ON THE

TREATMENT OF DIARRHŒA, WITH REPORTS
OF TWO CASES OF SPASMODIC CHOLERA.

By W. LAWSON, Esq., L.S.A., &c., Cleveland-street, Fitzroy-square.

In the ordinary cases of diarrhœa, of which there have been, within the last month, many hundreds in my practice, I have generally found the following (universally I might say) successful:—To an adult labouring under a severe form of diarrhœa, with pain in the bowels, frequent dejections, at first dark, and afterwards rice-coloured, I give calomel, five grains; powdered opium, a grain and a half, in two pills: and follow it up by a mixture of prepared chalk, two drachms; aromatic confection, a drachm; powdered gum acacia, two scruples; tincture of catechu, half an ounce; compound spirit of ammonia, two drachms; essence of ginger, a drachm; cinnamon-water, to six ounces. Mix. A fourth part to be taken after every loose dejection, adding according to circumstances, ether, and tincture of opium. If there is vomiting, I direct sinapisms to the chest and belly; if cramps, to the feet and calves of the legs; forbidding all slops, and directing cold brandy and water, and solid aliment. When the diarrhœa is subdued, great care is necessary to restore the biliary secretion, by small doses of mercury with chalk, with a sedative, such as extract of hyoscyamus, and a gentle aperient of magnesia and rhubarb.

For children under six years of age, I have generally been successful with the following:—mercury with chalk, three grains; Dover's powder, two grains: mix for a powder; and compound chalk mixture without the opium; sinapisms to the pit of the stomach.

For food:—New-laid eggs and bread; thick arrowroot with brandy, as with adults. No slops, excluding even beef-tea, until the diarrhœa is stopped; then beef-tea, with a little portwine and arrowroot mixed.

During the present epidemic, I have treated only two cases of well-marked Asiatic cholera.

CASE 1.—A female, fifty-two years of age, very fat, and asthmatic, living in a kitchen, under which there is a cesspool, said to have been there without being emptied for upwards of thirty years. I was called to her on Sunday, July 16th, at five, P.M. She had cooked the family dinner at two o'clock, and had eaten freely of roast lamb and green peas, at which time she appeared in her usual health. About four, she became very sick, vomited freely, and was once purged. I saw her at five o'clock; she was then cold as ice, painfully so to the touch; the skin perfectly blue; without pulse, and without voice; still sick, but as I learnt, had not been purged more than once, the quantity about two quarts. I directed brandy and water to be given in large quantities; turpentine and hot water applied to the stomach; sinapisms to the feet, and had the legs, arms, and hands rubbed with turpentine embrocations. At six o'clock, she had somewhat recovered; but the vomiting and pain continued. The fingers and toes were contracted; cramps and spasms of the legs and stomach. I then ordered the calomel and opium pills, and the chalk mixture, with ether and laudanum. About ten o'clock the pain and cramps had ceased, as well as the vomiting. The surface became warm; a hoarse whisper could be heard; there was still no purging, nor had there been any secretion of urine. At twelve o'clock all the symptoms were mitigated; the skin was warm; the pulse free; the voice better; cramps only occasional; still no secretion of urine. I ordered a repetition of all the measures, frictions, sinapisms, brandy, &c.

July 17th.—At eight A.M. she was still improving, but seemed lethargic. I discontinued the opium, and ordered the other means to be continued, but being called away, I found on my return at six P.M., that supposing her much better, their application had been suspended, and the stage of collapse had returned. She never again rallied, and at twelve o'clock she died, without either vomiting or purging.

CASE 2.—A man, thirty years of age, living in a confined and unhealthy situation, in a house charged with the filthy exhalations of privy and cesspool, was seized with cramps and vomiting on the 5th of August. When I saw him first, he was cold, blue, and pulseless, the eyes sunk, and the face with an expression of horror and fear, firmly impressed with the idea of cholera and death; there was violent pain in the stomach and bowels; fingers and toes contracted; cramps in the legs, and no urine had passed. I gave two calomel and opium pills, and the following mixture:—Spirits of camphor, two drachms; oil of cajeput, thirty drops; tincture of opium, fifty-five minims; peppermint-water to six ounces. Mix. An ounce every two hours. Turpentine applications, sinapisms, brandy

and water, and solid diet, frictions to the feet and legs. These remedies were continued with slight variations for nine days, and the patient has recovered, but continues very weak.

