

## Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

## "CHOLERA MALIGNA."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—*"Taurus Major"* writes in your issue of July 11th, recommending the administration of sulphuric acid and opium in the early stages of cholera. Although I have successfully treated cases of English cholera with morphia, ammonia, and carbolic acid in mixture, I am now of opinion that opium should be avoided both in the early and late stages of the disease, inasmuch as it is a cardiac depressant in the highest degree, both in small and large doses. I hold it to be unreasonable to ascribe a stimulant action to the drug for about half an hour after its administration only, and to find that subsequent to that short period its action is to depress. I would rather try to account for the pseudo-stimulation of the vascular system by arguing that from the first it reduces the muscular power of the heart, and, by delaying the circulation of venous blood in the cranium, causes a cerebral excitement similar to that experienced by drowning persons, or by supposing it to have a special stimulant action upon the nervous system, which is checked in a very short time by the development of cardiac depression.

After considerable experience in the treatment of English cholera, I can say with confidence that chloral is a safer and better sedative than opium or morphia, and, when used with belladonna, an invaluable remedy for the diarrhoea and vomiting of that complaint. As soon as the mistaken notion (for such I affirm it to be) that opium possesses cardiac stimulant properties is recognised, so soon will the use of this dangerous remedy be discontinued in the treatment of diseases of the head, lungs, and heart, and not in those of the kidney only. In ordinary diarrhoea there is no better remedy than *"God's gift,"* prescribed with ammonia and carbolic acid; but in cholera, such is the tendency to cardiac depression, it is never safe to prescribe more than half a grain of it in the shape of morphia.

I was called to a case of English cholera about a fortnight ago. The patient, Mrs. M—, was forty-five years of age. She had been ill three hours, and was in the stage of collapse. There were all the symptoms of the severest form of the disease—viz., vomiting, purging of rice-water material, cramps in the abdomen and limbs (with the legs and feet rigid and bluish), and collapse. I ordered brandy and soda-water to drink, hot linseed meal and mustard poultices to the bowels, and the following mixture:—Recipe: Potassæ bicarbonatis, ʒij.; spiritus ammoniæ aromatisæ, ʒiij.; spiritus ætheris chlorici, ʒj.; acidi carbolic, ℥xv.; chloral hydrat., ʒj.; tincturæ belladonnæ, ʒj.; aquam ad ʒvj. Et recipe, acidi citrici, gr. xx., fiat pulv. mitte vj. tales. Of this mixture I gave the patient a sixth part, with one powder added every two hours whilst effervescing. The first dose stopped the vomiting and purging, and in six hours my patient was comparatively well. In twelve hours she came downstairs cured, with the exception of stiffness and slight muscular pains in the lower limbs. Here there was no reactionary fever, but complete restoration to health in twelve hours. This is an example of many cases treated in this way by me, a cure resulting in every one with from three to six or eight doses of medicine, in from six to twelve hours.

Now, I maintain that if English cholera can thus be so rapidly cured, the same remedy will answer for the Asiatic form, because the difference between the two lies only in degree.

Further to criticise *"Taurus Major,"* I would add that sulphuric acid may be useful in restraining an ordinary diarrhoea by means of its astringent action; but what, I would ask, will be its action on the blood, already so thick as to be almost devoid of flowing power? If tannic acid should be avoided, for the same reason should all acids; they bind the blood still more.

In your issue of July 4th Dr. Ward recommends ice. The objection to cold remedies is the fact of their depressant properties generally. As for the use of ice in thinning the viscid blood, it cannot compare with ammonia, the action of which, as a stimulant also, is of great service in restoring the circulation of the vital fluid.

The poison of cholera will, I am confident, yet be demonstrated to consist of some ammoniacal compound, the result

of abnormal fermentation in the intestines. This compound, being rapidly absorbed through a large tract of mucous membrane, rapidly induces an over-liquid condition of the blood. The absorption, being of so extensive a nature, tolerance of the local circulation is impossible of development, and the process of osmosis becomes reversed. It is probable that the circulation would very rapidly balance itself were it not for the irritation set up by the abnormal process in the intestinal tract, leading to purging and vomiting, which induces more or less of a vacuum, rapidly filled by further transudation of the watery elements of the blood.

The indications in the treatment of cholera are four in number. They are, first, to check abnormal digestive processes or fermentations. Carbolic acid is acknowledged to have great power in this direction. Secondly, to thin the viscid blood. Thirdly, to stimulate the heart and circulation generally. For these two purposes there is no remedy equal to ammonia. It is administered to the giver in cases of transfusion to prevent clotting in the cannula. Fourthly, to allay the irritability of the stomach and bowels. For this purpose chloral is superior to morphia or opium, in that it causes less depression, can be prescribed at all ages, and is not cumulative in its action.

In cholera infantum, a mixture of bismuth (ʒss.), glycerine (ʒiij.), chloral (ʒss.), belladonna (℥xv.—ʒss.), acid carbolic (℥x.) (aq. ʒij.), in teaspoonful doses every two or three hours, cures in a few hours.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

C. R. ILLINGWORTH, M.D. Ed.

Clayton-le-Moors, July 22nd, 1885.

## PAUPER-MAKING LEGISLATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I cannot say I altogether agree with your article on the above subject in every particular. You appear to forget that the agricultural labourers have not the same opportunities of gaining free medical relief as those that dwell in towns, and that the former, as a rule, are not so well paid as the latter. Many a man in the country can just manage to support himself and his family so long as they are in good health, but is obliged to fall back upon the parish during time of sickness, especially if it be long continued. The question is whether those who pay their dependants so badly should not be made to suffer in some way instead of those they employ. There always has been, and always will be, such a thing as oppressing the hireling in his wages.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Surbiton, Aug. 4th, 1885.

F. P. ATKINSON.

\* \* Our objection to the new legislation is that it tends to perpetuate the "oppression of the hireling," by perpetuating his pauperism.—ED. L.

## THE FINAL M.B. EDIN. EXAMINATION

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In view of the remarks which your Edinburgh correspondent has made on my letter in the *Scotsman* of July 28th, I must ask your permission to offer a few words of explanation.

What I said with regard to the examination paper referred to in the letter was that three out of the four questions "were to all appearances tests of a candidate's acquaintance with the systematic and clinical lectures and recently published work" of the university examiner; and that of these three the second and third were "to all appearances only in a remote manner tests of a good general knowledge of the subject," while the answer to the remaining one had been given by the examiner to his own students in a clinique four days before the examination. With regard to the last statement, I am told that the house-physician had selected the case which was the subject for the clinique; but, of course, it was not necessary for the examiner to adhere to his house-physician's choice of a case. Your correspondent affirms that "candidates who had none of the supposed advantages" referred to in my letter, "passed with as much credit as those who enjoyed them." I have at present no means of ascertaining who the successful candidates are to whom your correspondent refers, but I am very sure that the number of those who passed the