

pital, but with such disappointing results that we soon abandoned its use in favor of our old friends cod liver oil, maltine and steel wine.

If, at that time, I had known what I learned a few years later, namely, that Dr. N. A. Randolph,* of Philadelphia, had conclusively proved in the year 1884 that all paraffin when swallowed by the mouth passed through the alimentary tract in an unabsorbed and unchanged condition, I should probably have spared myself the trouble of making clinical experiments to prove its virtues as a food. When I entered into private practice a few years later I was surprised to observe that the psychological influence of persistent advertisement had already won for this petroleum emulsion a strong position in the affection of the medical profession as well as of the lay public as a cure for bronchitis and other pulmonary complaints. Knowing then that petroleum acted merely as an inert substance in the alimentary tract, and that none of it was absorbed into the system, I came to the conclusion that its reputation depended either on the same properties as those which belong to bread pills, or on the considerable doses of hypophosphites which were added, very wisely, on the principle that if the petroleum failed the added drugs might succeed.

In the year 1906 I began to alter my views with respect to the value of petroleum, for I came to the conclusion that it must possess therapeutic properties of a very rational character in the treatment of constipation, and that as a remedial agent in this condition it must be indirectly valuable in many other morbid conditions.

My enlightenment came in this way. I was at the time in great difficulties in respect to the treatment of constipation in infants, for I found that if the rational treatment of this condition by olive oil, a line of treatment which I greatly preferred to the irrational use of drugs, enemas, or glycerine suppositories—was pursued to its logical conclusion it led one to a most unfortunate *impassé*. An occasional teaspoonful of olive oil is an excellent corrective to constipation in infants when this condition is due to a deficiency of fat, but in those cases in which constipation supervenes in spite of the fact that fat is already supplied in adequate amount, the additional administration of olive oil only aggravates the symptom. In trying to discover some lubricant which could effect the required object without causing so-called "fat injuries," I called to mind certain observations which had been made some years previously by Dr. Robert Hutchison† in which he pointed out that, although the

* Proceedings, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, 1884.

† British Medical Journal, March 24, 1909.