

Lectures on the Nursing of Lung Diseases.

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CHAPTER V.

(Continued from page 432).

THE same difficulty is experienced with many other drugs required in the medical treatment of phthisis, because the patient's general weakness added, in most cases, to the enforced absence of out-door exercise, affects, not only his digestion of ordinary food, but his capacity for assimilating medicines. It is very common to find that the most useful drugs set up so much gastric irritation, that the nausea and vomiting thus produced render their administration impossible. For example, the two most popular remedies at the present day, in these cases, are the Syrup of the Hypophosphites and Cod Liver Oil. Both are most valuable tonics; the latter is invaluable also as an aid to nutrition, when all the tissues of the body are wasted as they are in Phthisical patients. In the case of the former, the taste sometimes causes nausea at once; and even in those patients who are able to take the medicine at first, it is often found that after a short time, as is the case with so many other drugs, the stomach becomes intolerant of the monotony of the treatment, and each dose causes an increasing degree of nausea.

Such intolerance must be at once dealt with. Sometimes, it can be obviated, but, more frequently, the only plan to be pursued is to discontinue the medicine at once. This course is necessary even more often in the case of Cod Liver Oil, because the oily taste causes disgust, and the nature of the medicine induces very disagreeable eructations. The latter, moreover, frequently cause a loss of appetite and thus an active distaste for food which are most prejudicial to the patient, and may even result in such malnutrition that the oil not only fails in its object, but actually leads to a loss of flesh and strength on the part of the patient. It is obvious, therefore, that efforts should always be made to enable the patient, if possible, to persevere with such valuable medicines; and it is, therefore, often a point of the greatest practical importance to consider how this can be accomplished.

With regard to the Hypophosphites, there are various measures which the Doctor will

adopt to effect this end. For example, he may give precisely the same drugs in another form than the ordinary Syrup. Recently Tabloids of the Hypophosphites have been introduced. These are easily dissolved in the stomach, and often excite less disturbance than the liquid form. And, once more, to illustrate the practical point to which attention has already been directed, the mere monotony in the long-continued administration of the medicine, may cause so much repulsion on the part of the patient, that its employment has to be discontinued. In foreign countries, this fact is more sensibly recognised than here. In France, for instance, many nauseous drugs are made up with wine, while others are disguised as sweetmeats; so that the patient can often be persuaded to take the same drugs for a considerable length of time, because they are presented to him in a varied and appetising manner.

What was said as to the grave mistake of monotonous dietary for invalids and convalescents applies, therefore, in special measure to the continued administration of medicines in the case of phthisical patients. And it thus often falls to the nurse to devise means whereby this monotony can be obviated, especially in the employment of Cod Liver Oil. Fortunately, this is not a very difficult matter. The taste of the oil can be disguised in various ways, and the method of its administration can be varied as often as the patient desires. The old-fashioned plan of giving the oil floated on half a wineglassful of Ginger or Cowslip wine has many advantages; or, it can be given occasionally in Milk, or in Brandy and Water. It is very useful in some cases for the patient to take a little common salt after each dose of the oil, because this not only cleans the mouth from the fishy taste, but often prevents the eructations of which so many patients strongly complain. Sucking a thin slice of lemon is preferred for the same purpose, by some patients. It is a good rule, then, to vary the nature of the fluid in which the oil is given, from time to time, so as to prevent the nauseating effects of the monotony.

All this, however, applies most forcibly to the old fashioned "cold drawn" Cod Liver Oil, which, however pure, always possesses a certain rank taste and odour. The modern preparations, notably those of Messrs. Allen and Hanbury's, and Messrs. Burroughs and Welcome, have the great advantages of being almost tasteless and even pleasant to take.

(To be continued.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)