

An anti-calomel lecture : being the substance of an address written by appointment of the Medical Association of Meigs County, Ohio : to have been delivered before said society at its annual meeting held in Pomeroy, Ohio, May 20th, 1854, at 10 o'clock, A.M., but was prevented by peculiar circumstances / by William N. Hudson.

Contributors

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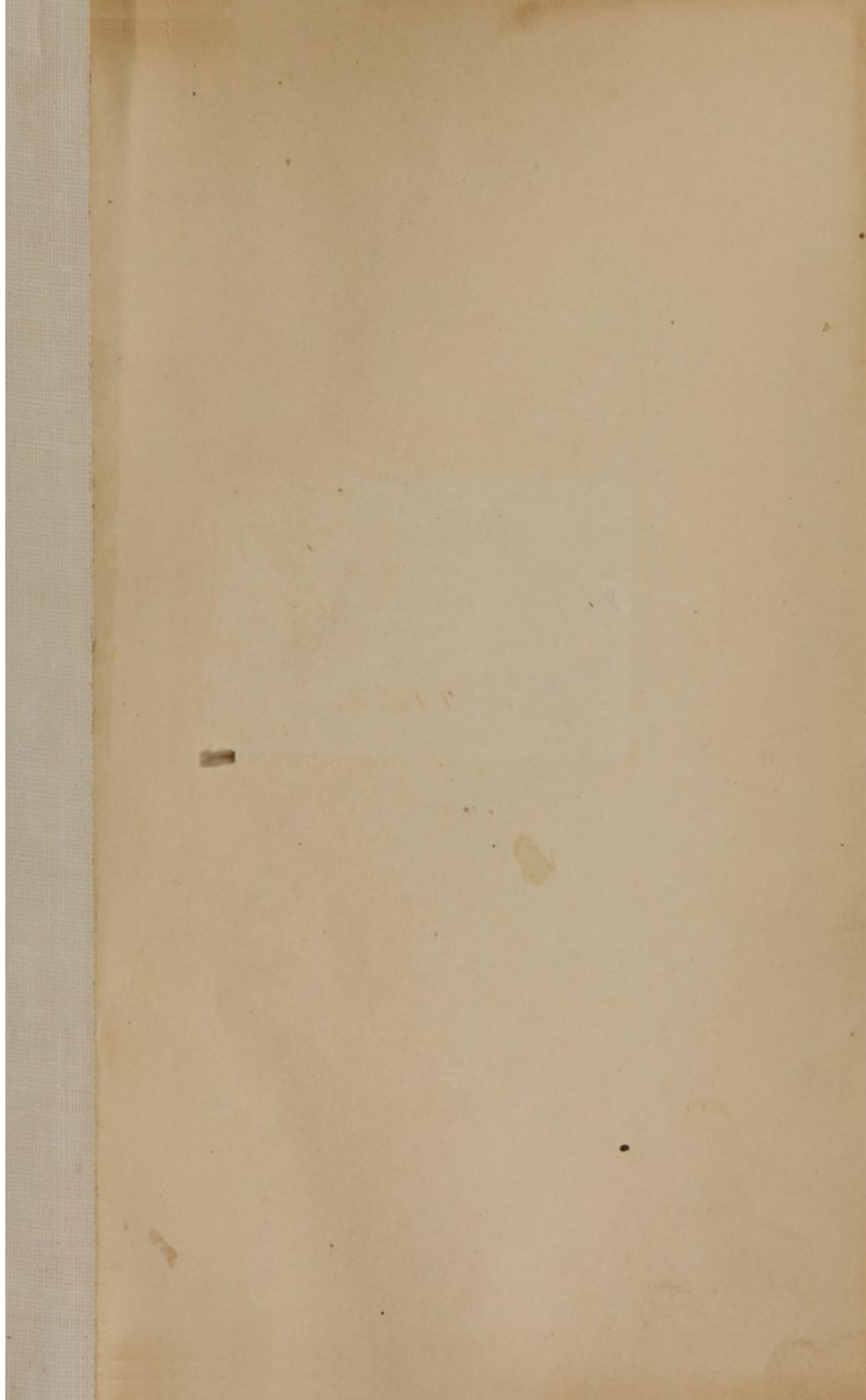
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AN

ANTI-CALOMEL LECTURE;

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF AN ADDRESS, WRITTEN BY APPOINTMENT OF THE

MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF MEIGS COUNTY, OHIO;

TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED BEFORE SAID SOCIETY, AT ITS

Annual Meeting,

Held in Pomeroy, Ohio, May 20th, 1854, at 10 o'clock, A. M.;

BUT WAS PREVENTED BY PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES.

BY

WILLIAM N. HUDSON, M. D.

"Truth is mighty, and will prevail."

21193
Washington, D. C.
POMEROY, OHIO.

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1854.

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1854.

ANTI-CALOMEL LECTURE.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDICAL FACULTY:—Agreeably to appointment, I appear before you, at this time, to make my apology for discontinuing the use of mercury, or any of its preparations, in my medical prescriptions. This reasonable request of my medical brethren I cheerfully obey; not, however, expecting that offering a few of the reasons, which satisfy myself, that the use of calomel and its kindred of the family of Ilydrargyrus, in their varied forms that have been, with the most honest and benevolent intentions, introduced into the human system, under the supposed idea of their curative virtues have, on the whole, done more harm than good; however well I am myself satisfied of the fact, after more than forty years' conversance with the healing art.

But though I may fail in bringing over my brethren generally, to the acknowledgement of my views, I think I shall at least get them to award to me that, which I most cordially reciprocate to them respectively, that is, honesty of purpose, in each one pursuing that mode of practice, which, according to his best means of information, his conscience dictates. I think, Sir, I shall also be the occasion of putting at least some of my brethren upon their guard in respect to the habitual administration of what I esteem, on the whole, one of the most destructive poisons in the material world, especially because of its habitual and general use.

