

Malarial fever was supposed to be caused by "certain invisible effluvia or emanations from the surface of the earth." They rôle of the festive mosquito in spreading this disease as well as yellow fever was then undreamed of. They did not believe in the contagiousness of phthisis, but explained its prevalence by constitutional predisposition. Diathesis figured largely in their etiology. Watson states that tubercular diseases are liable to occur principally in the phlegmatic with pale complexions, narrow chests, flabby muscles and feeble circulation; in the sanguine with transparent rosy skin, long silky eyelashes, and unusual mental precocity; and in the bilious with dark muddy complexion and mental and bodily sluggishness. Surely under these three heads all of mankind would be included and the value of the explanation rendered useless.

The energetic agent of proprietary drugs was as active then as to-day, and found a too easy and credulous hearer among the doctors. I learn from a presidential address delivered before the Medical Society of the State of New York, that "medicated gout water," the composition of which was unknown, was nevertheless approved by the faculty in London, Paris and New York. How many of us to-day succumb to the temptation of using some much vaunted remedy of which our total knowledge is embraced in the puffing of some verbose commercial traveller? As a proof that there is nothing new under the sun, I may mention that in 1810 the "gold cure" was recommended to the attention of every practitioner. This most valuable discovery was said to cure "syphilis, scrofula and scirrhus uterus" and more still, to have succeeded in nearly every trial. Credulity was rampant then as to-day, and the poor patients were compelled to swallow gallons of chemicals, whose only potency lay in the assured promises of the prescriber. Palatability is much more sought after to-day, and the belief in the efficacy of a mixture as proportionate to its nauseousness has passed away. This is partly due to developments in chemical analysis, for a century ago, they had cinchona bark but not quinine, opium but not morphine, nuxvomica but not strychnine. Bleeding was in constant use, and the heroic way in which it was performed must evoke our admiration for the courageousness of both patient and physician. They counted blood not by ounces but by pints. Even after this onslaught upon the life-giving fluid, they did not hesitate to follow on with such doses of purgatives and emetics as would cause the ruin of professional standing in anyone who ventured on such medication to-day. I can only explain the recovery of their patients by the surmise that they became so limp and helpless that the fair and honourable disease germ retired from the contest rather than gain a victory over so poor an antagonist.