

ART. XXVII.—*On the Employment of Calomel in Malarious Fevers.* By JOHN JARRON, Surgeon, Dunmville, C.W.

If we take the European Dispensatories and trace them back for fifty years, we will find mercury admitted to be a specific, both in the venereal disease and in inflammation of the liver,—the first on the principle that the two poisons could not exist together in the human body, and that this virus could only be expelled from it by the administration of mercury,—while its effect in hepatitis was attributed to something peculiar to that gland and its functions. After a time, we find the worst results of the venereal disease attributed not alone to that peculiar virus, but to the effects of mercury used to expel it from the body; and facts show that even this poison is capable of being thrown off by the human body without the use of mercury; and when this is not given at all, or in a much less quantity than had been at one time used, the disease becomes much milder, and more speedily cured.

We also find its effects in hepatitis still admitted, but its use is no longer limited to inflammation of the liver alone, but it has been employed in that of other glands, and salivation is looked on by many as a specific, not only for glandular inflammation, but for that of almost every tissue of the body.

Dr John Thompson, of Edinburgh, and those of his school, denounced mercury as a poison, capable of aggravating every disease, and not to be given for any length of time without ruin to the constitution.—Many East Indian, and other practitioners in tropical climates, look on it as not only

a specific in hepatitis, but also in bilious fever, dysentery, and even in cholera itself, which are only to be cured by “pushing calomel,” commensurate with the severity of the disease, and its prominent symptoms; while European and British practitioners, when such complaints became common to them, have thrown discredit on calomel, against which a prejudice previously existed, because they did not find it an infallible cure, though it is even there looked on as a most efficacious remedy in the treatment of these diseases.

The mode in which calomel has been administered, and the extent of the dose, are equally various and unsatisfactory.—Some talk of a dose of a grain, night and morning, and opium to prevent its acting as a purgative; that five grains is a strong purgative, and even direct what is to be done when a larger dose excites violent purging, even of blood. Dr Christison, in his work on “Poisons,” mentions a case where a man was tried for the murder of his wife, by administering large doses of calomel when she was suffering from diarrhœa. He had a narrow escape from being convicted, and the doctor remarks, “that the profession are now well aware, though not at the time of this trial, that in the very malady which was supposed to have carried off the deceased, the administration of calomel, in repeated large doses, is accounted, by many, a proper method of cure.”

Calomel was used in the cholera of the East, in scruple doses, and these were even frequently repeated. The same practice was tried in Europe, but some practitioners there have lately found out