

ART. XXII.—*The Chemical Treatment of disease.* By C. B. HALL, M. D.,
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MR. PRESIDENT,—The short time you can spare for an essay could be readily occupied in naming the different hypotheses advanced for the explanation of the *modus operandi* of medicines, all at variance with one another, all failing when put to the test of practice, and yet none without some grounds of physiological truth for their foundation.

I propose, therefore, that we leave as we find them, those sound principles of nosology that have stood already the experience of men of learning and thought, and devote a few minutes to the consideration of Liebig and Müller's opinion, that inflammation is an oxydized state of the proteine, and that all disease is the result of disarrangement of the affinities of particles, and see how far a chemical treatment may serve as an adjunct to a regular course of medicine. We do know of strange chemical changes constantly attending the animal economy. Thus in the normal state, the gastric juice, the almost first stage in nutrition, is acidulous, while the blood, the result of this digestion, is alkaline. Again we have the secretion from the liver, the largest secreting organ in the body, with an alkaline base, while the product of the no less important organ, the kidneys, is uric acid. We have also the oleaginous and albuminous secretions, the representatives of nitrogen and carbon, as we find others of oxygen and hydrogen, the two other elementary principles of all organic compounds. This in the healthy state. How innumerable the effects of their slightest variation in disease! Not acknowledging the theory that this constitutes disease, but simply viewing them as co-incidents and their regulation as concomitants.

Take, for instance, the simplest form of congestion, or perhaps more properly, torpor of the liver, found in the moderate drinker, particularly the beer-drinker, and more particularly when in moderation he has taken a little extra, with a few glasses of spirits, you find the tongue coated with heavy white fur, the gums pale and the fauces dry, the patient complains not so much of constipation of the bowels, as a difficulty in passing what he calls a gummy, sticky sort of substance, which clings to him with a tenacity almost immovable, and of a dark green colour, with very little odour, and attended by smarting, but no pain. The remedy for this is blue pill and black-draught, or as an old friend of mine in the country takes, ten grains of submuriæ hyd. followed by salts and senna. Chemically this is an acidulous excess, both in stomach and liver, and ten grains of carbonate of soda to act on the stomach, and ten of bi. tart. potass. to neutralize the hepatic secretion, in a glass of cold water, will often effect a cure in a few hours.

One of the most troublesome attendants of bilious as well as infantile remittent fever is the constant passing of green bile with mucus, showing its irritating effect on the membrane, thus provoking the febrile action and otherwise retarding the cure. I do not mean to say that liq. potass. or any other preparation of that alkali will cure bilious fever, but there is no doubt their use will correct this abnormal secretion and thus effect one of the most important indications.

On the treatment of dysentery or diarrhœa, or whatever name you give to the various bowel complaints of children, you find a double action or one extreme