

health and disease. On the other hand, owing to the more extensive cultivation of our soil, the destruction of our forests, the draining of our marshes, and the greater attention paid to the study of hygiene, our people, especially those in the rural districts, are much more exempt from the diseases caused by the noxious exhalations from the earth's surface, so prevalent in newly-settled countries, and so pernicious in their effects upon the constitution, than they were in the early days of my white and bald-headed contemporaries.

Do not men during accidents and surgical operations, and women during parturition, often lose enormous quantities of blood, and yet frequently make excellent recoveries? In epistaxis, hæmoptysis, and hæmatemesis, this fluid is often largely poured out, and yet it is seldom that we hear of a person dying from the effects of its loss.

In the face of such facts as these, and a hundred others that might be adduced, if time permitted, the doctrine of a change of type in disease must fall to the ground as utterly untenable.

The influence of fashion is not limited to our profession. We all recollect how the crinoline of the French Empress, invented to conceal a condition of which most ladies are so proud, enslaved the female mind, until every woman, married and single, considered it as an indispensable article of dress. A sofa, however spacious, was hardly long enough for a woman thus arrayed to sit upon. How the fashion has changed within the last six or eight years is familiar to everybody. Now the dress is so narrow as to show the outline of the person, and compel the greatest care in progressing lest the fair wearer should trip and tear her garments. Even diseases occasionally become fashionably. When it became known that Louis XIV. was laboring under anal fistula, the disgusting malady became at once the fashionable ailment of his debauched court. The use of enemata was cultivated as one of the fine arts in France in the time of Molière, who lashed the faculty without mercy for its follies and extravagances.

Second.—The indiscriminate employment of the lancet in former days did much to bring blood-letting into discredit, not only with the better thinking class of physicians, but the public at large. "We cure the sick," says Guy Patin, a professor in the Royal College of France, "when over eighty years old, by blood-letting, and also infants of not more than two or three months, with as much success and as little inconvenience." Rush, the great champion of this operation on this side of the Atlantic, bled indiscriminately and remorselessly at all periods of life, the young, the middle-aged, and the old, in all kinds of diseases, in the eruptive fevers, in fever and ague, in puerperal fever, in inflammations, in injuries, in hemorrhages, and even in anæmia, often taking immense quantities of blood, and repeating the operation six, eight or even a dozen times in the same patient. In short, he and his followers used to bleed in every possible disorder until, in many cases, no more blood would flow, because there was none left. That such a

practice would at length work out its own destruction is what might reasonably have been expected. It rang its own knell.

Third.—That we are much better acquainted with the nature and treatment of disease than our fathers were is a fact so universally accepted as to require no argument in its support. Our progress in this respect, during the last forty years, has simply been marvellous; and to nothing are we so much indebted for these improvements as to the study of pathological anatomy and histology, and the astounding developments of chemical science.

Fourth.—That the treatment of disease has been greatly simplified within the period above specified is familiar to every member of the profession. Homœopathy, by the absurdity of its doctrines and primitive practices, long ago demonstrated to the world that most of its cures are effected spontaneously, through nature's restorative powers alone, while the patient's mind is medicated with the decillionth part of a drop or a grain of medicine; and in comparatively recent years two eminent medical philosophers, Professor Bigelow, of Boston, and Sir John Forbes, of London, showed us, by a series of admirably-conducted observations, that certain diseases, as small-pox, scarlatina, measles, typhus and typhoid fevers, are self-limited in character, and therefore not to be materially if at all abridged in their course by any plan or means of medication whatever. A third of a century ago the only so-called depressants, aside from the use of the lancet, were tartar emetic, calomel, digitalis, the latter of doubtful efficacy in any case, and the first often exhibited without due discrimination. Of aconite and veratrum veride, now so universally employed as antiphlogistic agents, we were totally ignorant. These two medicines, as I shall endeavor to prove by-and-by, although frequently of immense service in the treatment of inflammatory affections, are far, far inferior to blood-letting.

Believing that these are the principal, if not the only, reasons which have led to the abandonment of blood-letting as a therapeutic agent, I propose now to speak of the operation itself, and to point out first, the classes of diseases to which it is more especially applicable; secondly, the period at which it should be performed to yield the greatest amount of good; and, lastly, its mode of action.

Blood may be abstracted in different ways, as, first, by venesection, secondly, by leeches and cups; thirdly, by incision, scarification, or puncture; and fourthly, by arteriotomy. The latter operation is so difficult of performance that few practitioners are willing to attempt it. There are cases, as in violent inflammation of the brain, eye, and ear, in which it is supposed to exercise a peculiarly beneficial influence; but generally speaking, it is quite certain that venesection, if properly executed, answers every purpose, even in the affections here specified. Similar remarks are applicable to bleeding at the jugular vein, also usually a difficult and, sometimes even a dangerous, operation.

The diseases to which blood-letting is more particularly applicable are the different inflammations,