

Observations on the properties and efficacy of the saline and chalybeate spas at Melksham : illustrated with some remarkable cases / by O.W. Bartley.

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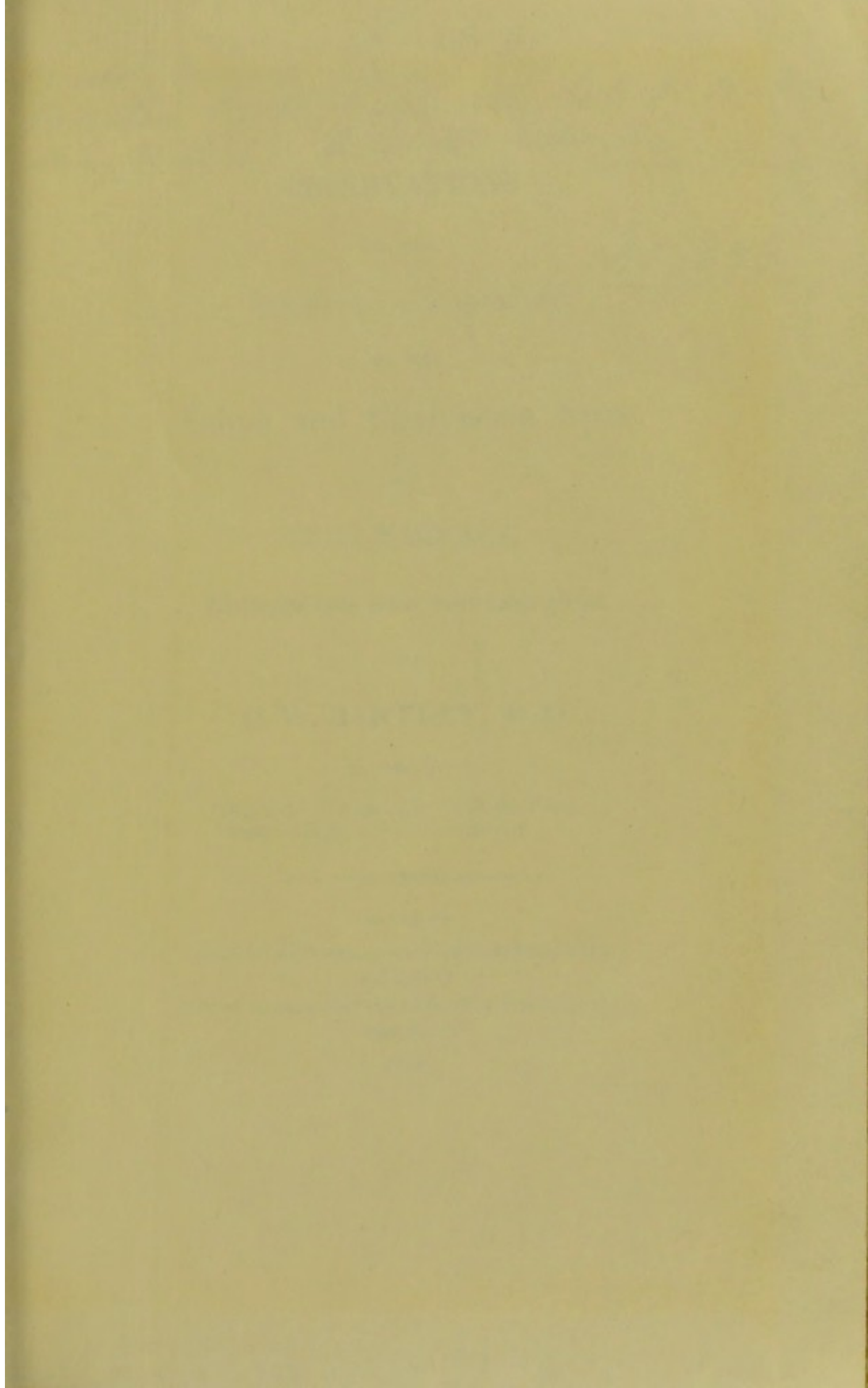