When, in the year 1816, I commenced the practice of medicine, in this State of Ohio, and was licensed to poison men, women and children according to law *et secundem artem*, I entertained the highest expectations from the use of the lancet, opium, antimony and mercury, especially the latter; I even supposed calomel to be useful in a large majority of the diseases which afflict the human family, though not serious in their nature; and that it was indispensable in all violent cases, high fevers, visceral obstructions and most chronic affections; for, although most of the books, and some of our medical teachers, especially Dr. Chapman, warned us of some occasional untoward effects, following the use of these poisonous minerals, I still hoped and even believed that those evil consequences were *only* occasional, and as I supposed, from some in-

attention or error connected with their administration, and trusted that all bad consequences might, by care, be easily obviated; and, inasmuch, as I then supposed, its exhibition was *absolutely* necessary to the successful treatment of almost all serious complaints, concluded that we must be content to put up with some inconveniences, when to be counterbalanced with so much real good, as I then expected, from the use of these substances, which I then, and for many years after, considered medicines; and, in consequence, I have, in the course of my practice, dealt out many pounds of calomel and other mercurials, how many now I could not tell, neither is it of any moment; hereafter, with my present views of their destructiveness, I shall use no more, except with the view of *destroying* life, exterior to the human system, as rats, mice and smaller animals. For, since my gradual, but, I think, very thorough medical conversion, I could no more consciously administer calomel, blue pill, tartarised antimony in emetic doses, or the "Sampson doses" of the "Sampson" medicines generally, than Paul could conscientiously persecute Christians after his extraordinary visit to Damascus.

One reason, Mr. President, why I continued the use of mercurials so long, was possibly the same which actuates some of my medical brethren at present, that is, the force of habit: we are told, truly too, sir, that "education forms the mind," and that "it is hard to learn old animals new tricks," however this may be with others, it has unquestionably had a good measure of truth in my case. Another reason may have been, that I found myself in so good company, being encouraged by the uniform practice of my brethren; we are all aware, sir, how much we are apt to conform to our associates.

I had not, however, been long in practice before I began to discover, by painful ocular demonstration, the uncertainty of the effects of calomel, as well as other substances, used as medicines, upon the human system, and these manifestations have increased with my own practice and that of my medical brethren; to go into a detail of them all, would require volumes of paper and weeks of time; I will mention a few, and I presume the recollection of my observing brethren will supply to their

minds a large number of additional facts of a similar nature, which to me at least, if not to them, evinces the uncertainty of the effect of mercurials upon the human system, and the often unlooked for and more unwelcome symptoms, evidently arising from their use.

But to the few cases. I shall name :

1st, J. I., a hard laboring, robust man, of about 26 years, of a costive habit, called on me one day, for something to regulate his bowels. I gave him some cathartic pills, containing a portion of calomel. In a few days, I was called on to do something to obviate its effects upon his mouth, which had become very sore. After weeks of intense suffering, and profuse salivation, with the loss of a number of his teeth at the time, and the remainder afterward, he got about, was able to perform some labor, but was never, as I should judge, the same man afterward.

2d, Mrs. C. E., a lady of about 22, though not so robust an individual as the former, was under similar circumstances, operated upon in like manner and remained very feeble, as long as I was acquainted with her.

3rd, Miss A. N., aged about 14, laboring under general fever, and peritoneal inflammation; and in which, according to the foolish custom of those times, I wished to see the system affected by mercury, I gave calomel in regular and often repeated doses, and applied strong mercurial ointment at the same time, and all for about a week; the whole was well retained, but had no manifest effect whatever at the time. She was married a few years afterward, but has ever lived a sterile lady of feeble health.

4th, At the identical time of the last named case, Mrs. L. R. was lying much enfeebled with previous disease, and considerable medication; and, wishing to give her a cathartic, I could not think of anything that would be more likely to agree with her irritable stomach than a dose of calomel, which I exhibited, without any adjuvant, at 10 o'clock at night. Very early the next morning, (it was in the month of August,) I found her *severely* salivated, with swelled tongue, which continued a number of weeks and, with her previous weakness, occasioned me, as well as her friends, not a little anxiety and the most diligent attention. But she lived, to be a burden to herself and friends, and one more witness of the often unexpected, unintentional, but very distressing effects of a single dose of calomel.

5th, Not far from the same time, in a case of violent constipation, in consultation with the late Dr. D., of G. County, O., case of Mrs. S. In the course of two days we administered more than two ounces of calomel, besides using a great variety of other cathartic medicines in large doses, and using the other means then common in cases of violent constipation. We stated, between ourselves, that if she lived, she would be likely to have ptyalism that would be hard to control, and probably hypercatharsis to boot. But we were

happily disappointed, for she lived, and I believe still lives, had no indication of salivation and, though her bowels were, in the course of a few days, *moved*, were not purged according to the usual acceptation of that term.

I presume the brethren present will recollect reading the report of cholera cases of Dr. Cook, in 1833, in which he administered to the same patient, table-spoonful doses of calomel; and, where his patients recovered, for some did recover, some were moderately salivated, some violently and some not at all,—evincing, as has all my observations, the entire uncertainty of the effects of the medicine under consideration.

6th, In 1818, I was desired to investigate the case of D. D., Esq., about 40 years of age, who had at that time, according to his statement, for upward of twenty years, been afflicted with a necrotic state of the tibia and ulceration of the super incumbent integuments, ever supposed to be the effect of mercurials administered in his younger years; various physicians, he states, of Philadelphia and of the State of Delaware, had made unsuccessful attempts to arrest its progress. I did not attempt the case myself, he being a cripple in consequence; and holding the office of Justice of the Peace till the day of his death, at about 50, it gave an opportunity for hundreds, if not thousands, who called at his office on business, to experience the unpleasant, but unmistakable mercurial odor.

A few years ago, as I was passing through G— county, in this State, I learned that Dr. P. had been immersed in two thousand dollars damages, by the Court of Common Pleas, for that county, in consequence of an unfortunate and, no doubt, unlooked for subsequentia to the administration of calomel, which he had prescribed. I believe the verdict was wrong, for I suppose it was administered *secundum artem*. The Dr. appealed the case, but how it was decided in the higher Court I never learned. In this case, the patient lived, but lived only to suffer and to be a terror to herself and her associates.

But let me ask, and it is a solemn question. How many to whom the medicine, (so called,) has been given, have *not lived* to tell the sad after tale, but which misfortune, to call the circumstance by no harder name, the cold clods have covered from human view?

I have been told, sir, by a member of this society, that a prominent professor, in one of the medical Schools of Philadelphia, stated that he had never witnessed any unpleasant effects from the exhibition of calomel, notwithstanding his high station. I must say, sir, he has had or seen very little practice, or he has been very blind, or very fortunate—more fortunate than most of the members of this society—for who, among us, have not seen teeth destroyed, maxillary and other bones of the face and head, as well as of other parts of the body, rendered necrotic, carious or fragile, and the health of the individual injured for life, and who are easily salivated at any sub-

sequent period of life, by the most minute dose of mercury. If my brethren have never witnessed any of these effects, following the use of the medicine, I must say, sir, they have been most fortunate, more so than even the laity.

