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Criticism and News.**

Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancet, Toronto."

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RECTAL MEDICATION AND ALIMENTATION.

That the rectum possesses no mean powers of absorption has long since been established; yet we fear its great importance is not generally recognized, and that insufficient attention has been given to the many advantages of rectal medication and alimentation. Many important diseases are in proximate relation to this cavity, and consequently are more readily affected by remedies, thus administered, than by any other mode. Liebig states that a 20% solution of salt injected into the rectum will disappear completely in one hour, so completely that an evacuation at the end of that time, will be found to contain no more than the usual quantity of salt. The fluid extract of rhubarb has been detected in the urine one hour after injection into the rectum, and abundant proof has been obtained, that most if not all liquid or soluble remedies are absorbed by the rectum with great facility. Hence we may confidently administer medicines per rectum whenever indicated, especially for pelvic ailments. Comparatively few resort to this method, even for diseases of this locality, because of their want of confidence in the absorbent powers of the rectum; yet the few who have given it a fair trial, seldom return to medication by the stomach for diseases of the bladder, prostate, womb, ovaries, testicles, lower bowel, etc., etc. Medication by rectal suppository or capsule, is simple, direct and cleanly, and when indicated remedies are properly selected and

prepared, is very efficacious. The advantages of this mode are obvious; the stomach is left free for food, the disgust produced by nauseous medicines, their probable rejection by the stomach, the troubles of administering to children and delirious patients, and many other practical difficulties are all obviated. Rectal alimentation also deserves more practical attention than it has hitherto received. Although the practice has obtained from the earliest period, and is probably as old as the science of medicine, yet we have not availed ourselves of its great utility, to the extent which its importance merits. Herodotus states the Egyptians used clysters at certain times for their health, and the ancient Greeks injected wine, whey, milk, ptisan, broth of spelt, etc., for this purpose. The Romans availed themselves of this method of administering nourishment, as a sustaining treatment, as well as most other civilized nations of which we have any record. The practice has continued to ebb and flow, with the fashion of the period, down to the present day. Many prominent physicians of the last and present century have strongly advocated its utility, and urged its more frequent adoption by the profession. The use of pancreatized enemata has been known for over two hundred years. It is mentioned in a Latin treatise published in 1671. It behoves us then not to permit this important means of sustaining life, under adverse circumstances, to languish or become obsolete at the present day. That its necessity and utility are as important to day as in the past, will not be disputed, nor has it been superseded by any other method of administering nourishment, when the stomach, from any cause, fails to perform its duties. Now that science has furnished us with the means of supplying food partially if not wholly digested, and prepared for absorption, rectal alimentation should attain better results than in former days, and should be more frequently resorted to, if we would avail ourselves of every means in the interest of our patient. Pancreatized and peptonized aliment, in a liquid or semi-liquid form, is readily absorbed by the rectum, and will sustain life for an indefinite period. Its utility in the large majority of diseases is so obvious, that enumeration would be superfluous. We have barely hinted at a few of the points of this very important subject, but all will easily conceive its necessity in every-day practice, and we trust will not fail to recognize its great importance,