

THE BUFFY COAT OF THE BLOOD  
DURING PREGNANCY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In the seventh of M. Magendie's interesting lectures on the blood, now in course of publication in your valuable Journal, it is stated that Rasori (in a long article on phlogosis) asserts that the buffy coat is never wanting during the existence of pregnancy. Referring to the 39th, and three following pages of the Leghorn edition of the work alluded to, entitled "Teoria della Flogosi," which was published shortly before the decease of this distinguished physician, it may be seen that he professed a very different opinion, which a few extracts from the work, bearing immediately on the subject, will, I think, very easily show. He says:—"Blood drawn during the period of gestation, when there are no symptoms to warrant bloodletting, generally exhibits no buffy coat, or at least such as is characteristic of inflammation. Sometimes there is seen a very thin covering resembling mucus, in colour scarcely to be distinguished from the serum, but such as no medical man of experience would mistake for the real buffy coat; moreover, the clot has not the firm consistence, nor is there that excess of serum which is observed in inflammatory diseases." He also states:—"That when blood drawn during pregnancy presents a distinct buffy coat, this appearance should not be ascribed to pregnancy, but to a slow inflammatory affection of the uterus or some other viscus, which this state has tended to increase." He mentions that he has frequently had occasion to observe that medical men have ascribed the buffed appearance of the blood to the state of pregnancy, when he has been able to trace the cause of it to some chronic inflammation, which this state had probably aggravated. He thus concludes the chapter on the subject in question:—"I do not mean to deny the frequency of the buffy coat during pregnancy, but I maintain, in the first place, that it is not so common as is generally supposed; in the second, that it is frequently caused by some obscure inflammatory affection; in the third, that pregnancy, in a great number of cases, is accompanied by a more or less slight diathesis of stimulus, occasioned either by general plethora or by an increase of stimulus, which the uterus is, of necessity, at this period subjected to; in the fourth place, that these and other conditions of pregnancy tend to produce an increase of stimulus, and the consequent increase of the circulation and augmentation of heat, may cause the fibrine to acquire a firmer consistence than it would possess in a state of health, which, as I have already explained, is the cause of the buffy coat being produced."

M. Magendie also makes it appear that Rasori considered the *buff* of the blood as "the inflammatory element *par excellence*." Another quotation, however, from the same work will show clearly that the author looked on the *buff* as the constant effect and not the cause of inflammation. At the 38th page he draws the following deductions, which he gives as the fruit of forty years observation:—

"1. That the presence of the *buff*, as an effect, is a proof of the existence of the cause, namely, inflammation.

"2. That the more the *buff* increases in proportion to the two other component parts of the blood, the serum and clot, but more particularly with respect to the latter, the stronger must be considered the operation of the cause. Since, *ceteris paribus*, the extent of the effect will be in proportion to the power of the cause, namely, inflammation.

"3. As the same cause produces the consolidation of the fibrine, thereby allowing it to separate itself from the other two component parts, so the more the fibrine or *buff* becomes firm and cupped, the more powerful must have been the cause, namely, a higher grade of inflammatory disease."

I am inclined to think that the majority of medical men in this country, who take the trouble to observe for themselves, will coincide in opinion with Rasori rather than Magendie and others, who are of opinion that the buffy coat depends on the size of the opening made in the vein, or on the shape or dimensions of the vessel which receives the blood. The author of the article "Couenne," in the "Dictionnaire abrégé des Sciences Médicales," has another opinion with regard to it equally at variance with that of Rasori; he says:—"Hence it appears that the buffy coat of the blood is nothing more than the superior layer of the coagulum which has been modified, and, as it were, dried by the action of the air." I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

KEITH IMRAY, M.D.

79, Mosley-street, Manchester,

March 15, 1839.

IODIDE OF POTASSIUM IN ACUTE  
RHEUMATISM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—From observing some cases of acute rheumatism successfully treated by the use of the hydriodate of potash, or, more chemically speaking, the iodide of potassium, as reported by C. D. Mackay, M.D., in your Journal of March 2nd, 1839, I have been disposed to forward for publication the following cases, which were treated in the Manchester Royal Infirmary, during the time I acted as clinical clerk to

the late Dr. Phillips, then lecturer on clinical medicine in that institution; and which cases perfectly accord with those of your excellent correspondent, Dr. Mackay; to these I add my humble testimony of the unequivocal action of the iodide of potassium in subduing that specific something,—acute rheumatism. I am, Sir, yours most respectfully,

T. H. WARDLEWORTH.

Rochdale, March 21st, 1839.

