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THE ADVANCE OF THEORY IN MODERN MEDICINE.

Whether or not the clinical skill of the present generation of medical men, even the oldest of them, is greatly in advance of that of their professional fathers and grandfathers, there can be no doubt whatever as to the advance of recent years in theoretical knowledge of physiological and pathological processes. Extracts from the third edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in 1797, may be interesting reading now, from their archaism, and may serve as fixed points from which to "triangulate" our progress within the past century. The reader may remember that individuals not a few, must yet be living, who were assisted in their entrance into this cold world by the writer of the article on Medicine in the volume referred to. How vastly the microscope and clinical research have improved our knowledge may be seen in the following paragraph, still tainted with the Galenian theory of "humors." "It is certain, indeed, that the blood in a state of health, has some small share of acrimony, and this acrimony from certain causes may be a little increased so as to produce various diseases of a dangerous nature. This we are assured of from the increase of motion in the heart and arteries, and the similar augmentation of the action of the secretory organs, from acrid substances taken inwardly. The same thing also appears from the unusual acrimony of the secreted fluids in such cases, by which the vessels are some-

times greatly stimulated, and sometimes even quite eroded. Very many acrid substances, however, are daily taken into the stomach, so that these must either be corrected in the *primæ viæ*, or changed by digestion before they pass into the blood; or at least by dilution with much water, or being blunted by an admixture with gluten, oil, or inflammable air, they must deposit much of their acrimony, and at last be thrown out of the body as noxious substances."

Probably the physician does not live who is not many times discouraged at the apparent failure of his contest with disease. In his hours of "blue-ness" let him ponder the almost impassable chasm between the theories then obtaining in physiology and the ætiology of disease, and a triumph such at Koch seems really to have scored at last, which, by the way, he is reported to attribute more to the microscope-makers than to himself.

In treatment, too, the physician of a century ago lacked not in boldness and decisiveness of action. A case of hydrophobia was treated as follows:—"With this view a large tub of cold water, well saturated with common salt, was prepared, into which the poor boy was plunged over-head and ears, and there held until he ceased to struggle. He was then taken out again, and the same operation repeated until he became so quiet that the doctor was under apprehensions that a total extinction of life would take place. He was then wrapped up in a blanket and put to bed, and he remained more quiet than he had formerly been; but all his former restlessness returned, his pulse sunk, and he died about two o'clock in the morning." Now read Pasteur, any pessimistic physician of to-day. The article on Nymphomania is truly quaint. After a list of remedies somewhat alarming in their heroism—blood-letting, cooling purges, camphor in 20 grain doses or more, opiates as in mania, intra-uterine injections of barley-water, "with a small quantity of hemlock juice," the author naively adds: "This is called *specific*," but matrimony if possible should be preferred. The cure for *Tænia Solium* would certainly induce the obnoxious cestode to change his quarters with expedition. After very stringent fasting, and the drinking of sundry broths and infusions, the patient is to take two or three drachms of powdered root of male fern, and if vomiting occurs, another; then, two hours after,