

Too much importance cannot be given to this method of examining a portion of the body whose functions have so far not been open to a closer examination than could be obtained through abdominal palpation.

#### THE BROMIDES IN THE TREATMENT OF EPILEPSY.

There exists a strong feeling in the popular mind that the prolonged use of the bromides in the treatment of epilepsy is not only useless, but actually harmful. One might even say that this feeling to some extent has taken hold of the medical mind. There is, in fact, in some quarters a reaction against the administration of bromides in the treatment of this disease.

There is no doubt that since the introduction of the bromides in 1857 in the treatment of epilepsy, most epileptics at some period in the course of their malady have been treated by these drugs. The almost universal prescribing of the bromides during the past half century, with more or less success, has to a large extent deprived such patients of the advantages which certainly may be obtained from hygienic, dietetic, and disciplinary lines of treatment.

The decision as to whether a particular case of epilepsy has been cured in the proper sense of that term is difficult to determine, as it is well known that attacks may recur even after an interval of twenty or more years. But it may be conceded that arrests of fits for a period of from five to ten years in a case which presents no mental stigmata and in which all treatment has been suspended may be deemed as cured.

It is just this difficulty in defining a cure which renders the discussion of the problem of the value of bromides so difficult. In the pre-bromide days—that is, before the year 1857—quite a number of cases of epilepsy were recorded by the French and English physicians as cured, the percentage varying from 5 to 13 per cent.<sup>7</sup> These are the results recorded by physicians who used remedies such as oxide of zinc, nitrate of silver, and belladonna, some of which have largely passed out of common use.

On the other hand, the statistics of those who have treated epilepsy with the bromides do not differ materially from those just mentioned. Since the introduction of the bromides the statistics of cured cases also vary from 4 or 5 to 12 per cent.<sup>7</sup> Medical writers, therefore, such as Pierce Clark,<sup>8</sup> of New York, and others, who favor the abolition of sedative drugs in the treatment of this disease, find in the above quoted figures a strong basis for their contention that the bromides are neither necessary nor desirable adjuvants to ordinary hygienic remedies.