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THE DIFFERENT MODES OF TREATING DISEASE, OR THE DIFFERENT ACTION OF MEDICINE ON THE SYSTEM IN AN ABNORMAL STATE.

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It is generally admitted that while great advance has been made in Pathology during the present century, a corresponding improvement has not been made in Therapeutics. Some valuable articles have been added to the *materia medica*; the constituents of several medicines, and the physiological effects of many more, have been ascertained. In the use of medicine, the knowledge attained has been negative; that is, physicians have ascertained what medicine cannot do, rather than what it can do. The principles to guide the physician in the administration of medicine have undergone no material change since the days of Cullen. From the time of Hippocrates to the close of the 17th century, the human system was regarded as a hydraulic machine, or as a chemical laboratory, governed by mechanical or chemical laws. Disease consisted in certain changes in the blood, and the design of medicine was to restore the blood to a healthy state.

Stahl effected a great change in the science of medicine, by directing the attention of physicians to the study of the vital powers. Hoffman, and still more Cullen, made further advances in the same direction. According to Cullen, most medicines affect the system by impressions made on the nerves of the stomach; but he allowed that some medicines of minor importance operate by chemical action. The same opinions are held at the present day. It is evident that the attention of most authors of our own times has been directed chiefly to the dynamic action of medicine, while their chemical action has attracted but little attention. I hope to be able to show, before I close this paper, that there are reasons for regarding some of our most valuable medicines as chemical in their primary action.

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I begin with the statement, that all treatment of disease has for its object, 1st, a direct change in the dynamic powers, or in the tissues which are the laboratories of those powers, with a view of restoration to health or alleviation of suffering; or, 2d, a direct chemical change in the blood or tissues, and indirectly a change in the dynamic powers, with a view to restoration to health or alleviation of suffering. We have thus two classes of medical treatment—1st, the dynamic treatment; 2d, the chemical treatment.

1st. The dynamic treatment is that, as I have already intimated, which has occupied the attention of physicians of modern times; and it is by the direct exercise of the dynamic powers that nature effects her cures. Taking nature for our guide, we shall find that she adopts different modes to relieve disease; sometimes by increasing the natural excretions, chiefly from the skin, the mucous membrane of the air passages and the kidneys, and more rarely by the intestines; sometimes by an extraordinary or preternatural discharge, as hæmorrhage from the nose or womb; and sometimes by exciting another disease in another part. Giving to the self-healing powers a place by themselves, we shall have four kinds of treatment under the dynamic class. 1st, the autopathic; 2d, the homeopathic; 3d, the antipathic; 4th, the allopathic.

1st. The autopathic treatment. Autopathic, from *Αυτός*, self, and *Πάθος*; disease cured by itself. This is "nature curing disease," synonymous with the expectant treatment of the French. The collection of symptoms by which we designate the existence of a special disease, particularly febrile and inflammatory affections, are evidently nothing more than the manifestation of the efforts being made by nature to restore the system to health. In the autopathic treatment everything is left to nature, without any attempt to aid or control it by medicine. In this treatment everything which can excite, irritate or disturb the system, must be avoided. The voluntary muscles must be freed from all effort, and an uniform warmth of the body maintained; the senses must be at rest, and the mind tranquil; the drinks mild, and as abundant as may be desired; the food sufficient in quantity, and of a quality to support the system, at the same time free from anything which may disturb the digestive organs or quicken the circulation. Such is, briefly, the autopathic treatment, and which requires nearly as much the watchfulness of the physician, as when the patient is daily drugged. If we except the exanthemata, it is not often that a case of acute disease occurs, in which this treatment is strictly adhered to. More frequently an emetic or cathartic is given at the outset, and often interposed in the course of the disease; or injections are given, baths, sponging with water, are used, or an anodyne administered at night. Consequently, little opportunity is obtained in this country, especially in private practice, to contrast this mode of practice with others. I would also remark, in this connection, that this treatment is also applicable to other cases of acute disease, in which medicines are used.