I am at this day acquainted with a considerable number of persons, of different ages, and both sexes, having formerly been mercurialized, who, upon the slightest indisposition, (and such are, and must be frequently complaining,) state that they can taste the mercury, some such will experience more or less salivation, even without additional mercury, or medicine of any kind, and upon the slightest addition of any mercurials are profusely salivated.

An acquaintance of mine, Esq. S., of P— Co., for seven or eight months, (after the subsidence of a fever, for which he had been thoroughly mercurialized,) remained exceedingly feeble in both body and mind. He was finally advised, by the late Dr. A. W—, to take a minute portion of the *sulphur sublimatum*, once or twice a day. In about 2 weeks a salivation commenced and continued most profuse for 6 weeks or more and subsided.— He was somewhat improved, but never during the remainder of his life, some 10 to 12 years, was he able to attend to business.

And here, sir, I would suggest whether it is not probable, that close observation would lead at least to the strong appearance of possibility, that, although some of the medicinal "sampsons," and calomel in particular, may and do, for the time being, have the appearance of curing many acute diseases, whether, even in those cases of *apparent* good, they do not, in fact, merely *alter* the state of diseased action, and thus produce life-long *chronic* diseases of the bones, and various other tissues of the animal economy?

And here, sir, I would state another case:— I was called, in the dead of night, to assist Dr. F. to replace (as was stated) a dislocated hip-joint of an elderly lady who had, in early life, been thoroughly mercurialized, and had been steadily running down for a number of years, and "bed rid" for about 2 or 3 years, only rising once or twice in 24 hours, to have her bed adjusted. The accident happened as she was passing from her arm-chair to her bed, leaning upon her daughter. Upon investigation, it was found, instead of a dislocation, to be a fracture of the thigh bone, in consequence of *Fragilitas ossium*. She survived about two weeks after this occurrence.

The members of this society may recollect reading an account of a case that happened, not long since, in one of the London hospitals, of a lady supposed to be recovering from a disease for which she had been treated with calomel, and while sitting up in bed, eating a bowl of broth, her head fell suddenly forward, and she instantly expired. A *post-mortem* investigation disclosed, to the satisfaction of the attending physicians, that the mercury had combined with the odontoid process, of the

second cervical vertebrae, and so destroyed its texture that it was unable to sustain the weight of the head.

Another case of *Fragilitas ossium*, of which I have been informed, happened in the adjoining county of Athens, not many years since. A gentleman while sitting in his chair, in the act of throwing one of his lower extremities across the other, fractured the body of the thigh bone. I state briefly the facts, as I heard them, not having the whole history of the case.

We are persuaded, sir, that every effect has a cause; and this disease, *Fragilitas ossium*, (or brittleness of the bones,) is, I believe, peculiar to the human family; and, like many other ailments peculiar to man, must have a cause or causes which operate upon man, that do not affect other animals; and may we not suppose that these causes are the unphysiological habits of man, in the various items of food, drinks, exercise, medication, &c., including all the wrong habits, the most of which are fostered by what is considered civilized life, and especially this now under consideration, the brittleness of the bones? And inasmuch as the animals and man, in a state of nature, are nearly or quite free from this disease, and inasmuch as one of the acknowledged effects of mercurial medicines is to destroy the vital texture of the jaws, skull, and other bones; and inasmuch, also, as these effects were seldom heard of, before the introduction of the various preparations of mercury, into the materia medica, by Paracelsus, about 330 years ago—that is, about the year 1520—and are increasing, in proportion to the growing use of calomel, blue pill, &c., have we not good reason to conclude that a very large majority of the cases of *Fragilitas ossium*, as well as a vast number of other chronic affections, are the consequence of mercurial preparations, introduced into the animal economy under a false idea of their curative virtues?

And here, sir, permit me to propound another important question for the future investigation of physicians, and others; it is this:— Whether a large majority of the chronic diseases, (and a most fearful catalogue is exhibited,) are not the consequence of erroneous habits of diet, regimen, and medication, too often prescribed, indulged, or encouraged, by professed practitioners of the healing art?

Having, sir, by way of introduction, mentioned but a small proportion of the cases of the prejudicial effects of mercury, that have come under my own observation and knowledge, in the course of about forty years experience, I shall take the liberty to quote the opinions and observations of a few noted medical men, both of this and the eastern continent, either in their own words, or in substance, interspersing occasional remarks of my own.

And first, Hooper says: "Mercury is carried into the system in the same way as other substances—either absorbed from the surface &c

the body, or that of the alimentary canal; it cannot, however, in all cases, in both ways;" and he might have added, in either way, so awfully forbidding is it to the animal economy, in some instances, "at least, no effect is apparently produced; in many persons, the bowels can hardly bear mercury at all. When it can be thrown into the constitution by the skin, it is the better way, because the skin is not so essential to life as the stomach, and the constitution is less injured;" admitting, of course, that it must be injured. He says, further:—"Many courses of mercury would kill the patient." Now, sir, if a plurality of courses would kill, by parity of reasoning, one course, or one dose, will help to kill; and, if killing is the legitimate object of medical prescriptions, let us give mercury "to kill." Further on, he says: "It occasions a fever, and acts like a poison." Now, sir, if it acts like a poison, what does it differ from a poison?—And again, who can tell upon what constitution it will act as a poison? Then why try the experiment? He says, again: "In some, it produces a hectic fever." I recollect, sir, that Dr. Chapman, in his lectures, said that this was its usual effect in all pulmonics, accelerating Phthisis Pulmonalis oftentimes with most alarming rapidity; and this I believe to be the experience of all observing medical men; for, says he, again: "Mercury often produces pains, like those of Rheumatism, and nodes of a scrofulous nature." Now, sir, since scrofulous diseases have become so very rife, why add to their frequency and fatality, by persisting in the use of this "poison?"—Again, says he: "Mercury occasionally attacks the bowels, and causes violent purging, even of blood. At other times, it is suddenly determined to the mouth, producing inflammation, ulceration, and mortification." And, sir, does not this coincide with the experience of us all, proving the often uncertain and poisonous effects of mercury?

Next, Neligan, after speaking of the mercurial palsy, or what the French call *tremblement metalique*, says: "Individuals are met with, in whom almost the minutest dose of ANY preparation of mercury will produce the most violent salivation; while, on the other hand, some persons appear to be totally insensible to the operation of the drug."

