

have reference to the axial stab, and, moreover, the shape of the cup, pocket, or stocking of liquified gelatine is often very characteristic. On the other hand, a side stab affords a means of microscopical examination from the outside which might often prove useful.

Selected Articles.

THERAPEUTIC REFLECTIONS.

The prudent merchant resorts from time to time to an inventory of his obligations and assets, in order that he may diminish the former and increase or enhance the value of the latter. It would surely inure to the satisfaction of the physician and to the advantage of his suffering clients, if he would follow this example. This I propose to do, asking your indulgence if I bring before you true observations and experiences which are not novel to you. Indeed if my remarks call forth a responsive echo in your minds, this will demonstrate that I have truly given voice, as is my intent, to actual observations at the bedside. From such I propose to draw lessons and to elicit discussions, which may enable some of us to leave this hall better armed for the battle with disease and death which we are daily waging.

Enthusiasm in therapeutics is indeed unwarranted, for the history of medicine abounds in the rise and fall of the most brilliant structures, in the explosion of the most plausible theories, and, what is more painful than all else, the overthrow of remedies which have seemed to be so firmly entrenched in the minds of the foremost physicians for so long a period that they seemed impregnable against all attacks. I need but call from the shadows of the past the spectre of venesection. Though hoary with age, and lauded by men whose works are to-day revered, this therapeutic flower withered under the light of modern physiology and pathology.

Another remedy, once the sheet anchor in many serious diseases, has been dethroned and has taken the subordinate though most useful position of a simple anodyne.

Time was when in certain forms of peritonitis opium was the chief remedy, because it "acted as a splint to the inflamed surfaces;" to-day, Lawson Tait's teaching, that it is dangerous and that the opposite treatment by saline purgatives is more useful, is most successfully followed. Let him who grows fulsome in his laudations of a remedy, bear in mind how these mighty giants have fallen and endeavor to rescue the remedy he espouses from a similar fate by judicious tests and unprejudiced comparisons. What is the status of therapeutics to-day? What are the assets with which

the physician may meet his daily obligations to cure the sick?

Let us confess that the materia medica consists chiefly of medicinal agents, whose action on the human body, with the exception of very few, is uncertain, and whose effect upon disease is either neutral or unreliable. How often can we conscientiously say that we have accomplished, by means of any medicinal agent or combination of such agents, the cure or removal of any disease? With the exception of quinine, and perhaps of mercury and the iodides, there is not a single medicinal agent which may be regarded as actually curative. And yet we constantly meet intelligent physicians who insist upon the contrary, and in so doing neglect remedies that are more valuable because their action is clearly explicable upon rational principles. Faith in drugs is almost as frequent among physicians as faith in being drugged among patients. As an illustration I would refer to a case of acute enterocolitis in a child which I saw recently in consultation with a gentleman who is justly esteemed by colleagues and patients. The usual symptoms, fever, a large number of evacuations, loss of sleep and appetite, etc., were present. Upon the antiseptic theory salol had been frequently administered; to meet other symptoms bismuth, Dover's powders, and other remedies. The simple substitution of intestinal irrigation for the salol, together with an abolition of the milk diet, produced a complete change in this case. It may be held that the latter course is that recognized as proper at the present time. But I cite this case to show that it is not so universally recognized as it should be, and to illustrate the difference between medicinal and non-medicinal remedies for the purpose of emphasizing the chief point of this paper, viz., the too frequent neglect of those non-medicinal agents, whose action in disease is so simple, rational and clinically effective, and the unhappy reliance on pharmaceutical preparations whose effect, like that of salol, as an intestinal antiseptic, has never been definitely proven. The vast majority of remedies in our pharmacopœia have no better foundation than salol, and yet they are constantly used upon the strength of so-called clinical observation.

The rock upon which therapeutics has always split, and which continues to menace us because we seem not to profit by the teachings of history, is the treatment of symptoms. In my student days, when venesection was in its last gasp, veratrum viride had in the South gained many adherents. A rapid pulse was the chief manifestation of all fevers; here was a remedy which in small doses perfectly controlled the pulse. A reduction to one-half of its rate could readily be produced. I shall never forget one of the first cases of pneumonia which I treated as house physician of a hospital.