2d. Homœopathic treatment. From "*ὅμοιος* and *πάθος* ; literally, disease cured by like or similar disease. More freely, disease cured by medicines producing symptoms like to those produced by the disease itself. In this paper, the term will be used to comprehend all medicines which coöperate with nature to restore, through the natural excretions, the system from an abnormal to a normal state. The common view of homœopathy is, that it consists in treating disease with doses of medicine of infinite minuteness. This is Hahnemannism, not essentially homœopathy. The essential feature of homœopathy is not in the size of the dose, but in the power of medicine to aid nature in her curative efforts. With this view of homœopathy, all physicians adopt it in their practice. For instance, a patient is suffering from nausea and ineffectual efforts to vomit, owing to some offending substance in the stomach. We aid these efforts by giving warm water, or, if needed, by giving ipecacuanha in doses sufficient to vomit. This is homœopathic treatment. The bowels are disturbed by the presence of some offending substance. Ineffectual efforts are made to relieve them, as is manifested by rumbling and frequent small discharges. A cathartic is given, and the bowels are relieved. This is homœopathic treatment.

Again, a woman is in travail. Everything is favorable for delivery but the want of pains. Ergot is given, the womb is excited, and the child is born. This is homœopathic treatment. In these cases medicine aids the efforts of nature. In other words, the efforts of nature and the action of the medicine are similar. In the cases mentioned, large doses of medicine are usually required. On the other hand, I am persuaded that medicines which in large doses produce certain symptoms, will, in smaller doses, relieve the same symptoms, when produced by disease or disordered action. For instance :—nausea will sometimes be relieved by small doses of ipecacuanha ; colocynth, which in large doses will produce colic pains, in smaller doses will relieve the same symptoms ; corrosive sublimate, which in large doses will produce griping with tenesmus, frequent and small discharges of a dysenteric character—in minute doses is a medicine of great value in some forms of dysentery. Let me not be misunderstood. It is not my intention to attempt to defend homœopathy as a system complete in itself, and able to encounter disease in all its forms, nor is it my intention to advocate the use of infinitesimal doses. I am sensible of the extravagance of homœopathy as taught by Hahnemann, and as still practised by the strictest of his disciples. Still I am persuaded that there is great value in the homœopathic treatment, considered as I have defined it, as one mode of treating disease, and consequently limited in its application. I speak from experience, and can confidently say that I am not much more sure that ipecacuanha will vomit, or colocynth purge, or opium produce sleep ; I am not more sure of the efficacy of calomel in the treatment of syphilis, or of cinchona in the treatment of intermittents, than I am of the efficacy of the more important of the homœopathic medi-

cines in the treatment of diseases to which they are applicable; not in infinitesimal doses, but in doses much smaller than are usually supposed to have effect.*

In making the foregoing statement, I know that I am placing myself in opposition to a great majority of the profession, and in opposition to gentlemen, to whose opinions I have been accustomed to yield my own. But neither the weight of talents, of character or numbers, can cause me to yield the evidence of my own senses. I say what I know to be the truth, when I state that many diseases of a grave character, including most of the inflammatory affections of the chest and abdomen, and some functional derangements of the digestive organs, constituting a large portion of the cases that daily come under the cognizance of the physician, can be treated with success by the homœopathic mode.

The principle of the homœopathic doctrine having been confounded with the absurdities of the Hahnemannian practice, has not received that consideration which it deserves. I believe it presents a valuable truth, entitled to serious attention. There are two important propositions that I will present in this place.

1st. No two diseases of a similar character can exist in the system at the same time. This doctrine was taught by John Hunter, and is sustained by several facts. Examples of the same kind have been produced by other physicians.

2d. All medicines introduced into the system produce disease, some affecting a single organ, or set of organs, and being of short duration, such as ipecacuanha and castor oil; others affecting the whole system and being of longer continuance, such as opium, arsenic, mercury.

To my mind, these two propositions are of great significance. In the present imperfect state of our knowledge, it cannot be said, *a priori*, from the known symptoms or disease produced by any medicine, that this artificial disease will certainly destroy or displace another natural disease of similar symptoms. But from the laws of similar diseases, so far as they are known, it is a fair presumption that such an occurrence will sometimes take place.

