

Here again we must append *not necessarily*—because the history of narcotic poisoning reveals to us the concordance of a ghastly face and a congested brain.

The very limitation to congestion, admitting this has been agreed upon, renews the old question about power and debility. It may be due to either. Which is the efficient cause in epilepsy? Our author inclines to the last named. A similar opinion was entertained by Mr. Solly of London, and we are rather astonished at finding no allusion to it in the work under notice. Mr. S. ingeniously supposed that the fullness of the veins proceeded from deficient contraction of the muscular coat of the capillaries of the brain; and when it is remembered it is an explanation offered about an event which is sealed to human observation, we may admire its applicability, while we refrain from placing in it implicit confidence.

So in like manner the distinction is preserved as to the existent state of the muscular system. The late Dr. Marshall Hall, as perhaps is well known, devised a singular theory to account for the epileptic seizure; and one which, from its pretensions to simple exposition upon something like principles as easily comprehensible as those of mechanics, was likely to ingratiate itself into the confidence and acceptance of not a few of his readers. He gave it the classic name of *trachelismus*; and his hypothesis was, that the blood was prevented returning from the brain by the spasm of certain muscles in the neck. Here again was power, and that too of a most effective character. His notion has been impugned by Romberg and others,—as we think our author might have advantageously informed those who consult him. R. says—and he is an authority of great weight—that no proof is given that such compression is really effected by the spasm of the cervical muscles; and, among other instances of an opponent kind, refers to the abortive forms of epilepsy, which are remarkable in consequence of the prevalence of psychical disturbance, while scarcely any convulsive action is manifested. Our author holds opinions different to those generally accepted on the subject of muscular contraction, and they fully warrant the extension of the prevailing idea of debility to their peculiar condition during the epileptic fit. It was conceived that the muscles were over-stimulated by being irritated with too large a supply of nervous influence. Our author, however, takes up an opposite interpretation. According to him,—

“Irritation, however brought about, acts by exhausting and not by stimulating. It is not that these muscles are more supplied with nervous influence. It is that they are less supplied with this influence. . . . It would seem indeed as if the disposition to muscular contraction were most antagonised where the largest amount of nervous influence was supplied to the muscles.”