

Selections.

Excerpts from the Remarks made by Dr. Albert C. Barnes, of Philadelphia, at the second annual meeting of the American Therapeutic Society, held at Washington, D.C., May 8th, 1901.

The paper of Dr. Reyburn just read merely reiterates the well-known fact that petroleum, when administered internally, is not absorbed from the gastro-intestinal tract, but, as is equally well known, a remedy may have the most pronounced physiologic effects purely on account of its mechanical properties. Dr. Robinson, of Philadelphia, states in the *Medical News* of July 14th, 1900: "In over fifty selected cases where nutrition, digestion and body weight were impaired and the purest oil administered in one or two dram doses, four times a day for periods of from three to six months, there was in every instance increase in weight and improvement in health, strength and feeling of well-being. The gain in weight was five and a quarter to twenty-three and a half pounds. There was no other change in living conditions or medication which might have caused these improvements." These clinical effects have been noted and recorded by a number of other observers. The manner in which petroleum accomplishes these results is shown by the laboratory experiments described in detail by the speaker. It was found that the addition of petroleum to albumen digested by an artificial gastric juice under exactly the same conditions as prevail in the human system, very materially hastened and facilitated the process of digestion; it was more rapid and complete than in the same experiment conducted without petroleum. Furthermore, it was shown experimentally that the mechanical influence of petroleum upon the churning, peristaltic movements of the upper portions of the small intestines favorably influenced the processes of absorption. In view of these experiments it can be safely concluded that the manner in which petroleum beneficially effects nutrition is by facilitating, expediting and completing the processes of digestion and assimilation of food. Another experiment described by the speaker was that conducted upon a man with marked malnutrition, in which the changes in metabolism were accurately studied for a period of three weeks by feeding the patient upon a normal diet, and then determining the daily elimination of nitrogen in the urine and feces. It was found that under the influence of petroleum the retention of nitrogenous matter in the system was increased. As is well known, the only method of determining the influence of any agent upon nutrition is by determining the daily body