

considerable extent, and, in my opinion, is a medicine deserving the highest praise.

B. Calomel administered according to your plan has been our sheet anchor.

C. In the stage of collapse calomel in small and frequently repeated doses is alone to be relied on.

D. A patient of mine took upwards of 400 grains, was saved, and had no soreness of the mouth.

E. We have tried every mode of treatment, and been obliged to abandon them for the calomel treatment.

F. The disease here has almost universally yielded to the calomel treatment by small and frequently repeated doses.

G. and H. We have found the calomel treatment most efficient in early stage of collapse, and when the patient had become pulseless.

I. Having seen a great deal of the cholera in 1832, and attended patients both alone and with you, I can speak in the strongest terms of the efficiency of the treatment in the stage of collapse.

K. I consider the want of success with many, by the calomel treatment, has arisen from the large doses of opium combined with it.

L. My success in the use of calomel in small doses convinces me that all who shall give it a trial will be equally convinced of its value.

M. I beg to forward you the case enclosed, as proving the power of the calomel treatment to cure the disease in its worst form.

With the foregoing extracts I shall now conclude, with the single remark that those who may object to the treatment of the cholera by calomel, on the ground that they do not understand the mode of its action, should with equal reason reject the use of quinine or instruments, for of the mode by which that medicine acts nothing whatever is known. It is strictly an empirical remedy, yet it is nevertheless an invaluable one, and it is therefore ardently to be hoped that the testimony of so many unbiassed witnesses to the value of the treatment will not be thrown away, and that the profession of these kingdoms, in imitation of their brethren of the United States, will give it a fair trial, feeling assured, as I do, that having, like their American brethren, given it such trial, they will, like them, never desire to abandon it.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
JOSEPH AYRE, M.D.

Hull, Sept. 1853.

TREATMENT OF CHOLERA BY SULPHURIC ACID.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The reappearance of cholera in England induces me to address you on the subject of the treatment of that disease by dilute sulphuric acid, in combination with compound sulphuric ether and laudanum, as practised by me in 1832, and introduced to notice in a pamphlet I published at that time. In such a malady there can be but little time given to theorise on the nature and character of the poison, or to indulge in the fancied mystical properties of this or that particular drug, when a case is before the medical practitioner. He is called upon to apply a direct and immediate remedy, if possible, to the symptoms before him; the most prominent of which is the separation or precipitation of the blood and the hæmorrhagic discharge of the serous portion of the bowels. All the other symptoms are necessarily induced by this one. It is needless to repeat them, or to stop to inquire into the remote causes. There is the fact, and I inferred that sulphuric acid, as a powerful astringent and antiseptic was a direct remedy to check the serous hæmorrhage. The addition of compound sulphuric ether as a powerful antispasmodic and anodyne was obvious enough to counteract cramps and pain; still further the addition of laudanum as a sedative and astringent. The patient also drinks frequently of diluents, as barley-water, thin gruel, milk-and-water, or weak wine, or brandy-and-water, chiefly cold, and some of them acidulated.

It would appear that these are the remedies which meet the immediate indications, and although it is hopeless to expect to overcome the fatality of cholera entirely by medical art, still it behoves that the treatment should be reasonable and obviously aiming at the immediate and real requirements of the case, or it cannot be said to be scientific.

It is reasonable to expect that any mode of treatment which goes to contend at once with the most urgent and pressing symptoms of the disorder will be ultimately more successful than the boasted secret remedies of the quacks, or than the gross empiricism sometimes prevailing even amongst medical practitioners themselves.

In the treatment of the case on which the foregoing practice was founded the room in which the patient was lying was crowded with lookers-on, and consequently the air much contaminated. They were most of them ordered out, the window and door set open, and as great a circulation of pure air as possible was effected through the apartment. The coldness of the extremities and surface, and the want of arterial circulation in cholera cannot probably be so effectually overcome by mere external applications, as by directing draughts of pure air internally to the lungs, thus affording a more abundant supply of oxygen to the blood, and this acting concomitantly with efforts directed to restrain the flow of serum from the bowels, is more likely to give the circulation a fresh start, and restore thereby the natural warmth of the body. This view appears to be substantiated by the reported fact that several persons having been left for dead in rooms exposed freely to the cold air of the night, were found reviving in the morning, and ultimately recovered. The pure bracing air, in such cases, must have gradually revived the circulation, presuming that the serous effusion from the bowels had ceased.

It is not my intention, on this occasion, to go more minutely into the treatment of cholera by dilute sulphuric acid, but simply to draw further attention to the subject, and to remark that it would be satisfactory to have a fair trial given to it by the profession and the authorities presiding upon the subject, during the present existence of the alarming endemic.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,
Sutton Coldfield, Sept. 1853. GEORGE BODINGTON.

