existing in solid tumours, it seems most probable that they are formed in the same manner as the cysts in the areolar tissue of other parts of the body.

To sum up briefly what has now been said respecting the nature and growth of cysts:—1st. We believe that one class of cysts are formed by a dilatation of the ducts or sacculi of glands. 2nd. We include in another class the cysts which, originating in cellular and fibrous structures, may be supposed to depend upon a dilatation of the areolæ of those tissues. 3rd. It seems probable that these two classes include all or nearly all the cysts which we are in the habit of meeting with. 4th. In both classes some other change besides the dilatation must take place to convert the gland-duct or the areolar cell in a closed sac. 5th. The dilatation now spoken of is not the result of any mere mechanical force; it is caused by a process of growth—of hypertrophic growth—and is attended by a thickening of the wall which may even exceed in proportion the enlargement of the cavity of the cyst. 6th. This increased growth is also often attended with an increase in the developmental powers of the tissue composing the wall of the cyst, which leads to a variety of new formations—these new formations exhibiting a general correspondence with the character of the tissue or organ in which the disease occurs. Lastly. These cysts are liable to the same diseases as other parts; and when the stimulus to their growth, whatever it be, fails, they are liable to the same results of atrophy, viz., wasting, earthy, and fatty degeneration.

ON THE USE OF COLD WATER

AS A

POWERFUL REMEDIAL AGENT IN CHRONIC DISEASE.

BY EDWARD HUMPAGE, ESQ., BRISTOL.

Read before the Annual Meeting of the Bath and Bristol Branch, July, 1850.

In submitting to you the following observations on the treatment of many chronic ailments by cold water applied to the surface of the body, I feel it to be quite necessary to state, *in limine*, that I have no sympathy with the popular notion about the universal application of this agent in all diseases—a doctrine too absurd to combat in an assembly such as this, but one which, I am sorry to say, is believed in and acted on by a very large number of intelligent people in this kingdom, as well as abroad.

It is not my intention to enter into any details, but rather to make a few general observations on the subject, in the hope that my professional brethren may be induced to test, by their own experience, the nature of a remedy at once so easy of employment, and so accessible to all.

From the time of Sir J. Hoyer, who lived in the latter half of the 17th century, down to the late Dr. Currie, of Liverpool, physicians have been quite alive to the value of cold water as a remedial agent, but with

practitioners generally I believe its advantages are even now almost entirely unknown.

Various circumstances of late have favoured the reconsideration of the subject; among these I may mention the discussions which have arisen on the public health, and the numerous sanitary reforms now under consideration, more especially in reference to the condition of the labouring classes in our large towns, and also the reaction which has most evidently taken place on the subject of remedies required, manifested in the disposition to leave nature more to her own resources in the cure of disease, and the almost universal condemnation of the heroic treatment of disease, too prevalent in former times.

The subject altogether is very large and important; nor do I even propose any statement in reference to the curative effects of water in *acute disease*, but shall merely offer a few observations on its influence in many of our chronic disorders, cases which have been always the annoyance of the medical attendant, for which he *must* prescribe, and about which he often hesitates, and finally gets rid of his patient by advising him to abstain from physic, and try change of air, or in fact do what he chooses.

Dyspepsia, in one or other of its Protean forms is, as we all know, at the root of a large proportion of chronic disorders. Indeed one of the most common forms in which stomach disorder ends, particularly in men of business, and in those of studious habits, is a prostration of nervous power, or, more explicitly, irritation of the solar plexus of nerves or some of its ramifications, the effects of which are familiar to us all. Mental dejection, inability to conduct business, restlessness, sleepless nights, dread of the future, suspicions, a want of volition, and all those distressing sequelæ of an exhausted nervous energy, too extraordinary for words to convey any adequate idea of, often, alas! leading to an entire break up of the intellectual and moral natures. I need scarcely say, in such cases medicine is of little avail, generally useless, and often injurious. The highly irritable condition of the mucous surfaces at once detects the presence of a mineral or of a vegetable poison, in however small a quantity administered. Now, for such cases the judicious application of cold water is most valuable. Let your patient be packed for three-quarters of an hour daily in the wet sheet, immediately after which let him have the cold dash, and be rubbed down by an attendant; let him live plainly, walk much, use a sitz-bath after his exercise, and once or twice weekly let the skin be freely sweated by the lamp-bath, and I can confidently say that a month or six weeks of such treatment will do more for your patient than all the drugs of the Pharmacopœia. Once get the skin to act freely, and you impress the nervous system most advantageously; you open a *great sluice*, (if I may so say,) for the getting rid of morbid secretions, and thereby remove that congested state of the internal organs which is the *first step* to organic disease.