This leads me, sir, to compare the case of Mr. S., of Cincinnati, who stated to me that he was most severely salivated by taking a few Homoeopathic pellets, with that of Mrs. S., of G— county, before mentioned, who took more than two ounces of calomel, from my hand, without any apparent effect. But N. further states, that, as the effect of a profuse mercurial salivation, "a frightful train of symptoms, in MANY instances followed by death itself, is the result." And again: "The effects of mercury are sometimes accompanied by a peculiarly alarming state, described by Mr. Pearson, under the name of *Mercurial crethism*. It is characterized by great depression of strength, a sense of anxiety about the

Precordia, frequent sighing, trembling, partial or universal, a small, quick, sometimes intermitting pulse, occasional vomiting, a pale, contracted countenance, a sense of coldness, &c. When these, or a greater part of these symptoms are present, a sudden exertion of the animal powers, such as rising up in bed, will often prove fatal. The use of this mineral is also attended with, or followed by, several forms of diseases of the skin; of these, the most important is *mercurial eczema*, which often occurs, when only a very small portion of a mercurial preparation has been taken. It frequently assumes a severe character. When it is ushered in with fever, difficult respiration, dry cough, and tightness across the chest, with a general smarting, and burning feel of the skin, over the whole body. These symptoms are soon followed by an eruption of minute vesicles, which break, and discharge a very fetid fluid; as the disease advances, it increases in severity, the eruption extends over the face and the whole of the body, which become covered with incrustations; the fever assumes a typhoid type, the difficulty of breathing increases, and is accompanied with bloody expectoration, spots of *purpura* appear, and death ensues, preceded by delirium and convulsions."

Dr. Hamilton, of Edinburgh, says: "Among the numerous poisons that have been used, there are but few which possess more active, and, of course, more dangerous powers, than mercury; even the simplest and mildest forms of that mineral exert a most extensive influence over the human frame; and many of its preparations are so deleterious, that, in the smallest doses, they speedily destroy life."

Dr. Falconer, of Bath, gives, in effect, the same testimony. "When the effects of mercury upon the human system are accurately investigated, and duly considered, it cannot fail to appear, that infinite injury must accrue from its use." Now, sir, if it is so, and I believe it is, why use it?

Says Dr. Beach: "In detailing the changes produced upon the system by preparations of mercury, it is unnecessary to premise the well known fact, that there are some individuals on whom the medicines, though continued for a considerable length of time, have little or no perceptible influence; and other constitutions, where a few grains will prove fatal. Preparations of mercury, exhibited either internally or externally, for any length of time, increase, in general, the action of the heart and arteries, and produce salivation, followed by emaciation and debility, with an extremely irritable state of the whole system; these effects are expressly mentioned, or virtually admitted, by every author, ancient and modern, who have directed its use. Blood drawn from the most delicate and debilitated individual, while under the influence of mercury, exhibits the same buffy coat with that drawn from a pleuritic patient, and the strength of the person rapidly declines. It appears, therefore, that the increased action of the heart and arteries,

excited by mercurials, produces not only the same injurious effects upon the body, with those arising from inflammation, [produced by other causes,] but also certain effects peculiar to itself." Thus,

Dr. Carmichael says: "Mercury induces a specific fever, different from all others, and attended with an increase of various secretions, the health is rapidly undermined, and if there be any ulcerations, in any part of the body, they *must* certainly degenerate into malignant sores, as blistered surfaces and wounds mortify, in cases where the living powers are much exhausted."

Mr. Matthews has unquestionably shown "That certain changes upon ulcerations, originally syphilitic, and certain derangements of health occur, whenever mercury has been administered in too acrid a form, or in too large quantity." And his remarks are confirmed by all experience. But the question is, how are we to know *a priori*—how much, and how strong doses to give?

Mr. M. *imagines* that the action of the "medicament" is peculiar to those apparent cases. But, sir, may we not rather conclude that it is merely an *excessive degree*, and not any peculiar action? For "it is a well known fact, that exposure to cold, bodily fatigue, irregularities in diet, and particularly indulgences in intoxicating liquors, have aggravated the severity of syphilitic ulcers, whether primary or secondary. But, as all those different causes concur only in *one* respect, viz: in exciting inflammation, it is evident that mercury, when it affects the system, must be productive of equally injurious changes upon the ulcers in question, and upon the general health; and because it produces a more violent degree of inflammation than almost any other natural or artificial cause we know of, except those articles set down in the catalogue of poisons." Upon the same principle may be explained the fact, mentioned by all practical writers, that schirrous tumors, cancerous affections, and scrofulous diseases, of every grade, are much aggravated by mercurials.

Dr. Blackall has shown that, "from the same cause, thickening of various membranes, particularly the Pericardium and Pleura, has accrued." And it is more than probable, sir, that the aching pains which so often, and almost invariably, follow courses of mercury, are owing to partial thickening, or adhesions taking place in the serous and more cellular membranes, especially those near the joints, whence so many cases of mercurial rheumatism.

From Dr. B.'s cases, too, we have reason to believe that the rheumatic or inflammatory diathesis may continue long after the disuse of the medicine—perhaps for life.

Emaciation so commonly follows a mercurial course, that some have, and with reason, supposed that it had that tendency. Thus, Van Sweiten observed that "all the pinguid humors are dissolved by the action of mercury; therefore the patient's body is totally emaciated."

But, sir, may we not rather suppose that the emaciation is, in a great measure, the result of the serous portion of the blood being expended, by passing off through the various emunctories, generally most manifest in the salivary ducts, in the attempt—a vain one, in many instances—to wash out the poisonous mineral, introduced into the system under the false idea of its curative virtues? as the tears are secreted most abundantly, to wash out of the eye any foreign substance. In all these extra exertions of nature, debility is the universal and necessary result.

Dr. Benj. Bell, late of Edinburgh, remarks that, "besides the usual symptoms of fever, mercury is apt to excite restlessness, anxiety, general debility, and a very distressing, irritable state of the whole system. In some, temporary delirium takes place; in others, palsy, or epilepsy, supervene, and, in *many*, the memory or judgment is more or less *permanently* impaired. Instances, too, have occurred, where sudden death has supervened, in consequence of very trifling exertion or agitation," corroborating a former quotation from Mr. Pearson.

It may be said, sir, that these are the extreme cases, and we readily admit that, in many instances, these violent effects do not immediately follow. Individuals, however, of a delicate habit and scrofulous diathesis, (and these, at this age, constitute a large and rapidly increasing proportion of our population,) are ever liable to experience, to a greater or less degree, the evil effects enumerated, from the use of mercury; so much so, that, for one, I have come to the conclusion that, on the whole, its use, as a medicine, has done, is doing, and if persisted in, is likely to do, infinitely more harm than good—if *real* good it ever does.