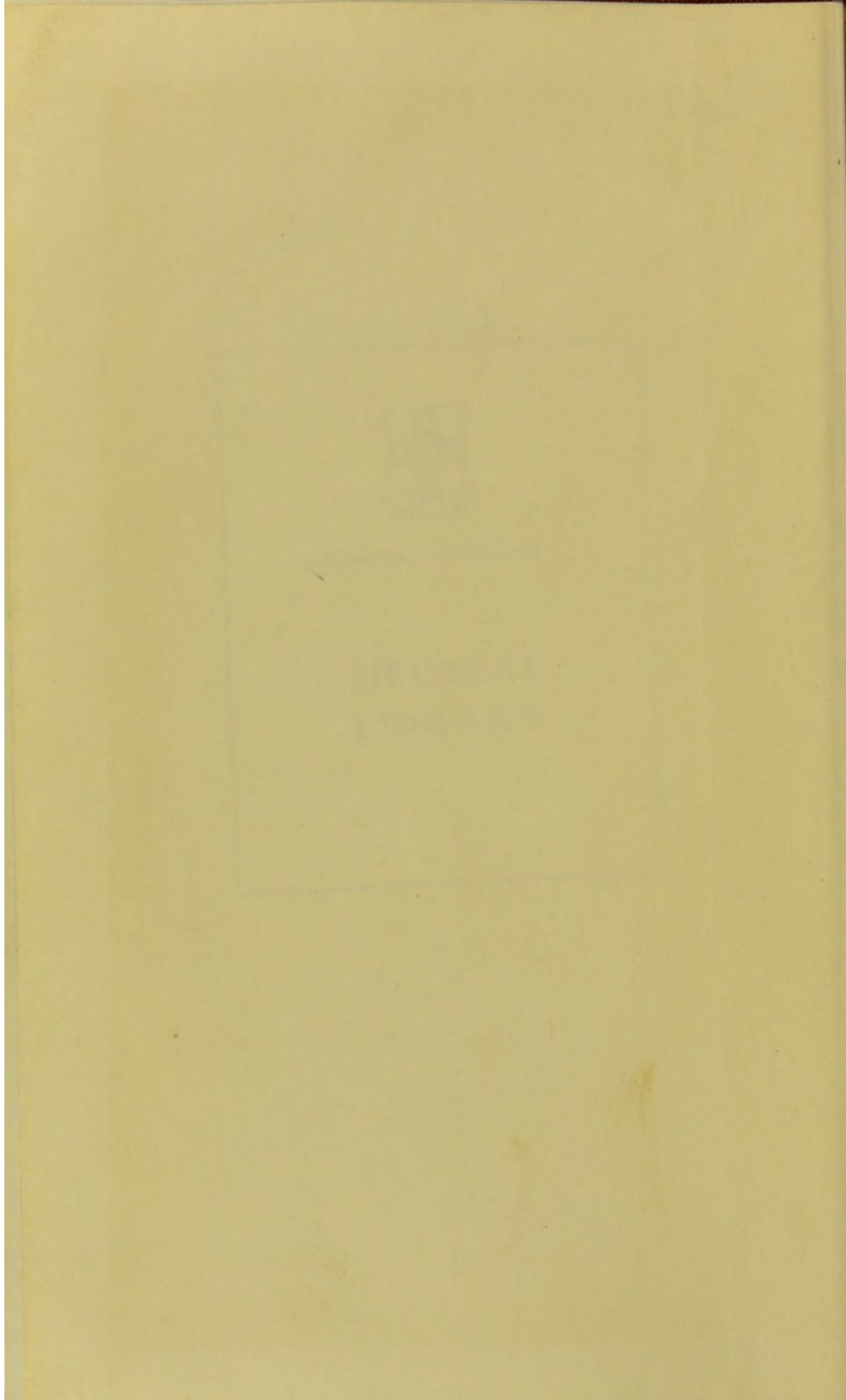
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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE
PROPERTIES AND EFFICACY
OF THE
Saline and Chalybeate Spas
AT
MELKSHAM,

No 399

(4)

Illustrated with some remarkable Cases.

BY
O. W. BARTLEY, M. D.

"Non Fumum ex Fulgore, sed ex Fumo dare Lucem
"Cogitat ut speciosa dehinc Miracula promat."

PRINTED BY
RICHARD CRUTTWELL, ST. JAMES'S-STREET, BATH;
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1814.

