very welcome statement that the health of the French Army is excellent. "The persistent mildness of the weather since the war began, the extreme carefulness of the Government, the watchfulness of the Commands, from the lowest to the highest,—such fatherly watchfulness as you would not find, so intense and so alert, in any other campaign—the organisation and the regular methodical active working of the Army Medical Service, the great care given to the food-supply, the sites chosen for the troops—all these, up to now, have resulted in the maintenance of a perfect sanitary condition. The wounded Frenchman is a healthy man. Diseases are at a very low point. . . . Dysentery and typhoid are almost unknown: the proportion of cases has seemed to me to be even less than in time of peace." And, he adds, the spirit of the wounded men is perfect: it plays its great part in the work of a speedy and permanent recovery, "ce moral, qui est la traduction fidèle et tangible de la vitalité de l'homme." It is not the wounded who are broken-hearted: "le trouble n'est que dans le cœur des mères."

We are thankful to know that the general health of the French Army, and of our own Expeditionary Force, is thoroughly satisfactory. How long this blessing will last we do not know. But we may be quite certain that the Army Medical Services are working day and night for it, not in vain.

General Delorme's paper goes on to consider what more can be done for the wounded. He urges, very justly, that the large proportion of shrapnel-wounds and shell-wounds indicates the advisability of having a rather elaborate field-hospital system, as near the front as may be. Wounds of this kind, of course, are infected from the very moment of their occurrence: and it is a matter of the highest importance that they should be attended to, very thoroughly, at the earliest moment possible. The "first dressing" which may suffice for a cleaner wound, made by a bullet, will not suffice for them. The occasion may require the use of X-rays, the extraction of foreign bodies, the immediate administration of a protective serum or vaccine, and so forth: none of them to be delayed.

In the discussion of this communication the speakers were Laveran, Roux, and Landouzy;

and the discussion was no less interesting than the paper. One, and that the worst, consequence of these infected wounds is, happily, under the control of a protective serum-treatment; and we may be sure that the money to provide that treatment will not be lacking. It is not simply a question of money: it is a question of what can be done, in this colossal fighting, to avoid loss of time in dealing thoroughly with so many infected wounds. As Landouzy says—and it is pleasant for an Englishman to read—"Il faut que, dans les armées des pays de Pasteur et de Lister, la Chirurgie active soit concentrée en partie et résolument vers l'avant, si l'on veut que l'asepsie et l'antisepsie des blessures de guerre soient possibles." STEPHEN PAGET.

THE TRANSIT OF MERCURY ON NOVEMBER 7, 1914.

MERCURY is one of the two planets which revolves round the sun in an orbit smaller than that of our earth, and consequently at a time of inferior conjunction generally passes just to the north or south of the sun. The reason why it does not always pass exactly between the sun and us is because its orbit is inclined at an angle of 7 degrees to the plane of the ecliptic, and the planet is only twice during a revolution at the cutting points or nodes, and is not necessarily at one of these points when passing on the near side of the sun.

When, however, conjunction does occur and the planet is near a node, it is seen to cross the sun as a small black spot, but it requires the use of a telescope to discern it. In May and November of each year the earth passes the nodal points, and it is only during these months that a transit can occur. On November 7 a very favourable transit will take place, and the whole phenomenon from start to finish will be visible from these islands during the interval comprising the two hours on each side of noon. Transits of Mercury are sufficiently rare to attract attention, as only about twelve occur in a century. The last one took place on November 12, 1907, and we shall have to wait until 1924, May 7, before another will be on view.

The planet makes first contact with the sun at 9h. 57m. 15s. on the morning of November 7 at a point on the sun's limb 156° from the north point of the sun counting towards the east. It takes the planet 2m. 14s. to place his whole disc completely on the sun. While it does not actually cross the centre of the solar disc, the time of its least distance from that centre is 12h. 3m. 22s. p.m. At 2h. 7m. 16s. p.m. the planet will have reached the sun's limb again, touching it at a point 255° from the north point, still reckoning in the same direction towards the east; it will take again 2m. 14s. to pass clear of the sun. It should be noted that the above times, although accurate enough for general observers, refer to the phenomenon as observed from the centre of the earth, and not as seen from the earth's surface.