

THE ALKALINE PERMANGANATES AND THEIR MEDICINAL USES

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The alkaline permanganates and their medicinal uses by John Muter

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AND
THEIR MEDICINAL USES.

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151. o. 96.

"The activity of the body is made to depend, so far as we can yet see, almost wholly upon one process—the union of oxygen with its substance. An animal, physiologically considered, is mainly a great oxidizing apparatus. By the incessant performance of this process the living frame becomes full of power, which is manifested in the various modes familiar to our experience. The flame of life is a state of burning—a process rather than a thing. A flux maintained by forces from without, and ceasing when they are withdrawn;—that is our life."—"On Health:" *Cornhill Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 337.

PREFACE.

THE introduction of the Permanganate of Potash into the British Pharmacopœia has seemed, to the author of the following pages, to afford a favourable occasion for offering to the medical public, a few observations on the nature and therapeutical uses of the permanganate salts, which appear to him to be calculated, by their composition and properties, to supply an important want long felt in practical medicine, namely, non-deleterious substances possessed of the power of neutralizing those subtle poisons which, there are good

reasons for thinking, are the causes of the so-called zymotic and other such diseases. Whether the peculiar condition of the vital fluid, on which the diseases in question depend, be of the nature of zymosis or of catalysis, there can hardly now be much diversity of opinion as to the practical importance of regarding this class of affections as resulting from some form of blood poisoning,

Few inquirers have done more for the application to practice of this principle than the late Dr. Todd; and before entering on the matter of the present essay, it cannot be amiss to place before the reader the admirable therapeutical maxims which that profound and philosophical practitioner laid down in one of his latest works.

“1. That the notion so long prevalent in the schools that acute disease can be prevented or cured by means which depress

and reduce vital and nervous power, is altogether fallacious.

“2. That acute disease is not curable by the direct influence of any kind of drug or any known remedial agent, *excepting when it is capable of acting as an antidote or of neutralizing a poison*, on the presence of which in the system the disease may depend (*materies morbi*).

“3. That disease is cured by natural processes, to promote which in their full vigour, vital power must be upheld. Remedies, whether in the shape of drugs, which exercise a special physiological influence on the system, or in whatever form, are useful only so far as they may excite, assist, or promote those natural curative processes.

“4. That it should be the aim of the physician (after he has sedulously studied the clinical history of disease, and made

himself master of its diagnosis) to inquire minutely into the intimate nature of these curative processes—their physiology, so to speak—to discover the best means of assisting them, *to search for antidotes to morbid poisons*, and to ascertain the best and most convenient methods of upholding vital power.”*

Although long known in scientific chemistry, and latterly in use by analytical chemists as oxidizing agents, the alkaline permanganates, until their introduction as disinfectants by Mr. Condy, of Battersea, were not even suspected of possessing any active properties which could be made available in any of the useful arts. Led by the study of the part played by ozone in natural disinfection to search for an efficient and true disinfectant among

* “Clinical Lectures on certain Acute Diseases,” by R. B. Todd, M.D. (1860), p. viii, Preface.