preventive of them. We lost one case recently of this kind, which was a supervention upon measles and some inflammation of the lungs and bron-chia. The child was weaned a short time previous to the attack, and had cut all her teeth. Upon looking at statistics, I find the operation of paracentesis to have saved 10 out of 19 cases, in the practice of an English physician by the name of Conquest. He could not have a better name. The operation was repeated upon some of them, and a large quantity of fluid extracted before effusion ceased, but 10 out of 19 recovered. We cannot but be pleased with the man who thus clearly diagnoses and has the courage to save life by this hazardous means. It is the duty of every physician to resort to the operation. I should consider it no great misfortune to come upon me, if half a dozen such cases died under my care five minutes after the introduction of the trocar, if at length I saved one. It is no mean ground for felicitation, for a man to say that some useful person, perhaps, is indebted to him for his life, which was retained by a manipulation that was liable to bring only a temporary spot upon his reputation. The laity are now quite well acquainted with some symptoms of this fatal disease, and there is not the risk in performing the operation unsuccessfullly that has existed. I have lost a great many children with the disease, and I know it is what perplexes every physician in New England. I have resolved to resort to the operation in proper cases for it, and I submit it for the greater consideration of the profession.

Nantucket, June 26th, 1854. Charles Bell.

MEDICINAL USE OF ALCOHOL.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

Messrs. Editors,—In the Journal of May 31st is a reply to my remarks upon alcohol as a medicine, by Dr. Hall, of Illinois. The Doctor thinks it “improper to introduce moral subjects for discussion in a periodical devoted to matters of a strictly scientific nature.” Does the converse hold true, that it would be unscientific to introduce moral or medico-moral subjects? He asks “if it is not the use of alcohol as a beverage and its consequent abuse, and not its medicinal use, that has done the harm.” This is precisely the same argument held by the advocates of its use as a beverage. “It is the abuse, say they, and not the use of the article that causes all the evils attendant.” But the use cannot be separated from the abuse, either as a beverage or as medicine, more especially as a domestic medicine.

Dr. H. should recollect that alcohol is an article sui generis; that it bears but little analogy to any other article; that opium, approximating the nearest in its effects, has never in a civilized community caused but in a slight degree the moral and physical evils chargeable to alcohol, and that while the latter enters almost universally into our medical prescriptions as well as in innumerable condiments, and the former rarely if ever, we cannot prevent the abuse of alcohol as a medicine without discarding its use.

The Doctor says truly, “no other agent has been so improperly used
Alcohol as a Medicine.

in this country as alcohol”; and I will add there is no other agent in the materia medica that can or is likely to be used so improperly. Dr. Hall would give alcohol to the reformed inebriate if he should deem it proper. I will suppose a case. Dr. H. is called to prescribe for a patient severely ill. The Doctor has a powerful poison which he can administer, not with impunity, but with some prospect of temporary relief. Yet the Doctor is fully aware that if he does give the poison he will excite or continue a latent morbid appetite which the patient has for that poison, and which appetite he has not the moral power to resist, but will ultimately resort to that poison to complete his destruction. Will Dr. H. prescribe the poison unhesitatingly? Or will the Doctor amputate a limb which may give a few minutes relief from pain, with a full knowledge that in a few hours his patient must die?

It is a new doctrine to me, if we are to prescribe temporarily for our patients, regardless of future consequences.

Dr. H. lays down his hypothesis very plainly, that “all medicines in health invariably do harm, but in disease are beneficial.” All medicines, then, are specific, or we are reduced to the theory of nostrum-mongers who say “they can do no harm if they do no good,” and we are gravely told by Dr. H. that all medicines not only do no harm in disease, but are beneficial.

I cannot concur with Dr. H. that “all medicines when used in health invariably do harm.” Are there not many articles recommended in health as well as disease, which do not do harm—such as garden rhubarb, cranberries, various greens, coffee and tea, milk, &c?

My object in writing, Messrs. Editors, is not hypercriticism, but chiefly to extend discussion upon an important subject affecting physicians and patients; and I think the profession cannot but perceive that while alcoholic prescriptions are so universal, and while it is recommended for a domestic medicine, it will continue to be used as a beverage and its lamentable effects will follow. Why not say, then, “if meat maketh my brother to offend, I will eat no more meat while the world standeth.”

Albion, Me., June 26th, 1854.

A. P. FULLER.

ALCOHOL AS A MEDICINE.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

Messrs. Editors,—We have been interested and amused with the discussion on the use of alcohol as a medicine going on through your pages. That the use of alcohol as a beverage is pernicious, no sane physician in this nineteenth century denies; but that because it is pernicious as a beverage, it should never be used medicinally, is the question now under discussion. The argument that its use should be discarded because it rouses a dormant appetite, would be potent, if true. Admitting that it does in some instances, and that serious injury is done by its administration in the form of tinctures, these cases seem to be only exceptions to the general rule; and does not the argument apply with equal force to the use of opium? How many physicians besides Dr. Gilman