

ascites, I determined to give it a trial in connection with Fer. et Strych. Cit., and at the end of one week a marked change in her appearance was observable, and in the short space of three weeks, the dropsy was entirely gone, the appetite returned, and the general health at present, Oct., 27th all that can be desired.

Judging from former cases, treated by this drug, and which have not recurred, I feel sanguine about the non-appearance of the effusion in the case of Mrs. S., but, even if it should, is not the easy and certain removal of the fluid by this means much more preferable than the painful, alarming, and sometimes dangerous operation of tapping a delicate nervous patient? In every case of ascites or ovarian dropsy I would strongly advocate the use of this diuretic before any operation be performed, feeling assured that its speedy, and in many cases, its permanent effects will surprise the physician, racking his brain to discover a sufficiently powerful drastic or active diuretic that will not further exhaust his patient, and yet prevent the necessity for repeated tapings. In connection with chalybeates, exercise and warm clothing I do not hesitate to say this medicine will, in ascites, supplant the trocar and canula, while in cases of ovarian cyst it will be found deserving of a more extended trial than has ever been accorded to it.

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the LANCET.

SIR,—While agreeing in the main with Dr. Mackinnon's article in your last number, it seems to me that he is inclined to a great extent to ignore the fact that "beef tea" is of very great and real value in those conditions of the system in which the powers of assimilation are much reduced or almost absent. I am not now speaking of the so-called extracts of meat, which are little if any more than the mere flavoring principles of the meat, and though of use as nerve stimulants possess scarcely any nutritive power. But beef tea besides these does, I believe, if properly made, contain a portion of the fibrin of the meat in a state of partial solution, or rather suspension, the finely divided coagulum usually present, consisting probably to a great extent of syntonin and albumen coagulated by heat, and this though insufficient to maintain

life in a man, all of whose functions are vigorously performed, does in a great measure assist in doing so in one whose voluntary muscular action is nearly *nil*. Besides in a large majority of cases where beef tea is almost the sole aliment given, as in the advanced stages of the adynamic fevers, the question is between giving that with a small quantity of farinaceous food, or depriving the patient altogether of food, and in such a case even Dr. Mackinnon himself would not, I think, hesitate to cast his theory to the winds, and give that which the universal experience of medical men long before Liebig's time has found to be of value.

I may here notice, though I should have done so before, Dr. McKinnon's comparison of beef tea with coffee, apple dumplings and potatoes. In the case of the coffee the substance itself consists of cellulose (which is totally indigestible) combined with a small proportion of volatile active principles which whatever their stimulant power, have certainly no nutrition beyond the doubtful one of lessening the rapidity of the change in the tissues. In apple dumplings and potatoes the starch of which they consist is so confined that the boiling water has no power to rupture and dissolve the grains, and in the former the soluble parts of the apple are also confined, so that the apple dumpling tea, or potato water is nothing but water containing a minute quantity of starch in suspension. From beef on the other hand, the water extracts the flavoring matter and the albumen, unless the product be boiled and filtered (neither of which should be done) when the latter is of course lost.

Further Dr. Mackinnon seems to have adopted Liebig's old division of all food into *tissue forming* or nitrogenous, and heat producing or non-nitrogenous, and that all food before being utilized must be first converted into tissue, neither of which propositions has, I think, been sustained altogether by subsequent experiments by Parkes, Fiske and Wislicenus, and others, which seem to render it probable that but little of the food ingested is ever converted into tissue, but is utilized for the production of heat and force at once; the excess of nitrogen being separated and excreted in the form of urea, and the remainder bearing much the relation to the tissues that the fuel does to the engine; it indirectly sets in motion. If this be so, the use of administering alcohol, starch, in the form of arrowroot, &c., and other easily oxidizable foods