
FOURTH DIVISION.—OF MECHANICAL REMEDIES.

THE last subdivision of the classification includes those classes of remedies, the operation of which is merely mechanical. Under this I have placed Diluents, Demulcents, Emollients, and Anthelmintics. They are classes of comparatively little importance.

CHAP. XX.**OF DILUENTS.**

DILUENTS have been defined, Substances which increase the fluidity of the blood, by augmenting the proportion of fluid in it. Watery liquors, it is obvious, will have this operation to a certain extent, and, strictly speaking, water is the only proper diluent. But different mild substances are added to it to render it pleasant, and frequently to communicate to it a demulcent quality, diluents and demulcents being generally employed to answer the same indications. With the former intention water is infused on scorched bread; or a decoction of bran is used. Gruel, which is a decoction of the grains of the oat, freed from their husk, is the most common lubricating diluent.

Diluents are prescribed principally in acute inflammatory diseases, with the views of quenching thirst, and diminishing the stimulating quality of the blood. They are employed too to favour the operation of sweating, being given tepid; and sometimes to promote the action of diuretics, especially of those which are saline. And there are some chronic diseases, more particularly affections of the glandular system, in which diluents appear to be advantageous. Some mineral waters, celebrated for their efficacy, are uncommonly pure; and the advantage derived from these in scrofula, and some other morbid affections, can scarcely be attributed to any other operation than mere dilution.