

In a recent work by A. B. Palmer, M.D., Professor in Medicine in the University of Michigan, we find the following: "There are other more particular causes concerned in the production of these affections, which require particular notice: Among these, aerial poisons hold a place; and the cases are numerous where exudations from decomposing organic matter, fermenting excreta and their filth, the gasses from sewers, cess-pools and privies, the foul air of crowded apartments, etc., have unmistakably been the causes of endemic and epidemic diarrhœa. Impurity of drinking water—water contaminated with the same matters, emanations from which float in the air, is another cause. Cases where diarrhœas have been clearly traced to this cause are too numerous to leave this an open question. The opinion prevails, more at the present than at and preceding time, that the cause is of a specific character—a peculiar microbe or ptomaine exciting this morbid state. The summer diarrhœa, with its exaggerations in the form of cholera morbus and cholera infantum, has striking resemblances to Asiatic cholera, and the evidence of a specific material in the production of that affection is too conclusive to admit of doubt. The analysis of these affections has given rise to the belief that some similar specific agent produces the former disease.

In a very striking paper recently read before the New York Academy of Medicine by Dr. Holt, of the New York Infant Asylum, great prominence is given, as an etiological factor to the food and the changes which take place in it in this class of diseases. Indeed he regards the immediate cause to be "the putrefactive changes which take place in the stomach and bowels in food not digested, which changes are often begun outside of the body." He thinks that "nearly all the diarrhœas and intestinal catarrhs of young children are essentially dyspeptic in their origin," and a similar view is held by Henech, of Berlin. The recent investigation in Europe and this country respecting the alkaloid poisons called ptomaines, produced in various organic matters which are used as foods, have opened up a field of great scientific and practical interest.

As Dr. Palmer says: "The causes of few diseases are bet-