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

PROPERTIES AND EFFECTS

OF THE

SALINE AND CHLORIDE SPONGES

OF

WATER

BY

J. H. WATKINS, M.D.

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

AND

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

1871

TO THE PUBLIC,

TO WHOSE BENEFIT IT IS DIRECTED,

THIS TREATISE

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

TO THE PUBLIC

TO WHOM FIRST IS PRESENTED

THE TREATISE

IN THE ART OF

OF THE AUTHOR

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

I Trust it will not be deemed obtrusive, that I endeavour to lead the attention of the public to the consideration of a subject, pregnant with advantage to many individuals who compose that body. It is the Saline and Chalybeate Spa's discovered at Melksham, to which I allude; both meriting the highest estimation for the beneficial and salutary properties they possess. My intention

is to explain their component parts; the diseases to which they may be applied with advantage; the mode of operation; and to illustrate their efficacy by adding some interesting cases, wherein it is completely established. I shall examine each of these springs separately, and adduce observations as I proceed in the investigation.

The situation of the Saline Spa is attended with many local advantages: it is twelve miles only from Bath, in the London road, near the very neat and pleasant town of Melksham, situate on an elevation called Bower Hill, not a mile distant from the town; the roads are excellent, forming a direct communication with every part of the kingdom; the surrounding scenery displays fertilization in

rich meadows, intersected by the winding course of the river Avon and the Wilts and Berks canal, whose level banks present an agreeable promenade ; the air is salubrious, and the aspect of the whole country around is inviting as a summer residence.

Having premised this, I advert to the qualities of the Saline Water. It has been carefully analyzed by Dr. Gibbes, Dr. Wilkinson, and myself, and we accord in the general estimate—that it is a Muriatic Aperient Water, containing, in combination with other properties equally considerable, Muriate of Soda, Muriate of Lime, and Muriate of Magnesia; and the chemical affinities of these are produced and preserved in perfection in the wonderful laboratory of nature. The

conjunction of these promise much, and much has been effected. In all cases allied to scrofula, glandular tumours, or enlargement; Rachitis, and those various distortions which proceed from Mollities Ossium; and old indolent and obstinate ulcers and sores, considerable benefit may result from a steady perseverance in the use of the water, internally and externally. Many cases have already occurred, in which its efficacy has been fully manifested and established: it indeed contains, besides others, the constituent properties of sea water, in which exist Muriate of Soda, Muriate of Magnesia, and Muriate of Lime. In the preparation of the former for culinary purposes, the latter are decomposed by pure Soda, which, by attracting their

acid, the magnesia and lime which it quits fall to the bottom. It appears to me that salutary advantages may be derived from bathing in the saline water, similar to those experienced from immersion in the sea: and it is devoutly to be wished, that the proprietors may be induced, by interest as well as duty, to construct baths for the accomplishment of this desirable end, in the event of which it would become an object of general attention and resort.

In addition to this, experience has justified the opinion, that the Spa is well calculated to be efficacious in the removal of those disorders arising from derangement in the hepatic system, usually denominated bilious, and their consequences; dyspepsia, irregular action in

the bowels, and habitual costiveness from deficient tone in the whole of the viscera.

It acts mildly and efficiently as an aperient, and promotes a due regularity of the biliary secretions. The quantity to be taken, as necessary to produce this effect, cannot be precisely ascertained, for it must materially depend on the temperament or the general habit of the person who takes it. In general, half a pint taken fasting acts moderately as an aperient; a pint will produce a gentle catharsis; but if a case should occur, in which this quantity proves inefficient, a pint may be taken in the first instance, and after half an hour's walk, another half-pint may be administered. It will be perhaps objected, that the quantity of fluid taken may be attended with inju-

rious consequences. This is not the case; there are no unpleasant sensations experienced consequent to its exhibition; and if it does not immediately act upon the bowels, it passes readily by urine, being powerfully diuretic. Persons who are accustomed to take purgative salts, the Epsom, for instance, are well aware that a small portion copiously diluted is more successful and pleasant in its operation than double the dose taken dissolved in a small quantity of fluid.

Professor CARLISLE, in his "Observations on the Properties and Uses of Cathartics," very properly and judiciously observes, "The highly-diluted dose of salts does not abstract any part of the circulating nutriment; and if taken before breakfast, it does not carry off

“ the digested aliment : whilst full doses
 “ of neutral salts, unaccompanied by
 “ copious dilution, prove exhausting and
 “ injurious to debilitated persons. Even
 “ in cases of emaciation, connected with
 “ habitual foulness of the bowels, diluted
 “ doses of the salts may be often repeated,
 “ and continued for many weeks, with
 “ beneficial effect.” Again he remarks,
 “ when neutral salts are given with
 “ copious dilution, they seem to wash out
 “ the intestinal tube, without diminishing
 “ the blood, or impairing the bodily
 “ strength.” I wish to impress on the
 mind a full conviction of these truths, as
 it will tend to raise the value of this
 Medicinal Spa high in the estimation of
 all who have received them.

