

Most of the nomenclatures now in use are derived more or less directly from that of William Farr, in which diseases are classed for the most part, *according to their anatomical seat, and not according to their nature.* This is evidently right, since the progress of science constantly modifies the opinions of physicians as to the nature of diseases, and consequently, a statistical nomenclature should be modified with the least possible frequency in order to admit of comparison with those of earlier date. The diseases of each system of organs should be grouped together; for example, the nervous system, the circulatory, the respiratory, the digestive, the genito-urinary, the affections of the skin, and those of the organs of locomotion (bones, joints, muscles). Besides these diseases, the seat of which is known, there are others which involve the whole organism. Formerly these general diseases were separated into several sub-divisions which to-day are out of date. It is better to group these diseases together, placing at the head of the list those which, with much reason, Dr. Farr called "zymotic"; then those which are termed "virulent"; finally, other general diseases and slow poisons. But it would doubtless be a mistake to make these distinctions in a new nomenclature, since we can to-day foresee that they will soon lose the importance which was once attached to them. For example, at the present day, the list of diseases called infectious includes additional diseases which were once classed under other titles. It is better, then, to avoid these classifications which are necessarily only provisional, and are also useless for statistical purposes.

We believe that, in the present state of medical science, we should not attempt to establish a definite grouping of diseases. What significance can be attached to-day to the terms "enthetic, dietetic, diathetic" diseases which Dr. Farr proposed for the adoption of the statistical congress of 1855? They have lost all their meaning, and a statistical system which informs us to-day, for example, how many persons died of diathetic diseases conveys but little meaning. But, if the name of the group or subdivision has lost its meaning, the name of any separate disease still preserves its significance; for example, this group of diseases, the "diathetic" was made up of gout, anæmia, cancer and senile gangrene. These diseases which seem to us to-day so oddly associated, when considered separately still preserve very definitely the meaning which they had in 1855. The history of the past should be our guide for the future. Those disease groups which once seemed most natural have rapidly lost their alleged value. We cannot, then, employ them in medical statistics if we aim at permanent work. On the contrary, the meaning of each disease taken separately changes much more slowly.