

TREATMENT OF TYPHOID FEVER.

What is typhoid fever? Is it simply an inflammation of "Peyer's patches" with an increase of temperature on account of the tissue changes in and around these glands, or rather is it not an increase of temperature caused by an effort of nature to eliminate a poison from the system, and are the glands not affected in the process of this elimination, and are not all the symptoms caused by a ptomaine poison produced by germs or bacilli introduced through the alimentary canal in the general system and in the different tissues forming the poison, and the fever is really the result of the increased chemico-vital action set up by these tissue changes and the efforts of nature to eliminate the poison from the system? Or is the poison a leucomaine and are the symptoms caused by its action on the different organs? An intelligent answer to these questions is necessary before we can scientifically treat the disease. For if the disease is simply local, the local treatment is the proper method, but if it is chemico-vital, then we must endeavour by our treatment to assist nature to eliminate the germs from the tissues, or to administer some antidote against the poison produced by the tissue changes. Are the tissue changes in some cases due to the elevation of temperature, or are they in all cases due to the chemico vital action of the system in its efforts to eliminate the ptomaine from the body. I believe that the temperature with its peculiar class of symptoms is caused by the chemico-vital action, not only at the seat of the apparent lesion but also through the greater part of the body, and the tissue changes in the heart and muscles are caused as a rule by the poison acting on these muscles or tissues, and only occasionally is the extreme heat of the body a cause of serious trouble in softening the tissues, but is itself, like the softening, a result of the large quantity of poison taken into the system or found in it.

Now, if we take this view of fever, and I think it is the correct one, then what is the proper method of treatment to follow, *i.e.*, of the three systems now in common use, *viz.*: Expectant, antipyretic, antiseptic.

I. Antipyretic. Brand's method, which has for its object the reduction of the body heat by immersion in cold water, is, in my opinion, useful in adding to the comfort of the patient, and it may in

a few cases where the heat elevation is a source of danger to the heart and other organs even arrest a threatened disaster, but as a routine practice with the intention of curing the patient by the reduction of the body temperature and the removal of the disease by such a reduction, I do not think either experience or logic will bear us out; and a bath or sponging once or twice daily will accomplish all that is required in this line and with far less trouble. The same may be said of antipyretic medicines, only that they may do a great deal of harm as well as good, and after their administration the seeming improvement is often followed by great weakness and a return in a more aggravated form of all the symptoms for which the drug was given. Of the internal use of cold water I have had some personal knowledge, and with all due deference to Prof. Meigs, I must say that, used as he states it should be used, in many cases it will do no good and often may do harm by increasing diarrhoea and vomiting.

II. Antiseptic. If the disease were simply a local one, then surely some antiseptic could be found to render aseptic the parts affected by its presence, but unfortunately before it comes under your notice it has become both local and systemic, and so far I do not think even the most sanguine eclectic will claim that a drug has been found, which is so far reaching in its antiseptic qualities that it will, with its keen scent and powerful germicidal properties, hunt up and destroy all the miserable little bacteria whose presence in our system, in this disease as well as others, gives so many pangs. I fear that such a drug would be apt to destroy the patient in its search for the disease. Of the drugs so used, and whose efficacy has been very much vaunted, each in their turn as *the* specifics, I will mention a few, but only to say that in my own experience, and I think in that of many others, failure to do what their ardent admirers have claimed for them is the rule rather than the exception.

Calomel is among the first, and as a drug to be given in the early stages of the disease, I think that it answers admirably. It cleanses the intestines of accumulated matters hurtful in themselves, and may for the time at least render the alimentary tract antiseptic. It also gives us a chance to start fair in our dietetic treatment, but this is all the distance I am inclined to follow with it, and would