In support of this opinion, I can adduce the observations of some of the most distinguished physicians, showing that the same medicines when used in excess, or in large quantities, will produce the same symptoms which, in smaller quantities, they are effectual in removing. As an example, I will mention mercury. Abernethy says, "We see the biliary secretions corrected by a few grains of mercury." "But in larger doses it never fails to irritate and weaken the constitution, and thus disorders the digestive organs." "Persons who are salivated have, as far as I have observed, the functions

* The most important of the homœopathic remedies here referred to are aconite, belladonna, bryonia, ipecacuanha, nux vomica, mercury, pulsatilla, veratrum. All of these, excepting mercury, I use in the form of tinctures, in doses of from half a drop to two drops. Of mercury I use the crude article triturated with sugar of milk, in proportion of ten grains of mercury to ninety grains of the sugar; of this preparation I use from two to ten grains. This will be found a very valuable medicine in aphthæ of the mouth, in some ulcerations of the throat, and in many of the bowel affections of children.

of the liver and digestive organs disturbed by that process." "I cannot but think it wrong to use mercury in hepatic affections to that extent which would disorder the functions of the liver if they were previously healthy. I have known many cases, where the liberal use of mercury has completely failed, in which the functions of the liver were, even in a short space of time, restored by alterative doses of that medicine." Dr. Chapman, of Philadelphia, says that "he had seen two cases of jaundice developed during a protracted salivation for syphilis," and also states that Dr. Cheyne had noticed the same fact. The testimony of other physicians to the same effect might be produced, but what I have stated is sufficient for my purpose.*

Arsenic: there is good authority for the use of this medicine in various diseases of the skin, for which purpose it was used by Tweedie, Eberle and Dewees. Dr. Johnson, of the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, says that "a vesicular eruption is a very common effect of the use of arsenic." The same author says, that "of all the vesicular eruptions, certain chronic and obstinate forms of eczema of the scrotum, labia, and margin of the anus, are those in which arsenical medicines are most frequently and successfully employed." Another effect attributed to arsenic, when given during health, is the scaling of the skin, and falling off of the hair and nails. Pereira says of it, "When used in various chronic affections of the skin, particularly in scaly diseases, arsenic is one of our most valuable agents. I can confidently recommend it in lepra, having seen a large number of cases treated by it without a single failure."

Tartrate of Antimony is generally admitted to have power in pneumonia. Magendie tried the effect of this medicine on dogs. From his experiments, it appears that its principal action is on the intestinal canal and lungs. Nausea, vomiting, alvine evacuations, and difficulty of respiration, were produced by injecting it into the veins, as well as by introducing it into the stomach. Traces of pneumonic gastritis and enteritis were found after death. Magendie ascribes to it a specific power of producing engorgement or inflammation of the lungs. Moreover, it is said that the same effects have been observed in the human pulmonary organs. A case is referred to by Orfila, where a man died of apoplexy, but who, within five days of his death, had taken forty grains of tartar emetic. In his lungs were observed very irregular blackish spots, which extended more or less deeply into the parenchyma of the lungs.

Enough has been said to show that some medicines, given in small doses, cure the very diseases which they produce in larger doses. In support of this doctrine, I have produced mercury in certain diseases of the liver, arsenic in some diseases of the skin, and tartrate of antimony in diseases of the lungs; as I presume that the profession, generally, are agreed in respect to the efficacy of these

* For the above references and those which follow, I am indebted to an article published by Dr. Peters, of New York, in an early number of the *Homœopathic Journal*, entitled "Gleanings."

medicines respectively, in the diseases above named. I have said enough to show that the doctrine is not without support. For myself, I am persuaded that it is a valuable truth, and that it is the only satisfactory explanation that can be given of the operation of some of our most valuable medicines. Let us compare this explanation with two others of the action of medicines which are most common.