I can, with Dr. Falkner, say that "I might cite *all* the writers on the materia medica, for authorities to show that the long continued and frequent use of mercury is not free from danger." And I have already proved that a desultory and even minute dose, has often produced most distressing and disastrous effects.

Both Falconer and Blackall mention instances of dropsy, evidently produced by the use of mercury. Dr. F. gives a fatal case, where hydrothorax immediately followed the cure of a facial eruption by a mercurial application.

Dr. Alley asserts that he has seen an eruption appear, over the entire body of a boy of about seven years, for whom but three grains of calomel had been prescribed. The following case, also, is instructive: "A lady aged twenty-eight, the mother of four children, had a miscarriage, at the end of the fourth month, and was very much reduced with hemorrhage; three days after, she complained of a bad taste in her mouth, with soreness of her gums, and the next day, salivation took place; on enquiring, it was found that *four years* previous, she had taken blue pill, for two weeks, which had but slightly touched

the gums, and it was solemnly asserted that she had taken no mercury since that time, and during which she had enjoyed apparent health; the ptyalism was, therefore, attributed to some accidental cause, but continuing with great violence, the medicines were chemically examined, but found to contain no mercury whatever. The salivation, with the usual debility and emaciation, continued above twelve months; occasionally, indeed, it was checked for a day or two, but would return, with alarming vomiting, and sinking of the living powers."

It is, sir, universally acknowledged, that, although the morbid, that is, the *poisonous* effects of mercury, are often induced by very small doses of the mineral, and that very suddenly; that at the same time it must be freely admitted, that there are no marks, as yet ascertained and probably never can be, by which *a priori* we may know in what constitution such results would be likely to follow.—Hence, the awful danger in administering the poison at all.

Dr. Steele observes, and, sir, I can most cordially reiterate his remarks, "I know full well the effects of mercury upon the human system, for I have tried it in every shape, and for almost every disease, and have found it always attended with uncertainty and risk; and if pushed to salivation, absolute consequences of a dangerous character, either open or hidden, were produced." This fact is, or ought to be, no secret to physicians, when almost all admit, that mercury does produce diseases of the most disagreeable and dangerous character. Why then persist in the use of it? But, sir, "if they will thus persist, in the face of all the evidence they have, or might and ought to have, and in defiance of all moral obligation, imposed by the sixth commandment, surely the people will not, and ought not, to be so infatuated much longer, as deliberately to swallow down the seeds of certain disease and death—the mass of them, at least, will halt and consider.

Dr. Porter, after much observation and experience, says in effect, "We have *no need* to resort to the use of such poisonous ingredients as mercury, arsenic and the like, in the cure of diseases, because there are more safe and certain remedies, and because they do not answer the purpose of their application: they clog up the system, and poison the fountains of life, and make the patient a sickly wretched being, through the remainder of his days. I appeal to the lame, the chronically sick, the blind, the toothless, the deformed, the dyspeptic the hypochondriac, to the individual of scrofulous habits, and ulcerated gums, to the rheumatic invalid, and broken down constitution, the unhappy victims of mercurial practice."

It is, sir, a lamentable fact, that those very articles, upon which we have been placing our chief dependence in practice, with strong, but misplaced confidence, are most destructive to the life these intended to prolong, and to the

health which they intended to restore and promote. But I am well aware, that the old prejudices are so completely "ground in" to some, both physicians and patients, that for a while, they will continue to use them, to some extent, but there is a "better time coming."

Fashion, sir, is the tyrant ruler, even in diseases and remedies; our unphysiological habits have rendered diseases of the liver and *primæ viæ* very common, and mercury has, with the majority of physicians, become equally fashionable; and it is admitted that it sometimes *appears* to relieve them; I say *appears*, because it is only in *appearance*; for if the patient's life is continued, after their use, the complaints always recur, calling for more mercury; in truth, mercurials answer the same purpose with the hepatic, that a quid of tobacco does with the consumer of that detestable weed, or the abominable dram to the inebriate, always crying "give, give," and always destructive to the constitution.

But I said, it is only in some cases, that the mercury apparently answers even for the time being, the end proposed. For, as Dr. Eberle observes, "in some cases calomel fails to excite the action of the liver, and causes injurious irritation of the mucus membrane of the bowels, giving rise to frequent, turbid, and watery discharges, attended with severe griping and abdominal tenderness." Here again, sir, *as always*, we see the uncertainty of its effect, and its aptness to produce disease, instead of curing it.

And here permit me to observe, that the persevering and scientific use of pure water, that great boon of a kind Providence, is infinitely more efficacious, and always perfectly safe, in curing diseases of the liver, and other diseases for which mercurials have been employed, than all the mercury that has been dug from the bowels of the earth, and all of the various combinations into which it has entered, since the days of Bombastes Paracelsus.

Dr. Shew observes, in effect, that, "as long as the mercurial mania rages, so long will physicians be called upon to treat many anomalous varieties of chronic rheumatism, made such by the mercury with which the patient had been dosed, for some acute disease, which may properly be called mercurial rheumatism."

It may, here, be well to name some of the contradictory opinions entertained by different men, of medical eminence, briefly drawn from Pereira: "Mercury is, by several writers, as Cullen, Young, Chapman and Eberle, placed in the class of siolagogues; by many, as Dr. A. T. Thomson, Edwards, Rovasseun, &c., among excitants; by Conrad, Butell, Horn, &c., as sedative; by Wilson Phillips to be stimulant, in small doses, and sedative in large ones; by John Murray, it is placed among the tonics; by Vogt,

among the *resolventia alterantia*; by Sunderlin, among the liquifacients; by Broussais, and his followers, among revulsives; by the Italians, as Giacomini, among contra stimulants; by others, as Barbier, among the *incertia sidis*, or those drugs whose *modus operandi* is not understood." I must confess, sir, that here I am a follower of Barbier.

And after reading the above brief statement of discordant opinions, of prominent medical men, upon this much used poison, upon much abused patients, I am almost inclined to believe in the truth of the following definition of the word physician, as being "a man who puts drugs, of which he knows *nothing*, into stomachs of which he knows less."