Doubtless there are many persons suffering from these disorders, accompanied by excessive debility ; hence those remedies which tend to the diminution of disease, without increasing exhaustion, are certainly to be preferred ; and this relief, I am convinced, the Water in question is calculated to afford, particularly from its impregnation with iron, operating as a tonic and corroborant. In regard to scorbutic affections, cutaneous eruptions of a chronic kind, herpes and lepra, experience of its efficacy in their removal has rendered it indubitable. I am also led to believe that it will prove an useful adjutant in the operation of other medicines in cases of ascites and anasarca, from the excitement it gives to the urinary secretions.

I shall conclude these remarks with an invitation to the afflicted, to resort to that source of health which the liberal hand of nature beneficently holds out to their acceptance; and, by a brief statement of facts, evince that the opinions I have advanced are well founded.

Case 1st. JOHN HATHERILL, residing at Laycock, a village about three miles distant from this place, during a period of eighteen years, was a great sufferer from deep and inveterate ulcers in one of his legs: various surgical efforts were directed to the cure at different times, but the sores still preserved the same indolent and untractable appearance, evincing no disposition to healthy granulation, and the curative means employed were una-

ble to subdue the inveteracy manifested. These appearances were accompanied by considerable tumefactions, and tension of the surrounding parts, occasioning various fissures, which after a time formed scabs, and when they fell off, an ichorous matter exuded from the denuded surface. Under these circumstances he was of course precluded from the use of the affected limb, and was under the necessity of receiving parochial assistance for his support. In May, 1813, he was directed to apply to the aid of the Saline Spa; he consented to this, and for two months persevered in taking a portion of the Water daily, in the mean time applying linen cloths frequently wetted with it to the diseased parts. At the end of this time the cure was completely effected,

the swelling subsided, the integuments resumed their usual healthy appearance, and the wounds were perfectly healed; the new surfaces of the cicatrices exhibiting a more smooth and equal appearance than I have ever witnessed, when effected by surgical aids; in short, he has had no return, nor any evidence of a disposition to a recurrence of his calamity. His general health is very materially improved, and he has walked six days in the week, every week from that time to the present, as far as Chippenham, three miles distant from his residence, and back again, without the smallest inconvenience. —Here is a strong evidence of the efficacy of the Water in the cure of scrofula; for I attribute the remote cause to a predisposition to that disease existing in his

constitution. What were the proximate or exciting causes I have not been able to learn, but my opinion will be confirmed by the succeeding case.

Case 2d. A son of the afore-mentioned JOHN HATHERILL, aged 14, was afflicted from his infancy with excoriations on the edges of his eye-lids, producing a constant purulent excretion from the parts, which, from its tenacity, continually matting together the upper and lower cilia, and resisting the elevation of the superior palpebra, considerably obstructed vision. He is of a sickly appearance and spare habit, exhibiting every mark of the existence of a scrofulous action. He has taken the Water two months, and made frequent application of it to the diseased

parts, which are now restored to a healthy state, and his health has been somewhat improved, though not established.

Case 3d. In February 1803, JOSEPH CHILCOT, of Melksham, was affected with a cutaneous eruption, which (from the intelligence I have been able to obtain from his description) I am induced to believe may be classed with Psoriasis Diffusa. It was attended with the most intolerable itching, with small white pustules discharging ichor, and so excessive a degree of irritation as to produce considerable fever, and occasionally slight delirium. These symptoms continued without remission until the succeeding June, when they altogether subsided. The most remarkable feature in the case is, the

recurrence of the disease in its exacerbation on the subsequent February, the time of its first appearance, and its remission as before in the month of June; it preserved the same decided character, unabated in violence, until the present year. At the beginning of August last he commenced the trial of the Saline Spa, and continued in the use of it internally until December, when he felt sensibly a renovation of his exhausted powers, but anxiously expected the re-appearance of the eruption at the usual time. In this expectation he was agreeably disappointed; nothing of the kind having supervened, and he is at this time in the full enjoyment of health.

Case 4th. WM. GERRISH, of Road, was afflicted four years; his case was decidedly

leprous. The usual means of relief were resorted to, under the directions of several of the faculty; they were of no avail. He began to take the Water, and to apply it to the diseased parts, in July last: it has completely succeeded in the removal of his complaint; the healthy appearance of the cuticle evinces no vestige of the morbid affection. He continues the occasional use of the Water to guard against a recurrence.