CASE 1.—Richard Rairford, mason, ætat. 30, a stout and healthy man, was attacked last Christmas with pain in his shoulder, coming on after exposure to cold and wet; he had always enjoyed good health previous to his present illness; and says he has led an intemperate life. He is now much reduced, and he has not been able to follow his employment since Christmas; the pain has now extended to all his joints, which are swollen and exceedingly painful to the touch; he is restless during a great part of the night; bowels regular; urine normal; tongue coated with a brown fur; appetite good; pulse 80, and soft. He was ordered the following:—

*Calomel and antimonial powder*, of each iij. grains; to be taken in the evening.

*Senna draught*, an ounce and a half, in the morning.

26. Has had his bowels freely moved from the draught; much the same in other respects. Ordered,

*Antimonial mixture*, xij. ounces;

*Wine of colchicum*, half an ounce. Take one ounce thrice a day.

August 2. He is still suffering from severe pain in all his joints, which continue much swollen. Continue antimonial mixture, and omit the colchicum, on account of its action on the bowels. He was ordered to use the sulphur-bath every morning.

22. He has continued much the same, and, as he expresses himself, "better 'and worse," since last report. Omit sulphur-bath, as he thought he was worse after using it.

*Ioduret of starch*, half a drachm, thrice a day.

29. No improvement. Habeat cald. bald. omni nocte.—(So in manuscript.)

Sept. 8. He appeared to improve at first from the use of the ioduret, but he is now much worse, and unable to leave his bed. Omit the ioduret.

*Dorer's powder*, x. grains, twice a day.

9. He is much better this morning, having passed a good night; and thinks he shall improve under the use of the Dover's powder, from the relief he has already experienced in taking it.

16. Has steadily improved in his general health since last report; yet he suffers much from his feet and knees being swollen, and

which are extremely painful either to the touch or on the least motion.

*Iodide of potash*, half a drachm;

*Peppermint water*, five ounces and a half;

*Syrup of crocus*, half an ounce. One ounce thrice a day.

20. He now feels better than he has done for the last nine months; and he attributes his present improved condition solely to his last medicine. He now only complains of slight aching pains in his feet during the night.

28. Dismissed cured.

CASE 2.—Mary Austin, ætat. 28, frame-tenter in a factory, was admitted October 2, 1837. States that about six months ago she was travelling, per railway, from Manchester to Wigan; whilst on her journey she was much exposed to cold, accompanied with a heavy fall of snow. The day after she experienced severe pain in the larger joints; which was unattended with swelling, and which confined her to bed for nine weeks. She now complains of much pain in all her joints, which is considerably increased during the night; bowels costive; tongue clean; appetite good; urine normal; catamenia regular; pulse 60.

*Antimonial mixture*, xij. ounces;

*Colchicum wine*, half an ounce. Three ounces thrice a day.

6. Thinks herself improved, as far as regards the pain. She complains of the medicine making her sick, attended with pain in her stomach. Omit the mixture; take *effervescing mixture*, an ounce and a half, every third hour.

9. Irritability of the stomach abated; much the same in other respects. Omit effervescing mixture.

*Ioduret of starch*, one scruple;

*Antimonial powder*, iij. grains. A powder every night.

25. Has continued to improve since last report.

31. She has complained, for the last day or two, of severe pain in her shoulders, which she considered to be occasioned by a change in the weather. Continue remedies.

Nov. 6. Has suffered for several days past from severe pain in her head, which is now relieved from the application of six leeches to each temple. Omit the ioduret, but continue the antimonial mixture.

9. Is much improved in her general health; pain in her joints still remains undiminished.

*Iodide of potash*, half a drachm;

*Water*, five ounces and a half;

*Syrup of crocus*, half an ounce. Take one ounce thrice a day.

27. Went out this day cured, and she stated that the last medicine had relieved her more than all the others.

CASE 3.—Anne Carty, ætat. 35, admitted Sept. 25, 1837. She is now suffering from

severe pain in all the larger joints, which are much swollen, and, as she expresses it, "ready to burst;" all which symptoms were occasioned by exposure to cold. Bowels regular; tongue clean; urine normal; anorexia, &c.; catamenia scanty, but regular; pulse 56, and soft.

