

of *circumfusa*, show a very peculiar affinity, and constitute the point of departure from these modifers of nutrition of which alterants form the most decided expression, applying to this term alterant its entire significance, considering it as a profound modifier, capable of introducing important changes, often disagreeable, into the composition of solids or liquids, but especially of the blood.

In most of the treatises on therapeutics, we meet this definition: The name alterant is given to those remedies which by long usage without producing immediate and sensible effects, modify in a persistent manner the nature of the blood and the various fluids. The alterants ought to be considered as agents of substitution. They only act clearly when substituting a curable malady for a chronic or incurable one.

In order to make my thought clear, I will cite some extreme examples on this subject: An exclusive flesh nourishment and confined air are the evident and primordial causes of disorders in the evolution of the regular phenomena of nutrition. On the other hand, I take mercury as a type of alterants and will recall to you its exciting action, almost to salivation, indicating a state of saturation of the economy, pretended necessary for therapeutical action, that which the verses of Fracastor depicts so eloquently in his poem "*Syphilidis, sive de morbo gallico*."

*"Liquefacta mali excrementa vidibis*

*Assidue sputo immundo fluitare per ora.*

*Et largum antè pedes tibi mirabere flumen."*

Truly, this conception of alterants is sensibly modified, and we are forced to limit their role to that of simple modifiers of the living cell, capable of restoring the anatomical elements from a morbid state to a healthy state. Under this title all remedies are alterants. In the sustained conflict between the foreign substances and cells, one looks for an attempt to provoke a special action over the anatomical elements rendering them incapable of becoming or of remaining the basis of the malady, of the functions doing duty by morbid means, or of constituting a proper soil for development, as to whether the malady belongs or not to the group of microbes. Such is the action of mercury as an antisiphilitic. The end that is proposed is the realization of an incompatibility between the soil and the morbid cause, as that which is found to exist following a former contamination or vaccination.

But the same causes of derangement of normal evolution exist everywhere: in the air we breathe; in the aliments serving to build up our tissues; in the vicious preponderance of activity given to such or such an organ, to such or such a function, or, indeed, on the other hand, in the exaggerated repose in which we maintain them; in the meteorological conditions of the land of which we are natives; in the establishment of