

come to hospital. Lying in bed is a cause of debility, as I have just said ; hence, surgeons put on starch bandages in fractures, and send such poor patients into the air. If you find in a patient a very irritable nervous system, you will have also waste going on, waste even during sleep. Excessive exercise also will waste the muscles, but proper or moderate exercise strengthens them. In London, one finds both extremes—one set of people all idle or sedentary, especially patients of the upper classes, or of the female sex ; their general debility is cured by prescribing exercise. They tell a good story of Dr Jephson, who used to cure his delicate lady patients at Leamington, by taking them out in a carriage,—but, suddenly, something happening which obliged the debilitated patients to walk back over a rough road, three or four miles. We have, then, patients also of the other extreme, who are “walked off their legs” by the toil of business. A few glasses of wine, or a little bark and ammonia does much good in such cases as tonics. You see at once, therefore, that it is a tedious process to find out if a patient owes his or her debility to waste of “tension,” or diminished “tension,” or whether you are to over-rest or to over-exercise. Sleep too, I may tell you (at least, healthy sleep), very much depends on healthy waste of tissues and their normal reparation.

Now, about tonics. You naturally will say, What about quinine ? Muller says, we know of no “direct tonics.” I believe, also, there are no tonics but those which wind up the “tension” of our tissues. Whatever will do that has, for all practical purposes, been regarded as a tonic. Well, iron and quinine are the favourite tonics, but in some cases a purgative would be a better tonic, so as to act on the liver ; in some other cases, wine is a direct tonic, or food. A gentleman recently came to me suffering under “general debility.” I saw at once his liver was the diseased part. Some small doses acted, as I call it, as a direct tonic. In another case of debility, I detected “Bright’s disease,” with intense debility. Well ! we “snuffed the candle.” The flame thickening, and dull from excess of effort, tissue was changed by one or two doses of elaterium into the cheerful glow of comparative health ; elaterium here I call a tonic. We took away what prevented the tension of the vital forces, and the elaterium produced a state of strength ; in short, acted as the very best sort of tonic. We may scientifically vary our medicine, but I call them all “tonics,” as establishing the normal “tension” of the constitution adapted to health.

In the recent “blood-letting controversy,” or discussion as to the nature of what is called inflammation, almost everything turns on the meaning of the terms “debility,” or asthenic power, active effusion in