METEOROLOGY AND CHOLERA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—We must not be led away by specious arguments of powerful sanitary writers, as we have been heretofore when suffering from *visitations*, or rather *coup d'états*, of pestilential cholera; we must not allow ourselves, by a mistaken enthusiasm, to join the ranks in a popular outcry; our judgment as professional men must yield ready obedience to no probabilities, analogies, or coincidences, in forming a just estimate of our situation, when in the very presence of a formidable enemy; we have a higher purpose in investigating the most knotty question of the day or of modern times—viz, the true cause of the propagation of malignant cholera.

Through the medium of the ordinary press every one has been induced to believe that the discovery has been made—that the removal of filth and dirt is all that is necessary to secure immunity from its attack; and hence our reason and understanding have been voluntary slaves to our *sense of smell*.

Alas! if the immortal Jenner had simply looked to the state of the filthiness of the districts wherein small-pox prevailed, (and Heaven knows how frequently the attacks of this repulsive disease were found, in the past century, to exist in the abodes of those where reeking abominations emitted their fetid odours,) would he have discovered the only prophylaxis—viz, vaccination? If cleanliness alone would have effected the purpose of *prevention*, there need have been no other means employed, nor would any have been discovered, to stay that plague.

No one disputes the propriety of the removal of decomposing agents of known deleterious properties from the atmosphere during epidemic influences; but let not this duty prevent us in going further, and discovering the true source or cause of a most mysterious disease, which possesses unknown laws for its propagation.

One fact alone militates against the common theory now advanced—that when the cholera prevailed in the northern parts of Europe, in 1831 and 1848, in hyperborean latitudes, where perpetual frosts and eternal ice reign paramount—where cattle intended for consumption, when killed, are allowed to remain for months exposed to the elements,—the cholera destroyed with the same unparalleled intensity the hapless inhabitants as it did in the Sunderbunds in Bengal, where decomposition abounds. Like small-pox, it takes its periodical course, and speeds from land to land like a desolating meteor, aided by the peculiar constitution of the air; but which will receive a check to its progress when science has been properly directed to it.

To what can we reasonably attribute the progress of the malady? It is my opinion, modestly offered, and with due respect to the numerous persuasions of other men, that the changes of wind, ever producing, ever changing, *temperature*, *moisture*, and *electricity* of the atmosphere—and these again ever operating on the secretions and excretions of the human body, diminishing and increasing them suddenly,—in fact,

causing a loss of the balance of the proper and healthy functions of life—are the rational grounds on which to base our conclusions respecting the origin and dissemination of this modern fell destroyer of the human race.

The dynamical laws of the atmosphere appear to be regulated by the specific properties of the several winds. The physical phenomena of the earth are, in a great measure, in subjection to them, and until they are better understood and known by the public we shall continue to be in error as to our deductions respecting epidemics generally.

Before the grand discovery of a *prophylaxis* is found out for cholera, I expect a time will come, not far distant, when some delicate *philosophical apparatus* will be applied or adapted to exhibit or detect the *vital* from the *non-vital* condition of the atmosphere of particular localities, as *superinducing cholera*, even when there is no miasmata or malaria to give umbrage to the supposition, that decomposing substances are the *fons et origo mali*. This will be a triumph; and thus, when an unfit state of the air is pronounced, the residents of the particular affected district will gladly avail themselves for their safety of a temporary emigration.

I am delighted to observe that at the meeting at Hull of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the subject of meteorology has been cursorily remarked on, and its bearing on health introduced for the first time into its discussion. It is some years since I awakened an interest in this new branch of medical study through the pages of THE LANCET; and I am quite sure that when more is known about the winds, and their effects on animated creation, the beneficial influence of such investigations on the *practice of medicine* will be freely acknowledged.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Romney-terrace, Westminster, J. C. ATKINSON, M.D.
Sept. 1853.

EXTERNAL STIMULUS IN CHOLERA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The resources of professional judgment in the treatment of cholera are not so numerous and efficient as to render a somewhat novel remedy unacceptable to those whose lot it may be to undertake the charge of many cases. I am indebted to a lady, of heroic mind and great intelligence, for the hints which led me to adopt in the collapse of cholera the powerful external stimulus which I shall presently describe. It appears that in the most desperate cases, even when life has appeared extinct, the native Indians are accustomed to apply the actual cautery freely to the abdomen, not unfrequently with the happy result of restored vitality. The remedy, based on the same principle, which I have employed in three cases with complete success in the Borough Gaol of Newcastle, is precisely similar in kind, though somewhat less harsh and formidable in degree. A piece of linen dipped in brandy is placed over the epigastrium or abdomen, and ignited; the brandy burns away in a minute or so, producing a considerable feeling of pain, which renders it necessary to secure the hands of the patient. Slight vesication will probably follow, and, if successful, in a short time heart and pulse begin to return, and the feelings of the patient are greatly improved; vomiting will also generally be put a stop to. It is probable that the application may soon require repetition, the situation being somewhat varied. In one case, now convalescent, in which death was apparently close at hand, the most complete effect was produced by a third application along the spine in the lumbar region.