*Ioduret of starch*, xij. grains, thrice a day.

29. No improvement. Increase the ioduret of starch to one scruple thrice a day.

Oct. 6. Is much improved from the use of the ioduret; less pain in all her joints; swelling much reduced; appetite good, &c.

19. She is now so far improved as to be enabled to leave her ward, and all she now complains of is a slight swelling and stiffness in her right ankle. Ordered to rub it every night with the following ointment:—

*Iodine*, one drachm;

*Simple ointment*, one ounce.

24. She has improved to the present time under the use of the ointment, and the internal administration of the ioduret.

28. Dismissed cured.

## EFFECTS OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IN IGNORANT HANDS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR:—The following case is one of many of a similar character, which have come under my observation, of ignorant and illegal practitioners, who take upon themselves the responsibility of bleeding and prescribing for disease with which they are totally unacquainted, causing the death, or protracted illness, of many of our poor fellow-creatures. The present case is one of long standing disease of the aorta, and when first visited by this tooth-drawer and bleeder, the subject was in a state of great exhaustion and collapse. Without attempting to restore warmth by external application, or stimulants internally, he bled him (as he says) "without exercising any judgment whether it was proper or not, as it was not his business to do," merely because the wife requested him; not satisfied with taking six or seven ounces, which he procured with the greatest difficulty, he wanted to lower the vital powers already too much depressed, still lower, by abstracting a further quantity by "pricking him again."

It is high time that some measures were taken to prevent a recurrence of these cases of gross malpractice, which are daily occurring. Having attended the inquest, and made, with Dr. Watts, the post-mortem examination, I send the particulars, if you think them sufficiently important, for insertion in THE LANCET. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ISAAC MASSEY.

St. Peter's Church-side, Nottingham.

The first witness called was *John Marriott*, who deposed that he had known the deceased, *Thomas Glover*, 40 years. Deceased was at work at Carrington, on Friday morning, between nine and ten o'clock, and had occasion to heat a piece of iron, which, when he had done, he laid on the vice I was filing at. I heard a groan, and turned round and saw him down on his knees; I called for assistance, and said Glover had fallen down in a fit; on raising him up we found him motionless, but placed him in a chair, and sponged his mouth and temples; he was breathing all the time, but I thought him dying; he remained nearly half an hour in that senseless state, and then vomited a little something like gruel, after which he became more sensible and vomited again. He wished us to get him to the privy, and when there, said he must be down on his face, or he should die; he lay on his belly a few minutes, and then we got him into a public-house. I then left him, and saw no more of him; he did not complain of pain in any particular part, but said he was exceedingly ill; have heard his son and daughter say he has had similar attacks before.

*Elizabeth Glover*, widow of the deceased, deposed:—*Thomas Glover* was 54 years old; has been in middling health, having been affected several times in a similar manner, but was as well as usual on going to work at eight o'clock on Friday morning. I heard he had a fit at half-past nine or ten, and sent my son to fetch a doctor; he was brought home at half-past eleven, quite helpless, like a dead man. Mr. Spurr, who lives in Broad-street, who I believe is a cupper and bleeder, came to the house, my son having fetched him. I wished Mr. Spurr to bleed him, as he had been bled before when attacked in a similar way, and found relief. When he had bled him, he told me to fetch a surgeon, as he was not satisfied to leave him in the state he was in at that time. I think Mr. Spurr did not take so much as half a basinful of blood. On going to the Union Hospital Dr. Watts came and ordered hot ale with ginger; he had two pints at different times, after which he seemed better; complained of great pain all over, except his head; he was very cold, and I put hot bricks to his feet. After Dr. Watts was gone, he asked me to give him some laudanum; I gave him thirty drops in a cup of tea, after which he tossed about a good deal, and died in half an hour. It was my husband's wish that I should give him the laudanum; I never perceived him at all insensible, and he breathed quite easy. When Mr. Spurr was bleeding him he knocked his arm about, and said, "it's of no use;" it was his agony that made him knock his arm about. He did not bleed freely, and Mr. Spurr wanted to "prick him again." When he was brought home his hands and feet, and all over him, were as cold as death; and when he was