

organs and upon the general system. In inflammation there is an engorged state of the capillaries of the inflamed part, and this engorgement depends on an enfeebled condition of those vessels. Now, so far as blood-letting has the effect of relieving the overloaded and dilated capillaries, and allowing them an opportunity to recover their natural tone and contractility, thus far it may be beneficial and no farther. But daily observation teaches us that in many cases of acute inflammation, the relief occasioned by the bleeding is but temporary, the enfeebled capillaries not being assisted by any remedies acting directly upon them, and tending to restore their normal tone and vigor, soon become again engorged with blood, and the symptoms which the blood had for a time relieved are again as bad as ever.

This we often see exemplified in cases of pneumonia and pleurisy. A free bleeding is followed by prompt relief of the pain and dyspnoea, but this amelioration is of short duration; in a few hours all the troublesome symptoms acquire their former severity, and we must bleed again. And thus venesection is not unfrequently repeated several times, each successive bleeding tending to debilitate more and more the general system, and render it less able to resist the morbid action and the disorganization going on in the affected part. But if in fact the blood-letting does finally "control," as is said, the local inflammatory action, a convalescence is rendered thus long and tedious as much by the treatment as by the original disease.

In many delicate and anæmic patients while bleeding seems to be required for the controlling of inflammation, it is, on the other hand, as strongly contra-indicated by the already enfeebled condition of the system, and the physician finds it difficult to decide the question, whether it were better to allow the local disease to take its course *uncontrolled*, or to risk the production of a dangerous and perhaps fatal prostration, which he fears may result from the use of the lancet.

Next in the course of common practice come purgatives. They act by de-

pletion—by detracting from the general circulation through the intestinal exhalents, and by derivation—by producing a determination from the inflamed organs to the intestinal canal. This is the theory—but it is doubtful in a practical point, whether the benefit produced on the seat of the disease is sufficient to compensate for the injury to parts otherwise in a state of health. The bowels which of themselves required no medicine are attacked by cathartic drugs, irritation of their mucous membrane is produced, and general derangement of the digestive functions is the result. Constipation follows the unnatural catharsis, or perhaps on the contrary diarrhoea sets in, and to the original disease is added the medicinal affection in the abdomen, thereby complicating the cases and rendering recovery slower and more difficult.

Vesicants are another means of derivation, and relieve the distended capillaries of the inflamed parts by determining from them to the skin. But in delicate and sensitive patients they increase greatly the nervous irritability, and in those of a cachectic habit the blistered surfaces are liable to ulceration, even gangrene has followed the artificial inflammation in cases where there was great prostration of the vital powers.

Such are the principal remedies (except a few specifics which have already crept into practice, as tartrate antimony in pneumonia) now used in the treatment of the phlegmasiæ, and it were folly to assert that these are all positively useless or entirely injurious, for many cures have undoubtedly been effected even by such clumsy and indirect treatment.

Could there be some mode devised whereby local diseases might be cured by remedies which operate directly, promptly, and solely on the diseased part without enfeebling the general system like blood-letting, and without disturbing the normal condition and functions of remote and otherwise healthy organs like the whole class of Revellents—surely it were a "consummation devoutly to be wished." This is what the specific method proposes and accomplishes.

By this method of treatment we avoid