Dr. Shew, (in his manual,) observes, that "chronic disease of the liver is often brought on by the use of calomel; the liver is torpid, the patient takes blue pill, calomel, or mercury, in some form, the liver is goaded on in its action more vigorously, for the time, and the patient feels better. But then again follows the old difficulty, in an increased form. The remedy (!) is used again, again and again, and at last loses its power, even to bring about *apparent good*, and the patient sinks into an incurable state."—And in speaking of what has been long called the secondary effects of the venereal disease, such as caries and necrosis, he says: "It is impossible to tell how much of those affections actually depend upon the medicine that had been administered to the patient, as it is allowed by all medical men, that mercury is capable (and often does) produce affections *entirely* similar."

If mercury is capable of producing dropsy, as stated by Sir Astley Cooper; or enlargement of the glands, according to Dieterick; or sloughing, and ulceration of the gums, according to Sir Astley and many others; or mercurial leprosy, according to Moriarty; or mercurial fever and salivation, as known by every practitioner; or palsy, according to Christison; or mercurial wasting of the bowels, and dysentery, as observed by many; or rotting of the bones, as known (or ought to be known) to all medical men; I say, sir, if mercury does often cause any or all of these evils—which it does,

with a host of others, too numerous to specify in a brief essay—ought it not to bring practitioners to a solemn stand, with regard to continuing its use, as a remedy?

Its tendency to produce tubercles, is attested by a host; amongst them, Drs. Chapman, Sweetser, and Travers. Nichols, in water-cure, says, patients often throw off large quantities of mercury, as well as other poisons, which may have lain in the system for years, producing rheumatic, neuralgic, and other nervous and chronic diseases; and that its dire effects can hardly be exaggerated.

Raush speaks of caries of the bones as amongst the direful effects of mercury; he also attests of its long continuance in the system, "being divided," he says, "into minute atoms."

Harsa, speaking of the scientific effects of water in the cure of diseases, observes that "it cools raging fevers, soothes the most violent pains, invigorates the organs of life, cleanses the system; sometimes mercury, &c., taken years before, are brought out through the pores of the skin, or made to pass off through some salutary crisis; strange as it may appear, it has been proved, times without number, and without the possibility of a mistake." He further says that "disease, originally acute, is often hurried into a chronic form by the excessive debilitation of poisonous drugs. I assert this from a knowledge of the fact. It is a solemn truth, that will sooner or later startle the world, from its confidence in a system so destructive to human life, health, and happiness."

Dr. Thatcher, both in his "Practice," and "Dispensatory," informs us that *no rules can be given, or regarded, to regulate its (mercury's) administration, or obviate the uncertainty always attending its introduction into the stomach.*"

And Dr. Chapman, in his materia medica, tells us that, "occasionally mercury, from some *unaccountable cause*, instead of operating as a remedy, acts as a poison."

And here let me ask, does not our own experience, with such authorities, sufficiently protest against destroying any more tongues, teeth, bones, gums, palates, jaws, lips, and whole animal frames,

by this POISON? The above observation of Dr. C. probably slipped his memory, when, a few years since, before his class, he addressed them as follows: "Gentlemen, if you could see what I almost daily see, in private practice, in this city—persons from the South, in the very last stages of wretched existence, emaciated to a skeleton; with both tables of the skull almost completely perforated, in many places; the nose half gone; with rotten jaws; ulcerated throats; breaths most pestiferous, more intolerable than poisonous upas; limbs racked, as it were, with the pains of the inquisition; minds as imbecile as the puling babe's; a grievous burden to themselves, and a disgusting spectacle to others—you would exclaim, as I have done, 'O! the lamentable want of science that dictates the use of this *noxious drug, calomel*, in the southern States.' Gentlemen, it is a disgraceful reproach to the profession of medicine! It is *quackery, horrid, unwarranted, murderous quackery!!* What merit do gentlemen of the south flatter themselves that they possess, by being able to salivate a patient? Cannot the veriest fool in Christendom salivate, give calomel? But I will ask another question: Who can stop its career at will, when it has taken the reins into its own *destructive* and ungovernable hand?

"He who, for an ordinary cause, resigns the fate of his patient to mercury, *is a vile enemy to the sick*; and if he is tolerably popular, will, in one season, have paved the way for the business of a *life*, for he has enough to do, ever afterwards, to stop [or rather to endeavor to stop] the *mercurial breach* of the constitutions of his dilapidated patients. He has thrown himself into a fearful proximity to death, and has now to fight him at arms' length, and without weapons, as long as the patient maintains a miserable existence." And now, Mr. President, permit me to ask, where is the intrinsic difference between "murderous quackery" in the south, and the east, west, and north?

Says Dr. Edward Johnson, of England, for many years an allopathist, but now a hydro-druggist, "the *great* remedies of the allopathic school, are medicinal

poisons; prescribed quantities of these are conveyed into the stomach, from time to time, until the whole system is under their influence; in other words, till the whole mass of blood is *poisoned*. But does the patient who has been swallowing mercury, suppose that the gums only are inflamed, by this circulation of mercurialized blood through them? Does he suppose that the other organs, the brain, the lungs, the kidneys, and the eyes, have a charmed life, and that they are proof against all injury from the poisoned blood passing through the delicate network of their tissues? What is to protect the heart, the brain, the lungs, the liver, the kidneys, the stomach, and (especially) the *bones* from the same sort of irritation as that which has loosened and destroyed all his teeth? And here, Mr. President, let me remark, that when the teeth are affected by mercury, we have reason to believe that all the bones of the body are more or less diseased, with the same poison, and that one, if not the principal reason why the teeth suffer more extensively than the other metallic portion of the system—the bones—is their contact with atmospheric air, upon the principle that all metals so exposed are more readily oxydized than if perfectly protected from the air.

Dr. Rush remarked, in a public lecture: "I am here incessantly led to make an apology for the instability of the theories and practice of physic; and those physicians generally become the most eminent who have emancipated themselves from the schools of physic.—Dissections daily convince us of our ignorance of disease, and cause us to blush at our prescriptions; and what mischief we have done, under the belief of false theories, and false facts; we have assisted in multiplying diseases; we have done more—we have increased their mortality. I will not stop to beg pardon of the faculty, for acknowledging, in this public manner, the weakness of our profession. I am pursuing truth, and am indifferent where I am led, if she only is my leader." On another occasion, he said: "The art of healing is like an unroofed temple, uncovered at the top, and cracked at the foundation."