Another class of cases in which I have seen most valuable effects of the free use of cold water is, where the health is seriously damaged by uterine irritation

or congestion, a state frequently associated with menorrhagia, and one over which medicine has little control. In such a condition two or three cold sitz-baths daily, with an occasional packing in the wet sheet, or the whole body well rubbed over with a sheet dripping in cold water, will be found most advantageous; the patient will soon improve in strength, and enjoy the remedy, which at first appeared most terrifying. Such treatment, I must say, *en passant*, would do away with much that is evil in the management of non-malignant uterine disease; it would put a stop to the too prevalent practice of speculum using, and be to delicate women a far more agreeable remedy than the weekly exposure and cauterizing, which I believe in numerous cases does great mischief.

Hysteria, in all its forms, may be combatted by the daily cold douch and sitz-baths, so as to remove the morbid susceptibility of the uterus, which is so frequently present in these cases.

In the convulsive variety of hysteria the cold dash is a specific, and indeed has been, as is well known, the remedy most relied on by the best practitioners.

In all cases of impaired health, from excess of any kind, I do not hesitate to say, that the free daily use of the water-cure processes is the most powerful agent we know of. I might enlarge as to the theory of its curative power, but many of my professional brethren around me would be better able to do justice to this part of my subject. I need not remind you of the immense importance of a healthy condition of the capillary circulation, nor of the enormous amount of excretory surface possessed by the skin; nor of the sympathy which exists between the skin and the mucous membranes; nor of the vast extent of the cuticular superficies, all which facts should teach us the value of any remedy which can be brought so exclusively to bear upon it. The uncertainty of effect in our diaphoretic medicines is too well known to require a comment, and in the proposed application of water we have a means at our disposal which brings the skin into the finest possible condition for obtaining perspiration.

A few observations on the value of water treatment in many skin diseases and I will sit down. I have employed it in psoriasis, and in acne punctata with the best results, and a case now under treatment, of severe psoriasis, combined with pityriasis, is receiving very marked benefit from the daily use of the wet sheet, and once or twice a week a sweating bath, followed by ablation in water at 60° Fahrenheit, a point worthy of attention, as water under 60°, in these cases, appears to stimulate the capillaries too powerfully, and reaction is consequently too great.

In all cases of cutaneous disease the necessity of cleanliness cannot be too much insisted on, and many patients will wash, if directed to do it, *secundum artem*, who would not be otherwise persuaded to perform their daily ablutions; indeed I need not say that the mere act of removing the cutaneous exudations is of itself sufficient curative treatment.

I have laid these few observations before the meeting

in the hope that the judicious use of water as a remedy will no longer be neglected by the profession, but that on the contrary, they will calmly look at the remedy, and, where feasible, employ it; for by so doing, they will stop the mouths of ill-conditioned persons and illiterate quacks, who now say that we will not employ a remedy which cures the patient too quickly, too simply, and without the mystery of the craft. We are, as a body, too noble-minded, too disinterested, to act thus, and I am sure if my medical brethren only believe water treatment to be good in chronic disorders, they will adopt it freely, fairly, and without reserve, not fearing on the one hand the accusation of those, who, in their dread of innovation, denounce all new modes of treatment as quackery; nor on the other, regarding the scorn of those who laugh at the failure of physic, and the seeming triumph of the empiric; for, in the words of our learned associate, Dr. Davis—"I believe we shall best consult the interest of legitimate medicine by admitting frankly whatever of truth the particular system under discussion may appear to us to contain, and by pointing out dispassionately where we consider truth to terminate and fiction to commence. By so doing, we shall let it appear that our rejection of the system has not arisen from prejudice, or from want of attention to its claims, but because it presents along with a less or greater substratum of truth, a huge superstructure of assumption and of falsehood."

ON PUERPERAL FEVER.

By EDWARD T. HUGHES, M.D., MOLD.

Read before the North Wales Branch.

DR. HUGHES said he did not propose to enter into any account of the pathology and treatment of the disease, as it would be impossible to do justice to so important a subject without trespassing too long on the time assigned to the meeting, but he took this opportunity of recording his testimony in proof of its occasional origin from the contagion of erysipelas. After briefly noticing the earlier epidemics of puerperal fever, and more particularly such as were coexistent with erysipelas, he referred, among numerous authorities, to the writings of Drs. Ramsbotham, Rigby, Copland, and Holmes, as also to the valuable communications of Mr. Storrs, of Doncaster, and others, in the Journal of the Association, for numerous and undoubted evidence on the same subject. He then reported the following as the result of his own experience:—

He attended daily, from the 30th of September to the 17th of October, 1843, two severe cases of sloughing erysipelas in the same family; both patients occupied the same apartment, and his visit never took less than twenty minutes, as in the one case the arm and fore-arm were extensively involved, and in the other the axilla and integuments of one side of the chest. On the 10th of October he attended a midwifery patient, living at least two miles and a half distant from his cases of