In many cases of diarrhœa I have tried the diluted sulphuric acid, but have never seen any benefit from its use, unless perhaps on a few occasions, when it seemed to check vomiting.

I am perfectly aware that the cases related are of a very ordinary kind, and I only mention them as confirmatory of the opinion I have always held, that diarrhœa is not a precursor of Asiatic cholera. In 1849, I attended upwards of 3000 cases of the severest species of diarrhœa, without one becoming cholera; and I saw in that year upwards of 100 cases of genuine Asiatic cholera, not one of which had been preceded by diarrhœa.

This year I have seen many hundreds of cases of diarrhœa, which have been easily subdued; and I have only seen these two cases of cholera, neither of which have arisen as consequences of diarrhœa.

TREATMENT OF CHOLERA AND DIARRHŒA

IN THE

VARIOUS HOSPITALS, INFIRMARIES, AND DISPENSARIES IN THE METROPOLIS.

No. I.

MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL.

By Wednesday last, ten cases of cholera in an advanced stage had been received into this hospital during the prevalence of the present epidemic. Of these, five have already proved fatal; but it is remarked by one of the resident medical officers, that the disease at its present visitation has put on such unusual violence, and run its course with so much rapidity, that little hope of recovery has existed where the cholera has reached any advanced stage. The preliminary diarrhœa has speedily been succeeded by collapse, the intermediate stages noticed in former visitations having been altogether absent, or so transient as to be little observable. The usual treatment here of cholera in its malignant form is, first to administer a very full dose of calomel, (from ten grains to a scruple,) which is laid upon the tongue with little reference to the quantity, except a discretionary administration relative to the age of the patient, who is as soon as possible afterwards placed in a warm bath, where he remains from twenty to twenty-five minutes, or until some degree of reaction is restored. After this, two grains of calomel are administered every two hours, and alternately with this dose, Stevens's saline mixture,—consisting of chlorate of potass, six grains; chloride of sodium, a scruple; sesquicarbonate of soda, half a drachm; water, an ounce and a half,—is given. The latter mixture is also injected per anum, and during this part of the treatment, cloths wrung out of hot water, and sprinkled with turpentine, are laid over the region of the bowels. For the advent of the disease—the stage of diarrhœa—the treatment pursued has been to administer about forty minims of dilute sulphuric acid every half hour for the first six doses, and afterwards once every six hours, in conjunction with strong peppermint-water, and the results of this treatment have been, as we learn, in the highest degree satisfactory. The number of patients treated in this way for diarrhœa has been considerable; but as they are mostly out-patients, no record has been kept of their cases. Whenever the diarrhœa has merged into the stage of collapse, they have promptly been received into the hospital, and subjected to the mode of treatment first-mentioned above. On Wednesday, three patients treated with the dilute sulphuric acid, after being in a state of collapse, were reported in a fair way for recovery.

ST. MARYLEBONE GENERAL DISPENSARY,

WELBECK-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE.

At this institution, Dr. Armitage informs us that no cases of genuine Asiatic cholera have been presented for treatment. Instances of choleraic diarrhœa have, however, been numerous, and subjected to treatment with ordinary chalk mixture, chalk with opium, or catechu. In a short time the disease has succumbed to these remedies.

WESTMINSTER GENERAL DISPENSARY,

GERRARD-STREET, SOHO.

MR. ROBERT WADE, in cases of simple diarrhœa, is in the habit, when the motions indicate sluggishness of the liver, of giving a mild dose of blue-pill, and the following mixture:—Sesquicarbonate of ammonia, powder of rhubarb, of each half-a-