Introductory notice to [On the treatment of acute and chronic rheumatism of the joints, lumbago, &c.;].

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Publication/Creation

[Place of publication not identified] : [publisher not identified], [cbetween 1800 and 1899?]

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With the Author's Compliments

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

Nearly two years have elapsed since the publication of the valuable antiphlogistic and anodyne remedy, which I had found in the local application of a temperature 40 degrees lower than any hitherto employed in medicine; but although I have not neglected the duty imposed on me by this discovery, of making it as extensively known as possible, I am sorry to say that its progress has not formed any exception to the truth, that of all improvements, the last adopted have ever been those that appertain to the practice of medicine. In this instance, however, there were peculiar difficulties to contend with. The therapeutical expedient which I had to recommend, had only been known in its uncontrolled agency, and had, therefore, been known only as a cause of disease; and it was not at first very obvious in what essential respect the degree of temperature which I wished to introduce as a new remedy, could differ from the low temperatures that had already been in use.

After the removal of the prejudices and misunderstandings which are adverted to in the first paragraphs of the following disquisition, another question was sure to occur to the practitioner: granting the utility and safety of this new remedy, what advantage does it possess over the numerous expedients for the removal of inflammation and pain which we already possess, that will compensate for the trouble of applying it, and of learning how to apply it properly?

In the first place, it will cure diseases and relieve pains that cannot be cured or relieved by any other known means. Both as an antiphlogistic and as an anodyne, the temperature which

has been specified, is much more powerful as respects many diseases than any agent or combination of agents possessing similar qualities hitherto employed in their treatment, and which, on that account, have often been found ineffectual. A very low temperature will arrest every inflammation which is near enough to the surface to be accessible to its influence, and totally and permanently remove irritation from the nerves which it can reach. Its employment in erysipelas, in various kinds of headach, in neuralgia, and in cancer, furnishes illustrations of this truth.*

Secondly, a very low, benumbing temperature will produce these effects *immediately*. Bleeding, mercurials and antimony, singly or in combination, may often bring about the same remedial change, if sufficient time be given; but, too frequently, disorganization precedes their efficient operation. We have a familiar example of the speedy action of congelation in the treatment of ophthalmia by it; and in its instantly arresting inflammation of the glands, when threatening suppuration or breach of the skin. Its agency has appeared to be as prompt and beneficial in cases of inflammation of the cerebral membranes and in peritonitis. On the other hand, the partial paralysis and permanent stiffness of the joints that so frequently follow rheumatic attacks, are instances of structural change from inflammation long unsubdued. But, even supposing that no mischief should result from delay, it is obvious that a remedy which more quickly cures or relieves than other remedies, has in this quickness alone, all other circumstances being alike, a manifest superiority over them. There are, doubtless, existing

* This observation has, of course, reference to the *alleviation*, not the *cure* of cancer. I have now under my care a case of cancer of the womb in which long intervals of perfect ease are afforded by a frigorific applied by means of a syphon of peculiar construction. Not only is there more relief thus obtained than by opium or other narcotics, but this advantage is not counterbalanced by the stupefaction that attends the use of these; and instead of precipitating the unfortunate patient's fate like narcotics, congelation, by arresting the accompanying inflammation, is calculated to prolong life. In early stages of this dreadful disease it might, from its powerful sedative and alterant properties, have a still better effect. Could the "Cancer Cell

vive repeated congelation? — On the 22d of June, a mixture of ice & sa
pplied by means of a thin silk gauze sack, for 3 minutes, to the cancerou
of a woman named Pocock in the Middlesex hospital, who had long
distressing severe & continuous pain. The relief was immediate & com
had had no return of pain, nor had an opiate been administered, up to
period of my last seeing her on the 6th inst — 14 days after

modes of treatment which will eventually cure irritable and scrophulous ulcers, prurigo, impetigo, eczema, and other chronic diseases of the skin; but congelation will usually effect the same purpose in as many days as there are weeks or months required by such practices. Again, although we have no remedy in which the least confidence can be placed for inflammatory or painful ptyalism, we know that it will eventually cease by the efforts of nature alone; but in the mean time, the patient is subjected to a long period of suffering and distress from which he might have been immediately relieved by congelation.

Thirdly, congelation is a safer remedy than those which are usually employed for the same purposes. Both bleeding and mercury often impair the restorative powers; antimony occasionally acts as a poison; opium stupefies and excites. Not once, in nearly two thousand applications which have now been made of it, has congelation caused the least injury. As anæsthetics in surgical operations, ether and chloroform are, either immediately or more remotely, not without danger; whereas the action of congelation, which is strictly local, instead of producing injury, facilitates the healing of wounds by preventing inflammation.

Fourthly, the operation of this temperature is not so disagreeable as that of most of the remedies for which it is substituted. It has been employed in the cases of children without causing them even to wince. Nothing, on the other hand, can be more distressing than severe mercurial salivation, or the sickness from full doses of antimony, and even some of the operations for extracting blood are often objects of dread to patients.

Fifthly, from the three first advantages now enumerated, viz., the power, promptitude, and safety of the action of congelation, results that of its *certainty* as a remedy, which, even as respects the character, and consequently the utility of the medical art, is a point of great importance in the consideration of therapeutical means, particularly at the present day, when scepticism as to the power of medicine in contradistinction to the healing powers of nature, is so prevalent; and when the

medical enquiries most in vogue, however curious and probably eventually useful, are little calculated speedily to increase our knowledge of the art of curing disease. We can foretell with certainty that bark will cure the ague, but of how few other remedies can we speak with so much confidence! Now, congelation is as certain a remedy of many diseases, when properly employed, as a judicious administration of bark or quinine is of ague. To take an example from the subject of the following treatise: every one of numerous cases of that form of rheumatism called lumbago, which have occurred during a recent period at a public institution, and which are recorded in the sequel, has immediately yielded to congelation; and no other unequivocal rheumatic affection has resisted it, when properly and thoroughly applied. The medical practitioner can therefore sustain the reputation of his art by confidently promising relief in these cases, as he can, by predicting the cure of uncomplicated ague by bark. And, although this is far from being amongst the most important applications of the remedy, it is no mean triumph of medicine to be capable of terminating in five minutes, and without chance of failure, a state of suffering and an incapacity of motion, which may have endured, with no intermission, for many days or weeks.

In conclusion, let me express the hope, that before forming any opinion of this new remedy, the practitioner will take the trouble of informing himself well respecting it, and especially, that he will avoid the error which several have already fallen into, of supposing that the very low or anæsthetic temperature specified, cannot essentially differ in its medical operation from the temperature of ice or cold water, as these have been usually employed. There is no resemblance between them. They differ as much, both in the sensations and effects they produce, as the usual high temperature which, in fomentations, is employed as a soothing application, differs from the very high or scalding temperature that in certain cases is resorted to as a powerful stimulant or vesicatory, or that higher still which is occasionally used as an escharotic.