

In the treatment of bowel complaints we must constantly keep in view the admitted effects of large doses of calomel in relieving vomiting and purging, and changing the character of the discharges from the bowels—this takes place without its being combined with opium; and if the term sedative is to be applied to its action, it is certainly very different from that of narcotics, and would seem to be entirely indirect, or secondary,—by neutralizing and altering the character of secretions that would seem to be the cause of existing symptoms in the disease. Mr Annesley, after remarking, “that acute dysentery in India is confined to the cæcum, colon, and rectum, so far as respects inflammation of their intestinal surfaces; but functional derangement is general throughout the whole intestinal canal, even for days before the dysenteric symptoms become fully formed,” says, “as the disease becomes developed, the functional disorder runs into vascular derangements, particularly in the large intestines, and is soon productive of serious alterations of the structure of the interior part of the canal.” In cases running on to inflammatory dysentery, we usually find the deranged biliary functions an important feature in the disease, and repeated doses of calomel become necessary to correct these, as well as to correct local inflammatory action; indeed, the healthy or disordered state of the biliary secretions in the stools of dysenteric patients, will prove the most important guides to us in the treatment of these diseases—guides that can never be followed too closely or with disadvantage, as we will soon find that the patients will never derive permanent advantage from medical treatment, until these disorders have been removed.

In choleroide diarrhœa, and even in cholera itself, we find a peculiar character of discharges from the stomach and bowels an invariable attendant on these affections, and the sinking, the collapse,

and spasms, only concomitants, if not consequences of it. When calomel stops the vomiting and purging, and allays the other symptoms, we always find the subsequent discharges from the bowels completely changed, often then resembling those in bad cases of fever, and as long as this state continues, the choleroide symptoms will not return, and are not to be brought back by the action of purgatives. The absence of bile in the secretions from the primæ viæ, is invariable in the discharges from cholera patients, and safety in such cases can never be depended upon until it re-appears, no matter what course of treatment may be followed.

Here, again, we have a decided object in view in the administration of calomel,—to neutralize the effects of diseased secretions, and to restore a healthy action in the chylopoietic viscera; and we can be at no loss for facts to guide us in the administration of this remedy.

In the congestive and pernicious varieties of fevers, we invariably find the secretions more than usually changed, and that particular characters of these are not unusually attended by peculiar sets of symptoms. The sinking in such cases, being usually of a sudden occurrence, and not the effect of protracted disease, or of direct debility, is rarely alleviated by the most [powerful diffusible stimuli; while the action of calomel purgatives, and even venesection, by removing the cause of the symptoms, will often suddenly restore the oppressed vis vitæ; and the course of the fevers incidental to such attacks shews the little benefit derived from medicine or stimuli, until natural secretions from the bowels appear. It is also in protracted cases of this nature that patients will often seem to be snatched from the grave by the occurrence of perfect ptyalism; the prostration of strength, the oppression and fever will instantly subside, and natural discharges from the bowels will follow gentle purgations.