Said Briehat: "To what errors have

not mankind been led, in the employment and denomination of medicine.—If they wanted deobstruents, they *made* them, and so on through the whole catalogue of medicines; and if they thought proper, (and they have often done so,) made the same article answer very opposite intentions, and at the same instant, blowing hot and cold at the same breath.” How often, sir, has this been the case, with the effects *attributed* to the various preparations of mercury? If physicians wished to reduce the system, they gave calomel; and if to tone it, calomel still; and so on through the chapter. Indeed, sir, it has become, with many, the *medicamentum*—so much so, that it might well be asked, with some, why should they be at a loss what to prescribe, if they have only calomel in their pocket?

Magendie says: “I hesitate not to declare, no matter how sorely it may wound our vanity, that so gross is our ignorance of the real nature of physiological disorders, called diseases, that it would, perhaps, be better to do *nothing*, and resign the complaint we are about to treat, (and especially the patient) to the resources of nature, than to act, as we frequently do, without knowing the why and the wherefore of our conduct, and at the obvious risk of hastening the end of the patient.”

And here, Mr. President, let me say that the orthœpathist, or the honest homœopathist, has entirely the advantage of the allopathist, for, by doing nothing at all, medicinally, he is certainly doing no hurt; and we had infinitely better do nothing at all, than to introduce absolute poison into the system, upon the principle of the Doctor's prescription who directed the lady to swallow a living cat to catch the live mouse, which she fancied she had swallowed. We should think it better to let the mouse have a chance to creep out, by the way he got in, or otherwise drown him, or wash him out with WATER.

Said Dr. Waterhouse, when retiring from the medical chair which for more than twenty years he had filled, in Harvard College, “I am sick of *learned quackery*.”

And Dr. Good observed: “The sci-

ence (!!!) of medicine is a barbarous jargon, and the effects of our remedies in the HIGHEST DEGREE UNCERTAIN, except, indeed, that they have already destroyed more lives than war, pestilence and famine combined.” An unquestionably just judgment, as regards mercury, if not many—and even a large proportion—of what have been esteemed the most powerful medicine; *powerful*, indeed, they have been, at least for evil. Then let us, hereafter, take the advice of Napoleon to his physician: “*Do not counteract the living principle.*”

Dr. James Clark, in his long and entertaining article on phthisis, in the cyclopaedia of practical medicine, observes that, “Mercury has *very* generally been considered, as capable of producing tubercular disease; we are inclined to believe this fact; and, therefore, consider that its use requires the *greatest* care, in persons of a delicate and strumous constitution.”

And since so large a majority of the human family, at least in our country, are of a strumous habit, either hereditary or acquired, had we not better entirely and forever suspend its use? I, for one, sir, have come to that conclusion; I believe that nature actually performs her own cures, and that whatever is so entirely opposed to nature, as the various preparations of mercury, is also opposed to the recovery of the sick; that, when the system is put under the best possible condition, as to diet, regimen, &c., it will, by its *vis medicatrix natura*, much easier counteract the effects of disease, without the intervention of extra poison.

Sir W. Knighton, late physician to George the fourth, observes that, “it is somewhat strange, that though in many arts and sciences, improvements have advanced, in progression with time, others have remained in *statu quo*, and medicine, appears to be one of these ill-fated arts, whose improvement bears no proportion to its antiquity.” Had not facts borne out the truth of his remarks, how could we account for a similar assertion of Abernethy, the truth of which is, however, to all careful observers? He says, “diseases appear to be on the increase, and have been for three or four hundred years.” That is, sir,

from the time that that apostle of wholesale murder, Paracelsus, introduced the *quicksilver* and other violent poisons into the materia medica.

In Holland, we are informed, there is a law, fining heavily, any person who administers mercurial medicines, and since that salutary regulation, that the fatality of diseases has greatly decreased in that country. And we find, sir, from statistics and observation, that where the least medicine is used among the sick, as in the Hydropathic establishments, and such hospitals and bettering houses as are conducted upon Homœopathic principles, diseases are less fatal, by more than fifty per cent., in proportion to the numbers admitted and diseases treated, than in those institutions where heavy medication is the practice, and especially when mercurial medicines are almost considered as the *sine quonon*.

And, now, Mr. President, though I have made but a beginning, of the extracts of different authors which I had marked for quoting; I suppose I have well nigh exhausted your patience, and that of the audience; and will close these extracts, by stating a few cases, from different "water-cure" works, showing the tenacity of mercurials to the animal system, as well as the power of *pure water, scientifically applied* in eradicating it, and other diseasing matter, from the animal economy.

"A gentleman, aged 33, having used mercury with great freedom, fell into a state of great debility and nervousness, and gradually became almost bald, and was described to look more like a corpse than a living person. His first treatment was a sitz bath, two lein tuchs, followed by a shallow tepid bath, and free drinking of water; afterward he sweated in the blanket, and used the plunging bath every other day; douching, also, on most days; but omitting the lein tuchs, and not using any douche on the day of the sweating blanket. He took as much exercise on the mountains as his strength would allow. Soon after his arrival, the few hairs on his head, which he brought with him disappeared, and the baldness was complete. Boils formed, and suppurated freely, when the treatment was reduced

to the use of two lein tuchs, and a sitz bath per day. Soon after, an eruption appeared over the whole body; first vesicular, afterward, scaly; also, more boils. The linen was stained with appearances which were supposed to arise from mercury. At the end of six months he gained some color of the cheeks; he grew stronger; but, also, new shoots of hair appeared on the head, and which, in two months more, increased that he had a fine head of hair;—he was pursuing treatment, and was evidently in quite a fair way of recovery."

"During my stay at Grafenburg," says Dr. Shew, who also reported the foregoing case, "I heard frequent mention of the stains of mercury, and iodine, appearing in the lein tuchs, either of a blue or reddish color; but Preisnitz assured my friend, Dr. Buxton, that he had seen mercurial gobules issue at the ends of the fingers, after a continued course of the water-cure, in patients who had made great employment of mercury, either internally, or externally, or both; notwithstanding that they had desisted from the use of the medicine for several years. I cannot doubt the veracity of Preisnitz, and Lebig, with whom I discussed the subject, had no doubt of such a fact, and offered as his explanation, that mercury combines with animal matter, and may remain so combined, for an indefinite time; and that the quick change of matter, which belongs to the water-cure treatment, would tend to the separation of the mercury, which might appear either in the globular or other form."

For, Libig says, "By means of the water-cure treatment, a change of matter is effected, in a greater degree in six weeks, than would happen, in the ordinary course of nature, in three years."

