

The agents of that medication are the modifiers of functions or organs to the aid of which they are directed by raising, lowering or regulating the rhythm of their activity. Thus we are led to establish two large groups—stimulants, and depressers—although the distinction may not be, in reality, quite as marked as this subdivision would lead one to think.

The action of a stimulant may be directly, or indirectly exercised: directly in rendering more perfect the interstitial elaborations from which the cellular work results characteristic of each organ tissue or cell; or, indeed, by bringing with greater abundance and after a better choice the elements of reparation. Such is the role of alimentary tonics, or analeptics, employed solely or concurrently with medicinal tonics. Analeptics are the agents which restore by nutrition the materials which are lacking in the blood, so that it may accomplish its work in a regular way. Under this heading, sodium chloride, iron, manganese, oxygen, phosphate of calcium are aliments, or, at least, constitute terms the vital medium more fertile, and which increase in consequence the multiplication like those which are considered as stimulants of histogenesis and favor the perfection of the finest acts of nutrition.

The mode of action of these substances is as complex. They may act directly on the cells or through the medium of the trophic nerves; they may intervene by provoking the exaggeration or diminution of the functional activity of the organ or tissue. Pushing the argument further in this direction, we find that it even leads us to still consider as indirect modifiers of nutrition, certain special or functional stimulants capable of exciting the sensitive activities of transition between the aliments and medicaments, because they may be considered, according to circumstances, either as alimentary substances destined for the renovation of anatomical elements and the fluids, or as medicinal substances intervening under the head of modifiers. On the other hand, all aliments which are energetic restorers in small volume form part of this group of analeptics.

Thus one may fix the passage, by insensible gradations, from the reconstructing agents which increase the activity of cellular formation, either by depositing some of the more useful alimentary material, or by a kind of augmentation of the cell appetite, to those which render the conflict between the cell and of the secretory organs, such as the diuretics, cholagogues and galactagogues.

As to agents of depression, they are represented by alterants or attenuants, remedies capable of exaggerating the movement of disassimilation or indeed of abating the activity of cellular formation according to a special action quite independent of a hypersecretory action, on the side