

Selections: Medicine.

TREATMENT OF INDIGESTION AND HEARTBURN.

In the course of an article in the *Practitioner*, January, 1881, Dr. J. Milner Fothergill writes:—

For the purpose of whetting the appetite and thus acting reflexly upon the gastric secretion, we employ the class of agents known as bitters. To these we add hydrochloric acid. Ringer has pointed out how an alkali taken into the stomach before a meal, when the stomach is alkaline, produces a freer flow of acid afterwards. Consequently we comprehend the value of that well-known preparation indifferently termed, "Haust. Stomach," or "Mist. Mirabilis," or "Mist. Rhei et Gentian," in the various hospitals; a combination of world-wide fame. One drawback to this combination of rhubarb, gentian and soda is, that the student becomes familiar with it and its virtues, but remains ignorant of its exact composition, and so loses sight of it when he enters upon practice for himself. Such a mixture before meals, followed by ten drops of hydrochloric acid after the meal, will often make the difference betwixt imperfect digestion, producing discomfort, and digestion so perfect that it does not provoke consciousness. Or where there is much irritability in the stomach, *i. e.*, when a bare, red tongue imperfectly covered with epithelium suggests a like condition of the internal coat of the stomach, then bismuth is most soothing. The mixture of soda, bismuth, and calumba is in use for such indigestion with good results. The dietary in such a case should consist of the blandest food, milk with or without baked flour in it, beef tea with baked flour; nothing more till an improved condition of the tongue tells of a more normal condition of the stomach. In such cases a plain opium pill at bedtime often soothes the stomach very nicely. Then there are cases where imperfect digestion is accompanied by the production of fatty acids, butyric and others, which add the phenomenon of "heartburn" to the symptoms; or there may be later products formed which cause the bitter, hot taste in the mouth on awakening in

the morning or after a post-prandial nap. It is usual to treat "heartburn" by the exhibition of an alkali; but this is not good practice. In union with an alkali the offending matter is nearly as objectionable as in the form of free acid. It is much better to give a mineral acid, as the hydrochloric, or phosphoric, which breaks up the feebler organic acid. By such means we can aid the digestive act. Then at other times the indigestion is due to lithiasis, where the presence of uric acid impairs the efficiency of the gastric juice. In these cases all measures which do not entertain the causal relations of the dyspepsia are of little use. By the administration of potash in a bitter infusion, well diluted, taken half an hour before a meal, this element of trouble is removed. In all cases of gouty persons suffering from dyspepsia, do not forget this cause of impairment of the gastric juice.—*Med. and Surg. Reporter.*

TENDON REFLEX.—Senator's latest writings corroborate Tschirjew's statement that division of the spinal cord, opposite the 5th or 6th lumbar vertebra abolishes patellar tendon reflex. Division of one lateral half of the spinal cord at this level, abolishes the reflex on the corresponding side only. Division of the lateral column on one side produces the same effect. Division of the posterior cornua of the grey substance is devoid of this effect. He concludes, hence says the *London Lancet*, that in this part of the lumbar region, both sensory and motor fibres of the posterior extremities are exclusively contained in the lateral columns. Patellar tendon reflex can only be induced by one kind of stimulation, namely, mechanical shock or sudden extension by a blow.

Dr. Latham, at the Cambridge Medical Society, suggests a chemical theory for the sudden deaths from chloroform. Hoffman has shown that chloroform converts the amides into isocyanides. After a dazzling array of chemical formulæ, Dr. Latham proceeds to suggest that the blood charged with chloroform passing into the coronary arteries, decomposes some of the constituents of the muscular tissue, which, thus rendered inert, is dilated by the pressure of the venous blood, and the patient dies with a distended right ventricle.