Time will not permit me to give details of cases; but having now tried the *brandy blister* in seven or eight cases of total collapse, I repeat that in three it has been entirely successful, and in others has had the effect of temporarily rousing the patients; and if, as experience has since taught me, in some of these it had been repeated with more energy, greater success might possibly have resulted. The patients, now convalescent, say that it is a *severe* remedy; but are quite conscious of its beneficial effects, and attribute to its use, without any hesitation, their restoration from impending death.

I have the honour to remain, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

September, 1853.

T. M. GREENHOW.

P.S.—When leisure permits I shall possibly give some details of the cases which have occurred in the Borough Gaol, exceeding considerably 100 in number, of whom eight are dead. The small number under treatment (less than twenty) are all likely to recover. About a week ago more than forty patients were ill at the same time.

SWARMS OF FLIES IN NEWCASTLE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I do not venture to suppose for a moment that I can add anything to the knowledge possessed by yourself and your correspondents on the subject of cholera. As you are aware, this town is now suffering under the visitation of cholera. The deaths yesterday were 118. This morning the opinion was that the progress of the disease had been checked; and at half-past eight o'clock this evening, when the Report of the Board of Health was issued, the return of the number of deaths for this day was 84.

But what I wish particularly to mention is, that the air in certain parts of the town is literally filled with a small fly with large wings, slightly tinged with green. I especially instance a space extending from the top of Northumberland-street, in this town, to the town moor, and even across the moor. The numbers of this fly were, I found again, greater over a sort of open drain at the end of the moor, which is crossed by the road more than half a mile from the town, there being merely a dwarf parapet to prevent any one falling in. In fact this fly appeared to me to be spread generally over the district, and where the town commences, there the insects are more confined in space, and crowded in a dense cloud, and are therefore more apparent.

I am not at all an alarmist, but I never in all my life saw anything like the quantity of this fly which I saw this afternoon when I went out for a walk before dinner. It was not a mere cluster of little clouds which could each be encircled in a hat, but a dense column, extending in space beyond the power of vision to discover where it commenced and where it ended. I palpably walked into it and out of it as I have done in and out of a London fog. I shall never forget it. What is to be expected from the death and decomposition of this mass of insect matter?

The condition of atmosphere which has generated such countless myriads of this kind of insect is a matter which your correspondents can understand better than I.

The place of which I speak is in the high and what is considered the healthy part of the town; but you will not consider it at all unaccountable when I state that two or three people of good condition, residing in this (apparently) advantageous locality, were suddenly and to the dismay of the community cut off.

I am not a member of the medical profession, nor a resident here. I enclose my name.

Newcastle-on-Tyne, Sept. 21, 1853.

J. F.

ROYAL MATERNITY CHARITY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Being out of town, and not a frequent reader of professional matters, on my return, I found THE LANCET on my desk of the 3rd Sept. In reply to your remarks upon my letter addressed to you in reference to the Royal Maternity Charity, I trust you will permit me, through the same medium, to put myself right as to my motives, however imperfectly I may represent them.

In the first place, Sir, I am thankful to be able to say I am not in that "hopeless state of mind" to which you significantly allude, nor am I one of "the class" who cannot be made to understand that "the time, labour, and skill of the physician, are as much his capital, and as much entitled to remuneration, as the similar capital of the lawyer;" because I fully concur in your remarks as a general principle, that medical men's time and services are identical with those of the lawyer, but the latter must give an account of his stewardship previous to payment, and to show he is entitled to his claims. As to the comparative merits and duties performed by the committee and those of the medical staff upon which you remark, so far as relates to the bed-sides of parturient women, the latter has the advantage, as the former do not profess any qualification for such an office, but they claim the very essential part of husbanding the ways and means. Now, Sir, I wish to put myself right with the profession as a body, because I think the services of gentlemen connected with it (as regards the Royal Maternity Charity especially) should be open to every respectable physician and surgeon in each locality to which the Charity extends, and ought not to be confined to inactive physicians, who claim a stipulated sum of the funds whether they do anything or nothing, and that the nearest professional man should be sent for by the midwives, when required, residing in the locality where the case occurs, instead of sending poor creatures two or three miles to the physicians, associated at present with the institution, who might probably not be at home, or would not choose to get out of their warm