

I am persuaded that, in order to secure the best treatment, constitutional and local, of diphtheria, it is necessary that the physician should accept the following propositions:—

1st. The specific principle of diphtheria, in all probability, enters the blood, in ordinary cases, through the lungs; and after an incubative period, which varies from a few hours to seven or eight days, produces the symptoms which characterize the disease.

2nd. Facts do not justify the belief that the system can be protected by antiseptic or preservative medicines administered internally. A quantity of this kind of medicine, introduced into the system, sufficient to preserve the blood and tissues from the action of the diphtheritic virus, would, there is every reason to think, be so large as to arrest molecular action, and therefore the functions of organs, and occasion death.

3rd. There is no known antidote for diphtheria, in the sense in which quinia is an antidote for malarial diseases, and no more probability that such an antidote will be discovered than for scarlet fever or typhoid fever.

4th. Diphtheria, like erysipelas, has no fixed duration. It may cease in two or three days or continue as many weeks; but the specific poison acts with more intensity in the commencement than subsequently, and its energy gradually abates. Hence, a diphtheritic inflammation, which arises in the beginning of diphtheria, as laryngitis, is more severe and dangerous than when the malady has continued a few days.

5th. The indication of treatment is to sustain the patient by the most nutritious diet, by tonics, and stimulants; and to employ other measures, general and local, as adjuvants, to meet special indications which may arise. The rules of treatment appropriate for scarlet fever, apply for the most part to diphtheria. Local treatment of the inflammations should be unirritating, and designed to prevent putrefactive changes, and septic poisoning. Irritating applications which produce pain lasting more than a few minutes, or which increase the area or degree of redness, are apt to do

harm, and increase the extent and thickness of the pseudo-membrane.

*General Treatment.*—This may be conveniently considered under the three heads, food, stimulants, and tonics. All physicians of experience recognize the importance of the use of the most nutritious and easily digested food, and the preservation of the appetite—for the safety of the patient requires that he should retain, as far as possible, his flesh and strength. The more nutritious and easily digested the food, given in sufficient quantity, with the appetite preserved, the less, obviously, the danger of the fatal prostration, which so frequently occurs suddenly and unexpectedly in grave cases. Beef-tea, or the expressed juice of meat, milk with farinaceous food, etc., should be administered every two or three hours, or to the full extent, without overtaxing digestion. Failure of the appetite, and refusal to take food, are justly regarded as very unfavourable signs. One objection to the use of the brush, instead of spraying the fauces, with the atomizer, is that it is more apt to provoke vomiting, by which nutriment, that is so much required, is lost. In malignant cases of diphtheria, as in scarlet fever of a similar type, patients are sometimes allowed to slumber too long without nutriment. It is the slumber of toxæmia, and should be interrupted at stated times, in order to give the food.

The same rule holds true in diphtheria as in other acute infectious maladies, that while mild cases do well without alcoholic stimulants, they are required in all cases of a severe type, and should be administered in large and frequent doses, whenever pallor and loss of appetite, or of strength and flesh, indicate danger from the diphtheritic or septic infection. It matters little how the stimulant is administered, whether milk-punch or wine-woy, provided that the proper quantity is employed. Were I to accept the theory that the cause of diphtheria is a vegetable organism, and were to search for a medicinal agent, employed internally, which would be most likely to destroy it, or retard its reproduction and development, I should accept the opinion of Sanne that the alcoholic preparations more