

THE SHOWER-BATH.

The ordinary shower-bath consists of a number of small streams of water falling upon the patient from a perforated vessel. The effect produced depends upon the size of the streams, the height from whence they fall, and the temperature of the water. Large streams of cold water, if falling but a short distance, will produce a severe shock on the nervous system. Small streams will produce an equally severe shock if the water falls through a considerable space. Several years since, the shower-bath was the favorite bath in many water-cure establishments; but as it was administered quite cold, it injured many patients by its severity; hence, it gradually fell into disrepute, and the spray-bath has generally taken its place in health institutions.

The shower-bath is, however, very valuable if properly administered. It should be taken, as a general thing, at a temperature of from 70° to 90°, when it will be found quite effective as a tonic. The cold shower upon the head is quite injurious, as well as painful, if the water falls any considerable distance, and is applied for any considerable length of time. Used in this way, it has sometimes been adopted in penitentiaries as a mode of punishment for intractable prisoners. The culprit was placed on a seat in such a manner that he could not move his body or head from a

fixed position. A small stream of ice water was then allowed to fall several feet and strike the crown of the head. This infliction was so severe that it was more dreaded by the prisoners who had once received it than was the time-honored cat-o-nine-tails. The injurious effects on the prisoners was very great; not so much, however, from the water itself, as from its extremely low temperature, and prolonged application, together with the fact that the culprit was confined in a fixed position.

The shower-bath should be given in the following manner: Begin with tepid water, then change to cool, and at last, for an instant, a dash of cold water. Never let the cold water fall directly upon the head except for an instant. Begin with letting the water fall upon the hands and arms, rubbing them briskly in the meantime; then let it fall upon the legs and feet, then upon the various parts of the body.

This bath is very useful when properly applied, not only in promoting cleanliness, but also in exciting the superficial circulation, and in removing internal congestions and inflammations. It may be given advantageously, also, in some cases, after a pack or vapor-bath.

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