

The author equally objects to any classification based upon the chemical analogies of medicines, because we derive therefrom no information as to their physiological or therapeutical actions. In this also we agree with our author. The object of the study of the *Materia Medica* is to aid in making the student a physician, not a botanist or a chemist only, therefore an arrangement which groups together remedies according to the parts of the body on which they exert their influence, or a classification according to their general effects, being more conducive to a proper knowledge of their uses, must be better than either of the former methods.

Dr. Beck is not satisfied with a classification grounded on the special action of remedies, as the following extract will shew.

“By some, medicines have been classified according to the particular part or tissue of the system upon which they are supposed to exert a special influence. This is the basis upon which the classification of Alibert and Eberle are founded. Specious as this is, it is nevertheless obnoxious to an objection which is insuperable. With the exception of those agents which are purely local in their operation, there is no medicine which is limited in its effects to any particular part of the body. Directly or indirectly, it extends its action more or less to other portions of the system. In applying it, therefore, to individual articles, the principle of the classification is constantly violated. For example, opium, in a classification of this kind, is placed under the head of those agents which exert their influence on the nervous system; and so it does—but besides this it also exerts an influence on the vascular system, on the skin, on the liver, on the urinary organs, and thus the very principle of the classification is contradicted. So also with almost every other agent. This, therefore, can never furnish a solid foundation for a classification.”

We cannot quite agree with these observations. Is not, it may be asked, the vascular system, the hair, the liver supplied with nerves, and is not the influence of opium exerted on these nerves? If so, the principles of the classification cannot be justly said to be contradicted. Is it not even probable that opium, after having been absorbed, exercises its power upon the sentient extremities of the nerves, which they transmit to the nervous centres?

We shall conclude, at least for the present, by giving the author's classification, in his own words. It will recommend itself to the student by its simplicity, and will be found a valuable aid to him in acquiring a knowledge of the actions and uses of the different articles of the *Materia Medica*.

“From what has been said, it must be obvious how difficult, if not impossible, it must be to frame a classification that shall be unexceptionable. In the one which I propose as the basis for the present course of lectures, my only objects will be simplicity and