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"Plus apud nos vera ratio valet, quam vulgi opinio."

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ON DIET.

By DR. RUTHERFORD RUSSELL.

(Concluded from our last.)

Before considering the comparative value of different forms of alcoholic drinks, let me observe that the cases in which marked benefit was derived from their administration as articles of regular diet, not occasional stimulants, were all characterized by the feebleness of the pulse, and a difficulty of obtaining a sufficient quantity of sleep. This entirely corresponds with what our physiological investigations might have led us to expect. In such instances, alcohol in its proper form at once propitiated the appetite of the nervous system, and presented to it its most appropriate aliment. At the same time it is right to state, that the greatest caution is required in deciding on the class of cases which are suitable for this method of treatment, for it certainly is extremely injurious in many cases characterized by a feeble pulse, if there is preter-natural general irritability present. In such cases it acts not as a sedative, but as a stimulant, and increases instead of mitigating the evil. I have known immediate improvement to follow the withdrawal of all stimulants, in cases where the heart is at once feeble and irritable. Indeed, I do not believe there is any matter connected with the management of those who consult us that requires so much care, and about which, with all our caution, we shall so often commit errors in giving a reply to the question, What must I drink? Perhaps it may be well to give Dr. Bence Jones' *resume* of the various qualities of different alcoholic drinks, as

it may afford us some guide in the solution of this intricate and perplexing problem.* "Generally then, it may be said, that beer contains much saline matter, wines contain very little, and spirits contain none at all. Each year our knowledge of the chemical composition of these fluids will increase, and with advancing knowledge we shall obtain more clearness regarding the dietetic and medicinal properties of all fermented liquids. At present the answer to the question which is the best wine, cannot be given, because of the imperfect knowledge which we possess of the chemical composition of different wines. But even when full knowledge is obtained, no universal answer can be given; for that wine which is best in one state, or for one person, may be the worst in a different state, or for another person.— Generally, however, it may be said, that that wine is best which contains least alcohol, least acid, least sugar, and highest flavor. This is the best for a person in health, while for a person in a state of low fever, that wine which contains least salts, most sugar, most astringent acid, and most alcohol, will cause least irritation of the bowels, will furnish most nutriment, be most febrifuge, and most supporting. Where there is much irritation and much depression, brandy will be better than wine. In some states in which diuretic action is desirable, Moselle wine, by the excess of salts it contains, may prove almost as energetic and far less heating than the essential oil in gin or whiskey. The difference in action being that between cream of tartar and

* Medical Times and Gazette for Sept. 1854.