

create a favorable medium for the development of certain germs which would not be capable of multiplying in a normal organism.

Conversely the development and multiplication of germs in a normal organism may become the cause of severe derangements in nutrition. Thus is it necessary to attack these enemies in every organ through which we suppose they may penetrate into the economy, to follow them in the blood and the tissues, to try to destroy them or at least to stop their multiplication; to forcibly remove from the liquids of the organism whatever might be necessary for their life, or to add what would be hurtful to their existence, in other words, to modify the physical state of the vital medium. In this case, the search for a parasiticide agent appropriate to each kind of germ should not cause us to neglect the organism of the patient by modifying his nutrition, in fine, by artificially producing that particular state of the fluids which creates immunity. In order to fix ideas by an example, phthisis is certainly proven to be due to germs, but these germs can only multiply readily in a body with poor nutrition, and this alteration of nutrition results from heredity, from innate conditions, from bad habits, from defective hygiene, from a physiologically debilitated function, or from previous maladies.

I hope by these few considerations to have made you seize the prime importance of the modifiers of nutrition. Their role is, indeed, quite superior to that of the remedies which we have studied previously. But the interpretation of their action is still more delicate and difficult because, in a great number of cases, the modification that they determine are brought about only by a very long lapse of time, and which experimentation is incapable of revealing by its interrupted nature. A series of changes intervene both in the vital medium and in the anatomical elements which are nourished there. Thus is it to empiricism that we owe the largest part, I would even say almost all our knowledge of therapeutic agents.

To mechanically modify the anatomical state, to change the active functions of the elements and structures, to provoke an act physiologically useful, are the desiderata these modifiers of nutrition attempt to realize, and it is here that we might apply the maxim of Schwelgue: "When it is expedient to act in a disease, it is the change which is essential." It is important to remember, that many remedies seem to produce opposite effects according to the condition in which they find the organ on which they act, as if their action is limited by putting the organ in a state contrary to that in which it was at the moment when the remedy influenced it. This observation is principally verified in the case of the modifiers of the nervous system and of nutrition.