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To the Editors of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

GENTLEMEN—Accompanying this, I send you a short sketch of the cholera as it prevailed here in 1851, which, if you think of sufficient value, you are at liberty to publish in the excellent "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal." As the treatment used did not differ essentially from that usually adopted, I have purposely said nothing about it, and have only given the *facts* regarding the origin and prevalence of the disease in this locality. The etiology of cholera can only be fully determined by a collection of facts, and these I have endeavored to give.

Respectfully,

GEORGE W. HALL.

Carthage, Ill., Aug. 23, 1855.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE EPIDEMIC CHOLERA AS IT PREVAILED IN THE TOWN OF CARTHAGE, ILLINOIS, IN THE SUMMER OF 1851.

THE village of Carthage, Illinois, is situated in the open prairie near the centre of Hancock County. The land on which the village is built is higher than that around it. One mile north of the village there is a small creek, and another about the same distance east of it. Along these creeks there is a strip of woodland. All the well water in the neighborhood contains carbonate and sulphate of lime in solution. During the months of April, May, and June, 1851, it rained excessively in this region, and to such an extent that much of the high dry land, and all the low lands, were rendered unfit for culture that season. During these months, and July, the weather was exceedingly hot,—much more so than usual. In consequence of the rains, large and numerous collections of stagnant water were formed on all the low places, and places at all filthy were rendered doubly so by the rains and great heat, and rapid decomposition of animal and vegetable matter.

On the 29th of June a German came into this village, stopped a while at one of the taverns, and complained of having diarrhœa; he stated that he had come off the Mississippi river where cholera was prevailing. After resting a while, he started on, and went nearly two miles, when he stopped at a farm near the road, crawled

into a straw pen, and was found soon after in almost a speechless condition. I saw him just after he was discovered, and found him in collapse from cholera, and he rapidly sank and died. As the symptoms of the disease are so well known, and were so marked in his case, I will not occupy space in giving them. After the remains of this poor fellow were buried, the cautious farmer set fire to the pen in which he died, and it was burned up.

No more cases of cholera occurred in the neighborhood, nor any unusual amount of diarrhœa, till the 16th of July following. On the 15th of July a circus company performed in this place, several of the men connected with which had diarrhœa. They left that night, and on the next morning, the 16th, three young women and a man, at the tavern where most of the circus company put up the day before, were suddenly attacked with cholera; and in spite of every means used to save them, they all sank into collapse and all died before 10 o'clock that night. Two of the women had been hard at work the day before their death, but the other one, and the man, had not. The house in which these cases occurred was a large one, and so constructed that it could not possibly be ventilated. Near the house was a large stable, around which were large heaps of manure, and straw which had been exposed to the action of the rains and heat. About forty feet from the house was a large privy, and under the porch a cistern filled with water, in which much refuse matter had been thrown. The exhalations from the stable, privy, and cistern, produced a stench perceptible for some distance from the house.

On the 17th, the day after the death of the above cases, another woman at this tavern was taken with the disease, and, like the others, died in a few hours.

On this day too (the 17th), a man who had been engaged in attending to the other cases, and who had been much about the tavern for several days, though living at some distance from it, took the disease, and died. This man was an habitual toper, and had used liquor freely, as a supposed preventive. On the same day, also, the father of one of the young women first attacked, left with his partner in business, and their wives, and went to a village 18 miles distant, where all were taken with cholera, and the two men died soon after their arrival. The two women recovered. On the next day, the 18th, four more men took the disease at the tavern where the above cases occurred, three of whom recovered, the other died. The next day, 19th, a young woman took the disease at the same house, and though she lived through the first stages of it, she died on the sixth day from the secondary or choleraic fever.

As fears were entertained that the disease would spread, most of our citizens left with their families, and no more cases occurred till the 25th of that month (July). On this day, two men, both of whom had been much with the sick at the tavern, were taken with the disease. These men were both habitual drinkers, and had both used brandy freely for some days before their attack. One of them

recovered, the other died. Here the cholera ceased in the village, and no cases followed in the neighborhood till the 17th of August succeeding, when three young men, four miles from this place, were suddenly taken with cholera, and they all died, in a few hours (4 or 5) after they were first taken. The next day a brother of two of them was attacked less violently, and recovered. No more cases followed.

These men lived in a low wet place, and were remarkably filthy in their habits. They had all been engaged at hard labor in the harvest field, and had all used whiskey to excess for several days before they were taken sick.

By many the above account will be taken as favoring the theory of the contagious origin of cholera. But I think the results are explicable without the aid of contagion. In the summer of 1851, cholera prevailed extensively in the small towns and villages in the West; and wherever a *nidus* existed in which the disease, or the poison on which it depends, could germinate, so to speak, the disease prevailed, and it prevailed in no other places. Unfortunately, the tavern, where the cases occurred in this place, was surrounded with all the circumstances favorable for the production of zymotic diseases. It is, however, true that no cases occurred in this place except at this one house, or in those who had been there a good deal of the time. But of the large number there all the time the disease was prevailing, but three who did not reside in the house had the disease, and all these three were in a *depressed* condition from the use of alcoholic liquors. Those not so depressed, escaped.

So in the country; where the cases occurred, local causes existed, sufficient to form a *bed* for the poison, extensively diffused through the air, to increase in, and the depression below the standard of full health, in those who had the disease, produced by hard labor, and liquor, made them susceptible to the influence of the poison, while others in the neighborhood, not so much predisposed, did not have cholera.

DETAILS OF A CASE OF DISEASE, FOLLOWED BY ANOMALOUS NERVOUS SYMPTOMS.

BY EDWARD JENNER COXE, M.D., N. ORLEANS.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

It will scarcely be denied, that in the practice of medicine there are occasionally presented interesting cases of disease, which though curable by appropriate treatment, or the recuperative power of nature, elude our ability to correctly trace the proximate cause, or satisfactorily account for the symptoms presented. In a practical point of view, such cases form by no means the least valuable contributions to the medical journals. Having in my own person lately passed through a short period of intense suffering and no little anxi-