Says Shew again, "I have witnessed examples of the latent stag of mercury in the system, and shall cite the following:—I prescribed to a poor woman, afflicted with rheumatism of the wrist joint, threatening ankylosis, which she had rubbed, at occasional intervals, with mercury, from January to the end of May. No mercury was taken internally; none used externally after May; in November following, she was seized with

the most violent salivation that can be imagined." Such cases, Mr. President, and those approaching to the like, are not uncommon. I could name quite a number in this county, who at every change of weather, are sensible of a mercurial taste; and it is but a short time since, I was conversing with a cripple from amputation, who stated that at every change he could taste mercury, and presumed that he also experienced a mercurial rheumatism. He does not know that he ever took any mercurials into his stomach, but had it applied to an ulcerated knee joint. Different members of this medical association are acquainted with him, and can converse with him at their leisure. I hope no one will take any exception to this disclosure, since I have, in this apology, freely confessed my own former errors. My desire is, that the serious consideration of these facts, may be a benefit to ourselves and to any patients for whom we may hereafter respectively prescribe; and hope, if we repent, and do works meet for repentance, that we may be forgiven for past sins.

Says Rause: "Very often, persons who have gone through a mercurial course, years before, have again in the water-cure, been salivated anew, which saliva tasted, and smelled so decidedly of mercury, that not only the patients themselves have distinctly observed it, but also others coming in contact with them, have noticed distinctly, the most marked mercurial smell. * * * It has furthermore occurred, that, by evaporating the critical discharges, from boils in the water-cure, mercury and other metallic poisons have been, in their chemical nature, brought to light."

Dr. Herr, professor in the University of Freiburg, says: "Certain medicines, after having been in any manner applied, are found DEPOSITED in the solid parts of the body. Thus, in persons who have taken mercurial preparations, we find mercury in the brain, muscles, bones, &c., &c. Copper deposits itself in the liver, &c. Sufficiently well known and established facts, in vast numbers, could be here cited as proof of the deposition of medicaments in the body:—among others, that of workers in mer-

cury, are so saturated with this metal, that a gold piece laid upon their tongues becomes white;—that, in the skeletons of old syphilitic patients, long after putrefaction, globules of mercury have been found."

These facts, Mr. President, show the strong affinity that exists between the metal under consideration, and the mineral portion of our frame; the lime of our bones, which is analogous to the amalgamation of mercury with other metals, a fact so well known to all, who have the slightest conversance with chemistry.

Dr. Nichols, water-cure physician, in New York city, observes: "the bath room is filled with dense vapor, by the active skin; and we can smell opium, tobacco, and other drugs, which may have been taken years before. The blankets used in packing require to be aired every day. One patient, at one house, amused himself with collecting little globules of mercury, which came out under his wet bandage, though he had taken none for years. Bandages and sheets are often deeply stained with matter which come from the skin, and they are, at times, so corroded as to fall to pieces;—and it is not uncommon to have them stiff with glutinous excretions as if they had been starched."

Mr. President, multiplicity of domestic and other duties, must be my excuse for the broken and unsystematic manner of these observations, and of the quotations, being but the moiety of what I might have adduced, would your time and mine have justified it. The same cause has prevented my examining and reviewing what I have penned.

But, sir, from all the evidence produced by others, as well as from my own observations, I have come to the following conclusions:

First. That mercurial preparations are always uncertain in their operation, so that, *a priori*, we cannot tell what will be their *apparent* effect.

Secondly. They are often *evidently deleterious*.

Thirdly. I believe them *always* to be so, to a greater or less extent.

Fourthly. That their tendency, when they do not very soon destroy the powers

[REPUBLISHED.]

DIET AND REGIMEN,

For Invalids and those afflicted with, or who wish to prevent Chronic Diseases, such as Dyspepsia, Liver Complaint, Lung Affections, Sick Headache, Chronic Nervous Affections, &c.

EAT at regular hours—and not oftener than once in five hours—of only one kind of wholesome food at a meal; and, what is still better, is to continue that one kind of food for every meal for a week or more, and then change for some other one kind, and do likewise. Let your food (wholesome *ripe* fruits excepted) be well cooked, and thoroughly masticated, and chiefly or wholly of a vegetable nature: such as good bread, especially “Graham bread,” wheat grits, corn bread if it agrees with the stomach, bread and milk, mush and milk, mush and molasses, potatoes, (roasted, baked or boiled,) rice in different forms, good ripe fruits, &c., &c., and *if* meats, only once a day, (at dinner) and that lean; such as beef, mutton, chicken, squirrel, venison, or *fresh* fish in the cool seasons of the year, such as you find by experience best agrees with your stomach.—Let your supper be light, or wholly omitted, and always taken at least three hours before retiring to rest.

Avoid all grease and fatty viands, especially pork and old butter. Use no pepper or spices, and salt sparingly.—Always stop eating while having something of an appetite for more food.

Pure *soft* water is the best and only drink that should be used. When a person has long been unhabituated to this beverage of kind nature, he may, for a *while*, use a little bread coffee, or a little *warm* water, which he may sweeten, and add a little milk, if he chooses.—Neither food nor drink should be taken more than milk-warm.

Avoid tea, coffee, all fermented and distilled liquors, and tobacco, in all their forms.

Every morning, on rising, and at least an hour before breakfast, take a general bath, of some kind, from head to foot, as cool as may be, so that a gentle glow is felt a few minutes afterward. Rub off well with a coarse towel. Those unaccustomed to daily bathing may begin with water a *little* warmed; but let each succeeding bath be gradually reduced in temperature, till it can be used cold, at all seasons of the year.

Exercise in the open, pure air, according to the state of your strength, either in a carriage, on horseback, on foot, or in gardening, agriculture, or some useful employment—but especially from the morning bath till breakfast time. Take a rubbing foot-bath for a few minutes every night before retiring to rest.

Retire early, either to a straw bed or mattress, (feather beds should be discarded by *all*,) and rise early, when the state of your strength will any way admit of it.

Let your bed-room, as well as sitting-room, be well ventilated.

When sitting, riding, or walking, at home or abroad, observe as erect a position as practicable, and very frequently throw the shoulders well back, and inhale as full a breath as possible, retaining it a few seconds, to expand the lungs and chest.

Clothe loosely, but comfortably, with linen or cotton next the skin. Avoid all stays, corsets, and extra bandages, except when needed in cases of surgery.

Always keep the head cool, and the feet comfortably warm.

Be moderate in *all*, even lawful, animal indulgences.

WILLIAM N. HUDSON, M. D.

CURETTE, NOLLS CO., O., OCT. 1, 1852.

