

although non-nitrogenous, is to a certain extent explained, as they supply the means of maintaining the exalted temperature usual in persons, with the least possible waste of tissue, the loss of which we are to a great extent prevented from supplying during these diseases, owing to the tissues being unable during the continuance of the morbid state to assimilate the foods which are necessary to maintain a state of health. Beef tea, as a nervous food and also as containing a small quantity of nitrogenous material in an easily assimilated form is thus of great use, as are also the other meat soups, as chicken, mutton, etc., especially as it can be administered in considerable quantity when even eggs and milk cannot be retained; at the same time it would be folly to give it to the exclusion of these when they can be digested.

Dr. Mackinnon, therefore, while no doubt strictly correct in most that he says, is, I think, in error in deprecating the present free use of beef tea, and by his article would lead some to suppose it to be useless, and to deprive their patients of that which, even if its value has been exaggerated, is yet vastly better than giving nothing at all, and allowing the patient to sink without our making any attempt to give food, because what we would like to give cannot be taken.

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Kingston, Nov. 17, 1874.

To the Editor of the LANCET.

SIR,—I have stated in the number of this journal for last July that beginning with nursing sore mouth, dyspepsia, and dysentery, I gradually found that the search in which I was engaged was one of much wider scope than a remedy for these; that it extended to the class of diseases having their seat in a tender or ulcerated state of the mucous membrane. If this appears to be utopian must we fall back upon its opposite, and say that there is no general principle to guide us, that each disease stands alone, and unconnected, and that a tender and ulcerated membrane in one cannot be cured by medicine, which cures a similar condition in another. In what way then are the numerous cures obtained by others as well as myself to be accounted for? How did it happen that a remedy for dysentery was found to be suited to scarlet fever, typhoid fever and croup, diseases

differing widely in their symptoms, but agreeing in an affection of the mucous membrane? It cannot be doubted that had not the constituents of the medicine been decided by observations of other diseases, the rapid course of croup would have been an effectual obstacle to any investigation based on it alone. Following the same argument, how did it happen that in constructing the medicine an addition which gave distinct evidence of gain in one disease of the mucous membrane, gave similar evidence in all others in which I had an opportunity of trying it, and that a retrogression in one was a retrogression in all. Hence, if these observations are correct, the important conclusion follows that the remedy for a terribly rapid and fatal disease may be studied in another of the same class, where time is of no importance, and life not imperilled.

As in scarlet fever and croup the constituents of the medicine were determined before I had an opportunity of trying it in measles. The child who died after passing through scarlet fever (see *Lancet* for Dec., 1873,) had just recovered from a severe attack of measles. When I first saw her the eruption was dusky red, there was great apprehension, and a fatal termination supposed to be near. Two grains of the squill combination without opium were ordered to be given thrice daily; next day I found her at play in her bed-room, and in twenty-four hours she had in a great measure the aspect of health. Other severe cases of measles have been treated successfully, and I have no failures to record.

Dr. MacIntyre, of Hespeler, was called to a case of great danger on the second day of the eruption; this had a dusky red colour, the face was swollen, eyes tender, and the secretion of tears copious. Pulse 150; the age being eighteen years; some delirium; nearly sleepless for the two preceding days; breathing oppressed, and frequent dry cough. Four grains of the digitalis combination without opium were given, and were speedily followed by long and sound sleep. Next morning pulse 106; no delirium; swelling of face greatly reduced; eyes able to bear light; and cough much lessened. Other four grains were given, and by evening all the symptoms were farther improved; a third dose was followed by a sound night's sleep, and a fourth completed the cure.

Confirmatory of your suggestion in the Sept. *Lancet* that "in malarious districts the addition of