

"Blood-drinking in Paris."

BY EDWARD CONNER.

BLOOD as a medicament is just now returning to favour in France. It has since a long time been employed for bath purposes, but lately it is being drunk as a tonic. There are in the vicinity of the Paris *abattoirs* or slaughter houses certain places where invalids can obtain a "glass of blood," warm and hissing, as it leaves the ox that has just been felled, and being bled. These "stalls" have more customers than is generally supposed. An ordinary glass of bullock's blood—that preferred—costs twelve sous. With beginners it is sipped with the courage of resignation, for it is a last resource. A water biscuit is dipped therein to inaugurate the new cure; the glass is ever kept in a basin of warm water to retard coagulation of contents. When accustomed to the beverage it is drunk like a nauseous mineral water. For the anæmic, the phthisical, the ataxic, and the scrofulous, the consumption of finely chopped raw lean beef is a daily event; every butcher in Paris prepares that now as a matter of course, just as he does a mutton chop, a veal cutlet, or a rumpsteak. And what difference is there between the chopped raw meat and blood? The latter is but liquid flesh and is more immediately assimilable by the system.

If blood be poor you are advised to enrich same by generous food and pure fresh air, in other words to make more globules, and eliminate the residue matters employed in their production. Is there anything astonishing then that the sick eagerly rush to fortify the blood, in rapidly producing the liquid flesh by consuming minced rumpsteak, quaffing blood steaming with volatilising life, drinking cod liver oil, or raw meat juice quinned? The specifics of the late Brown-Séquard were only the utilisation of the essences of the various organs of living animals to repair those of a corresponding character in man. The transfusion of blood by injecting it under the skin was but a "royal road" to the circulation instead of the round-about plan of the stomach assimilating the glass of blood, the raw steak, or the underdone black pudding, made from the blood of oxen and pigs. So think the debilitated who patronise the "blood bar" at the Paris *abattoirs*, and more especially during the spring months—the best season for this addition to the "thermal" stations of France. Will the supply of blood run dry? In 1891, the number of cattle, sheep and pigs slaughtered at La Villette was 1,901,360, of which 200,698 were oxen alone.

The "blood bath" is not exactly a novelty. It is, however, more common in the provinces than in Paris. The patient is brought to the *abattoirs*, where a small office opens into one of the many killing yards, the bathroom is fitted up comfortably, a small zinc

bath is placed inside a larger one, the interstice being filled with warm water so as to keep the blood from coagulating. A little warm water is placed inside the smaller bath which is afterwards filled up with blood brought in pails by slaughtermen, who are themselves smeared with the red liquid. After the patient has remained in the bath for an hour, immersed to the chin, he is wrapped up in a woollen rug for twenty minutes, then wiped with warm sponges.

Docteur Raspail was the great advocate of blood baths for cases of incipient paralysis, anæmia, and phthisis. By the by, it is a curious remark, but nevertheless a true one, that the healthiest class of workmen are the slaughter-house employées.

After all, the blood bath is not more extraordinary than many others. The ancients had their milk and oil one. To-day the "tripe bath" is not uncommon; it is prepared with the water in which the intestines of animals, with all fat removed, have been boiled. It is nearly the same as the gelatine baths, where a few pounds of glue are broken up, steeped for two hours, then placed in boiling water and the mixture poured into the bath that should be lukewarm. In Germany and Switzerland the milk cure is in vogue, and consists either wholly of skimmed milk or fifteen quarts of pure milk. Starch baths now replace those of milk. There are aromatic baths of thyme, lavender, mint sage and ginger; some of vinegar and alcohol; of ammonia, camphor, and common salt for the rheumatic. There are two "solid baths," composed of the residue of the wine and olive presses, and the other of the "mud" of medicinal waters, and there are some even from farm-yard manure!

The action of baths on the organism is very complex. Proust said:—"To appreciate that action it was necessary to consider the skin, as at once a place for certain chemical changes, as an organ of secretion, as an expansion of the circulating system, and lending itself, when necessary, to sanguinary accumulations, and the deturning of liquids from the internal organs." Now in all baths, more or less eccentric, but not necessarily valueless, they aim at exciting the skin, rousing up circulation, calming irritability, fortifying the debilitated, and tranquillizing the excited. Wine and brandy added to a bath stimulate; camphor, ammonia, and salt, assuage rheumatism; while tripe and gelatine baths favour the healing of surgical operations and reduce sprains. Why, therefore, should not, blood baths, and raw blood drinking exercise special action—though we prescribe neither, at present in England.

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