1st. A very common explanation of the action of medicines, is that which attributes to them a power of controlling the action of the heart. We often see expressions of this sort, "the medicine seemed to control the action of the heart; the pulse diminished in frequency and force." This explanation is very common. Indeed, it would seem that physicians regard the heart in the organic, as certainly it is in the spiritual system, as desperately wicked, and the occult cause of a multitude of depraved actions; and if the heart can be kept within its lawful limits, everything else will go right. But is this a correct explanation? Is the proximate course of any disease to be found in the organic action of the heart? I think not. On the other hand, the capillary system is undoubtedly the ostensible seat of all inflammatory diseases, and indeed of all diseases which are attended with increased action of the heart. The action of the heart is evidently secondary, or sympathetic. Consequently, medicine, if ever beneficial, in such cases must act first on the seat of the disease, or the capillary system; and the improvement in the action of the heart is secondary or consequential. Thus we see that this popular view of the action of medicine is entirely hypothetical, unsustained by facts. Pereira very justly says, "When we attentively watch the effects of medicines, it will become manifest that few of them excite or depress merely."

2d. Another common explanation of the action of medicines is, that they cause an altered action in the parts affected, and are therefore called alterative. Undoubtedly this is true. Medicines that produce any benefit must do this by producing altered action in the affected parts. All disease is altered action. All recovery from disease is altered action. All disease is vital action altered from normal to abnormal, and recovery is the reverse; and consequently, all medicine which aids in recovery must do it by producing altered action. But in this term altered action, do we find anything more than the expression of a fact, without any explanation of it? Pereira has been regarded by the profession as eminently a practical writer. His work on therapeutics is rich in facts drawn from all sources, without partiality to any particular system or mode of practice. In closing this part of my paper, I cannot do better than by giving the following quotations from his valuable work. "Stimulant washes," he says, "applied to the eye, sometimes cure ophthalmia. They operate, apparently, by altering the morbid action, and substituting a milder and more easily-cured disease for the one previously existing." And again, he says, "let us discard absurd hypothesis.

and for the present be content with the knowledge of the fact, that one disease, whether artificially or spontaneously generated, will often, not invariably, supersede another." I accept the whole of this passage as expressive of more than one important truth. "Not invariably" do medicines produce the effect here ascribed to them, is quite as much a truth as that they "often" do; as nature adopts different modes of relieving disease, so must the physician; and this leads me to my third division of dynamic treatment.

[To be continued.]

RULES FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF IRIDECTORY IN GLAUCOMA.

[Translated, with remarks, for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, by HASKET DERBY, M.D.]

MANY inquiries having been recently made of me as to the proper method of performing iridectomy in glaucoma, I feel that I can do no better than to state, in his own words, a few of the principles that Professor von Graefe has laid down for the guidance of others. I will merely premise that by "external incision" is meant the cut made by the lance knife in piercing the sclerotic, and by "internal incision" the cut made at its emergence into the anterior chamber.

"1. The incisions must be disposed as excentrically as possible, so that the external incision be made in the sclerotic about half a line from the edge of the cornea, and the internal incision directly in the line of junction of the cornea and sclerotic. It is thus rendered possible to remove the iris up to its ciliary insertion, and it appears that this is necessary to, and at any rate ensures, the result. Inasmuch, moreover, as the accompanying mydriasis narrows the width of the iris, any deviation of the internal incision from the periphery of the cornea would materially diminish the size of the excised portion.

"2. As large a piece of the iris as possible must be excised, on which account either a very broad lance knife must be employed, or an ordinary one must be made to enter more deeply. This operation is in this respect quite different from the usual one for artificial pupil, such as would, for example, be performed in the case of a leucoma adhærens, where, as is well known, optical reasons cause us to prefer a pupil of small size. But the more extensive the glaucomatous process, the more marked the increase of intra-ocular pressure, the larger the portion of iris I recommend excising. The point to be selected for performing the operation is naturally immaterial. I generally excise the iris inwards; should, however, a regard for appearances dispose us to be especially scrupulous, the excision may be made upwards. The age of the patient, however, generally renders this consideration unnecessary, besides which I consider an opening in the iris made inwards of little consequence, and certainly hardly perceptible in dark eyes. The operation for removing an upper portion of the iris is, moreover, inconvenient,