There is another case of lepra depending, and I trust I shall have to record its successful termination. The Bath Waters have been fully tried, without effect. The patient is continuing the use of the Saline Spa; it is evident considerable advantage has been derived from this, and promises a happy result.

Case 5th. Mr. SAINSBURY, timber-merchant, of Melksham, for four years laboured under a constant irritation, proceeding from excoriations in the armpits and groins, exuding copiously an ichorous discharge. He is of a corpulent habit; his obesity is increased by want of due exercise, owing to an exostosis on the tibia of his left leg, below which small abscesses frequently form, and discharge unhealthy pus, with small exfoliations of bone. He took the Saline Water three months at the latter end of the last year, since which he has had no return of the troublesome excoriations alluded to; but little benefit has been obtained, and little could be expected, in regard to the diseased leg. Yet I am led to believe, from the very favourable change which has taken place

in his general habit, that if he had resorted earlier to this remedy, the occurrence of the present unfavourable symptoms might have been prevented.

There are many other cases of scrofulous, scorbutic, and divers cutaneous diseases, in which the efficacy of the Spa has been clearly exhibited; but the enumeration of them would be tedious, and I shall proceed therefore to notice its beneficial effect in bilious and dyspeptic cases.

Case 7th. Mrs. C——, from Ireland, arrived here about six weeks since, to apply for relief from the Water in the removal of an hepatic disorder, with which she had been for a long time afflicted, supposed to arise from some obstruction

in the biliary ducts. Her countenance exhibited an inordinat^{te} secretion from affusion of bile in the circulation, being deeply tinged with a dark yellow, approaching at times to blackness, which also appeared in the tunicae adnatæ of the eyes, attended with great depression, insupportable languor, and that inability to exertion usually manifested in these diseases. She is now restored to her pristine health and natural energies. This prostration of strength has been repaired by the subsequent use of the Chalybeate Water, of which I shall speak hereafter.

Case 8th. Mrs. WEBB had laboured for a long time under all the symptoms of dyspepsia, accompanied with frequent and violent spasms in the præcordia;

appetite very much impaired, and consequent debility. She took the Saline Water about two months, in the latter part of the last year. The effect has been a complete recovery. The stomach appears to have recovered its tone, with no return of the spasms.

Case 9th. Capt. W——ns arrived here a month since, on his return from the West-Indies, to repair the effects of a warm climate, which had materially affected his constitution. He has just taken his departure from hence, fully satisfied with the considerable benefit he has derived from drinking the Saline Water.

Case 10th. Mrs. C——r has received permanent advantage in the removal of

a bilious affection; after persisting a month in the use of the water, she has returned home perfectly recovered.

Many instances might be adduced of a similar nature; but I forbear, as from their similarity alone they would become uninteresting. Yet deviating from the plan of arrangement I had prescribed for myself, I cannot avoid relating the history of a case of cutaneous disease which has recently come to my knowledge.

Case 11th. JOHN SELF, a weaver, of this place, has been subject to a violent herpetic disorder during the period of eleven years. The unremitting and insupportable irritation it occasioned so much reduced him, that from the great

prostration of strength he experienced, he was rendered incapable of pursuing his avocation. He drank the Saline Water, and applied it externally for two months, at the end of which time the urgent symptoms subsided, and the cuticle now manifests a healthy appearance.

I beg leave to add, that if any may require further information as to the authenticity of the foregoing cases, I am at all times ready to afford every satisfaction in my power.

I shall now allude to the Chalybeate Spa lately discovered in the same field. I have analyzed it, and find it contains the muriate of lime, the carbonate of

iron, and the carbonate of lime. I consider it so much impregnated with iron, that more could not be held in solution; and that it is equal, if not superior, in strength to any of the same kind yet discovered. I need not expatiate on the efficacy of such a water in cases of general debility, nervous affections, and others, as it seems to be generally understood and acknowledged. As I have before observed that its discovery has been very recent, it will account for my incompetence in furnishing proofs of its salutary effects, but I doubt not sufficient time will enable me to do so. It must derive considerable advantage from its propinquity to the Saline Spa, which may be considered as an useful preparative to the use of the

Chalybeate ; in short, it seems so pregnant with utility, that it merits due consideration and attention.

I conclude with observing, that my inducement in publishing these remarks is a desire to promote the benefit and advantage of society ; if, fortunately, this effect may be produced, my wishes, my intentions, and my expectations, will be fully gratified in their completion.

Melksham, June 25, 1814.

FINIS.

