

displayed in cases which differ very materially from each other. It is undeniable that in these diseases, instances will occur in which, from some peculiar complications either constitutional or pathological, these remedies would not only be inadmissible and useless, but even positively injurious: as in the case of colchicum in gout, it would be most improper to administer this drug when there existed a highly inflamed or congested condition of the alimentary canal. But such exceptions rather tend to show the extreme danger of treating disease empirically, and the necessity which exists for using the greatest discrimination and judgment in the investigation of disease, and the formation of our diagnosis, and cannot be fairly used to display any fallacy in the numerical method.

That the system is open to abuse and error, like every other plan of human arrangement, cannot rationally be disputed; but those who zealously and judiciously prosecute this mode of investigation, however startling and comprehensive the results which they obtain may be, are not justified in confining themselves to general rules. The exceptions become the object of careful study and examination, and form the groundwork of separate problems, to be worked out with the necessary elements and by sound reasoning and great reflection. Nor is it by limiting attention to the mere combination of units, by numerical expression simply, that the great and fundamental principles of the science can be eliminated; the whole mind must be given energetically to the details of facts; not alone to note the number of cases occurring of one generic form of disease, in a certain locality, and the casualties or results following its prevalence; but every circumstance must be strictly considered, which is calculated to afford information not only on the pathogenesis, progress, duration and termination of epidemic, endemic and sporadic diseases, but also on the influences which have been observed to govern their treatment. In such an investigation, the principal points to be regarded are climate, constitution, natural, as well as depending upon hereditary taint, habits, complication of diseases, and peculiar idiosyncrasies. So wide a field of observation necessarily calls for a sub-division of labour for its proper cultivation, and hence we find the tendency manifested by physicians to adopt one particular disease for study and remark.

It must be admitted, that in conducting the calculations connected with this department of medical science, many mistakes occur from a variety of causes, but principally from omitting some of the elements of the problem. In order to render these remarks as complete as I can, I propose in the next part of my communication to consider briefly the *sources of error or fallacy* in the numerical method; previous to giving some of the most prominent conclusions which have been arrived at by its aid.