TREATMENT OF CHOLERA

ON BOARD THE

CIRCASSIAN, CONVICT SHIP.*

SIR,—I beg leave to transmit the cases of Martin Kelly and Ann M'Namara, persons embarked on board this ship, which although not so severe as some commonly met with, still, I am of opinion, had they not been early under treatment, might ultimately have proved so.

My treatment of diarrhoea is simply this. I bleed them to not above sixteen ounces, on the very first application to me, which has generally been in the early stage of the disease, owing to the very strict orders which I have given to that effect. I then immediately commence giving three grains of calomel, and half a grain of opium every four hours, until the gums begin to be sensibly affected, and the dejections, which at first are of a very light colour, and in most instances watery, have assumed a healthy appearance.

I then give them a little rhubarb and magnesia in peppermint water; and of the twenty-nine cases which I have had (exclusive of the four of cholera) four have this day been discharged to duty, and the others are all in a most favourable state; indeed a great part of them are only continued in the Return to owing the soreness of their mouths, and the danger of relapse from imprudences in their diet.

The ship is tolerably well ventilated, and the prisons, hospitals, and barracks, are daily fumigated and sprinkled with chloride of lime, and the people kept in the greatest possible state of cleanliness.

I am, Sir,

Your much obliged and very
humble servant,

WM. PORTEOUS.

Circassian Convict-Ship,
Standgate Creek, Aug. 29, 1832.
To W. Maclean, Esq.

*Report of two Cases of Cholera on board of the
Circassian Convict Ship off Woolwich.*

CASE I.

Ann M'Namara (soldier's wife), aged 18, was attacked at eleven p. m., on the 18th of August, with vomiting, griping, and purging, followed towards the morning by cramps in the abdominal muscles, and excessive thirst.

She says that she vomited four times, but the purging was almost incessant until eight o'clock this morning (19th), and she does not know the nature of the dejections farther than that they were watery, but the matter ejected from the stomach tasted bitter. At eight o'clock she complained to me, and was then suffering severely from cramp in the abdominal muscles; countenance anxious but not shrunk; pulse 76, of good strength. The vomiting had ceased, but she had been purged about a quarter of an hour previously.

I gave her immediately twenty-five drops of laudanum in half a wineglassful of brandy, and bottles of hot water were applied to the abdomen, after which she had no more purging or vomiting. The cramp left her in a short time, when she fell asleep, and continued so for about an hour.

At one p. m., she had a copious loose stool, resembling very thin rice-water, without any griping. She had great thirst and vertigo, and had occasional slight twitches of cramp in the abdominal muscles during the day, for which she took six or seven drops of laudanum in a very small quantity of brandy, three or four times, and the hot water was continued.

At ten a. m., she began taking four grains of calomel and half a grain of opium every four hours, and warm gruel was given for drink, which treatment was continued during the night.

Next morning she was much better; had slept a little; the pain had entirely left her; had had three or four loose dejections of the same nature as the one above mentioned; and about two o'clock she voided urine for the first time for twenty-four hours. Pulse 80.

The calomel and opium were continued throughout the day, and she had two or three loose dejections, each succeeding one of more natural appearance; and on the morning of the 21st they were perfectly healthy, and she rapidly recovered without any other particular symptom.

CASE II.

Martin Kelly (soldier), aged 28, complained to me on the morning of the 23d of August, of having been purged two or three times during the night without any griping. His dejections were described as being light coloured. He took three grains of calomel and half a grain of opium every four hours during the day and throughout the night.

At noon on the 24th, while sitting on the poop, he was suddenly seized with vertigo and a sense of faintness, of which I was almost immediately informed; and when seen, he complained of excessive weakness and great nausea, but he had no

* Communicated by the Central Board of Health.

vomited nor had he been purged since the morning, and then only once, and once during the night. His countenance was pale and almost ghastly; pulse weak, irregular, and about 80, and his skin was covered with a profuse cold perspiration.

I had him immediately conveyed to the hospital, and put to bed; bled him to $\frac{3}{4}$ vi; gave him twenty-five drops of laudanum in two ounces of brandy, and applied warmth to his extremities.

He expressed himself immediately relieved by the bleeding; the pulse became regular and full; the cold perspiration was succeeded by a fine warm moisture, and he had no farther unpleasant symptom.

The calomel and opium were continued every four hours, until the morning of the 26th, when his gums were slightly affected, and the dejections, which at first were loose and very light coloured, became quite natural. He then took a dose of rhubarb and magnesia, which operated, and without having any other particular symptom, he was this day discharged to duty.

W. PORTEOUS,
Surgeon Superintendent.

Standgate Creek, Aug. 29, 1832.

COLD WATER

IN THE COLLAPSE STAGE OF

MALIGNANT CHOLERA.

*To the Members of the CENTRAL BOARD OF
HEALTH, London.*

GENTLEMEN,—The perusal of Dr. Hardwicke Shute's communications induces me to transmit an account of a most severe case successfully treated some weeks back almost on the same principles.

On the 6th August, at seven p.m., I visited a young man, $\text{ætat. } 20$, who was in the confirmed collapse stage of cholera, attended with the following symptoms:—General coldness and purplish colour of the skin, from every pore of which issued copious cold perspiration, or rather cold water; breath and tongue cold, the latter feeling like a frog; no pulse at the wrist; cramps in almost every muscle, and the vomiting and purging of transparent fluid excessive; urine suppressed; the countenance, if at first in any degree shrunken, became in less than an hour completely collapsed, and the voice decidedly a choëric whisper. On the 7th the pulse had not returned, yet the diarrhœa was considerably checked, but an immoderate flow of urine for a short time was observed. The skin was dry, though

still purplish and cold; cramps not so urgent; tongue no longer cold; slightly crusted; vomiting quite as frequent and copious. On the 8th there was some improvement, some warmth of skin, but no urine. On the 9th, a slight tinge of bile in the evacuations; no urine; pulse returned, but beating slowly. On the 10th, motions decidedly bilious, and the last feculent. Skin warm and pulse better; no urine till the 11th, from which time he gradually improved; was out on the 16th, and resumed his labour on the 24th, having had scarcely any consecutive fever.

The treatment was as follows:—A mustard plaster was applied to the spine, from the occiput to the sacrum, and followed by a blister spread on adhesive plaster. An enema of starch and laudanum was immediately administered, repeated in three hours, and then every twelve hours for four days; but after every loose motion, three-fourths of a pint of starch alone were thrown up the rectum. No medicine of any kind, but cold water as much and as frequently as the patient desired.

A medical friend, who saw this case with me on the 11th, afterwards treated a pulseless old man, $\text{ætat. } 70$, on the same plan, except giving 40 drops of laudanum in chalk mixture, and speedy recovery ensued; reaction being so decided as to allow of bleeding.

I gave cold water *ad libitum* to the first patient I attended with cholera, and withdrew all stimulants, and succeeded; but many other remedies were also tried, and it was not till I lost two cases, and witnessed many deaths under other plans, that in the cold stage I adopted the simple method above detailed. Experience alone can decide, whether the counter-irritation be or be not essential in addition to the cold water. I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

JOSEPH B. WHITING.

King's Lynn, Sept. 2nd, 1832.

In premonitory cases, the astringent and opiate plan recommended to the medical practitioners of this town by my brother Dr. Whiting, has been marked by the most decided success in arresting the progress of the disease, of which there have certainly been *three*, if not five importations.