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ON THE SANATORY CONDITION OF PARIS,
DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE
YEAR 1846.

(From the *Gazette Médicale de Paris*.)

The paper from which this account of the sanatory state of Paris is taken, is a continuation of a series of researches on the "Sanatory Review of the Year 1845, in relation to the state of the public health in Paris," a translation of which was given in recent numbers of this Journal. The conclusion which was arrived at from these researches was, that "the weight and the temperature, whether considered by themselves, or in their variations, do not appear to exercise any appreciable influence on the public health, or at least on the movement of the hospitals. The degree of humidity of the atmosphere, and the direction of the winds, on the contrary, appear to exert a well-marked influence."

It is unnecessary here to give the meteorological tables and details referring to the atmospheric changes occurring during the period now under review, the general results of these observations will be sufficient for the right understanding of the facts which are to follow:—

The first three months of the year 1845 [1846] have been characterized—1st, by an unaccustomed elevation of temperature; 2nd, by a very considerable degree of atmospheric pressure; 3rd, by the small quantity of rain fallen; 4th, by the prevalence of south and west winds; 5th, by the infrequency of great and sudden atmospheric disturbances. These several conditions were more marked in the month of February than in January or March. We proceed to examine their relations with the variations of the public health, and to shew the sanatory movement of the quarter, under the three-fold relation of the forms, the frequency, and the severity of disease.

FORMS OF DISEASE.

The first fact which strikes us is the relative infrequency of the more common diseases of winter—such as acute affections of the respiratory passages and of the joints. Not only were these diseases rare, but they were, with some exceptions, to be presently alluded to, in general mild. Pneumonia commonly yielded to two or three bloodlettings; bronchial catarrh was far from being frequent, and occasionally the thoracic affections assumed rather a neuralgic than an inflammatory character. We have seen for instance, in persons not inclined to asthma, intense dyspnoea, with wheezing inspiration, sense of constriction at the epigastrium,

blue lips, eyes surrounded with a dark circle, &c., suddenly supervene; and all without pain in the side, abnormal dullness, traces of rale, the least heat of skin or any other symptom of fever. The pulse even was not usually accelerated, but was oftener slow, and with an intermittence more or less marked. Immediate relief was experienced from a bleeding from the arm, but when this had once been performed the antiphlogistic treatment was altogether contra-indicated; narcotics had little effect, but great advantage was experienced from the employment of stimulants, both local and general,—ammoniacal frictions, or the application of rubefacients at the base of the chest, along the attachments of the diaphragm, over the præcordial region, and along the dorsal spine; internally, camphor, musk, strong coffee, &c. In other cases the affection of the chest put on more particularly the neuralgic form, and never perhaps at this period of the year had a greater number of inter-costal neuralgias been observed; they were very readily subdued by blisters sprinkled with morphine.

Though the ordinary diseases of winter were infrequent, the affections which more particularly belong to summer and autumn, were in a corresponding degree prevalent. From the beginning of January, and during the whole course of the three months, gastric fevers were very frequent, sometimes taking on the form called mucous, but more frequently occurring with a marked predominance of bilious symptoms; yellowish tint of the face and conjunctivæ, nausea, vomiting of porraceous matters, sense of fulness at the pit of the stomach, alternations of constipation and diarrhoea, giddiness, heavy or disturbed sleep, some heat at night, and general sense of weakness, were the most marked and the most usual accompaniments of the reigning abdominal affections. In some patients the epigastrium was the seat of a sense of sinking, which imperatively called for the administration of food; in others, on the contrary, it was extremely painful, the pain being increased by the slightest pressure, and shooting on each side under the false ribs and into the dorsal region. In one subject who was under treatment for a most intense bilious affection, with saffron-coloured tongue, continual nausea, disgust of food, and obstinate constipation, the symptoms of a sort of gastric or rather pancreatic catarrh, finally appeared; and at this period of the disease, and after the repeated use of emeto-cathartics, the bilious symptoms had disappeared, but the patient had daily vomitings of an enormous quantity of fluid, presenting the characters of saliva, being sometimes very slightly acid, but more often neutral. This condition

slowly yielded to the application of two large issues over the epigastrium, and the use of catechu internally. Finally, in some patients, the disease chiefly shewed itself in the middle or lower portions of the digestive tube; in these, the appetite was not affected, the tongue scarcely furred, the epigastrium free from pain, but digestion was accompanied with colic, secretion of foetid gases, and irregularity in the action of the bowels. Several cases of serous diarrhoea without symptoms of inflammation occurred in children, and yielded to the use of quinine and animal diet.

In the course of the month of February, when gastric fevers had already prevailed for some time, a considerable number of cases of typhoid fever were noticed. Most commonly these fevers put on the ataxic character, and were accompanied from the commencement with violent headache, sometimes limited to a circumscribed spot of the head, and of which the patients steadily complained until the setting in of delirium. This form was very generally fatal. We have elsewhere referred to a case of typhoid fever, which resulted in the critical formation of an enormous anthrax on the hip, and which M. Rayer has described under the name of *fièvre typhoïde charbonneuse*. We have also frequently seen certain symptoms usually among the precursors of ataxic fever—such as obstinate cephalalgia, with general prostration, heat of skin, and quick pulse, continued for eight, ten, or twelve days, without the accession of fresh symptoms, and thus constituting in themselves an affection which we shall vainly seek in nosological systems. Besides the case referred to, the practice of M. Rayer has offered one still more unusual, characterized by very strongly marked precursory typhoid symptoms, jaundice, followed by intestinal hæmorrhages, and numerous spots of purpura hæmorrhagica. The patient died about thirty-six hours after the formation of the jaundice, and on examination of the body a phlegmonous abscess of the liver was found, the characteristic lesions of typhoid fever, and in particular the tumefaction of the glands of Peyer and of the mesenteric glands, were entirely wanting.

Typhoid fever is sometimes complicated with genuine peritonitis, without perforation of the intestines. In two cases, elsewhere reported, this affection shewed itself during convalescence from the primary disease, but in addition a certain number of cases of simple idiopathic peritonitis were received into the Hospitals, chiefly towards the end of March.

It is well known that remittent fevers are of rare occurrence at Paris, and especially during the winter; but in the months of January and February a certain number of cases of these fevers were observed, both in hospital and private practice, for the most part taking on the adynamic type. If, without looking too much to this latter character, and especially taking into consideration the type of the fever, the sulphate of quinine was boldly administered, the cure was quickly obtained, and the success so certain and so rapid is in itself, an evidence of the specific nature of the affection. Several cases of confirmed malignant fever, with well-marked exacerbations, were also observed in the town. In one of these death took place during the third paroxysm, notwithstanding the employment of sulphate of quinine in large doses; the quinine treatment, assisted by the occasional application of

leeches behind the ears, with a view of combating the cerebral symptoms, the consequences of the paroxysm, proved more successful in the others.

It has been ascertained that about the months of March and October of each year, puerperal fevers are prevalent in lying-in hospitals; this year, from the month of February, and during the whole course of the month of March, these fevers were frequent in all the lying-in establishments, as well as in those hospitals into which recently delivered females had been received; frequent examples also, though less numerous, occurred in private practice. This diffusion of the epidemic in different localities, and under different circumstances, points to some other origin besides crowding and infection, and implies a more general occult cause; and as we have just seen that certain symptoms premonitory of typhoid fever may detach themselves, so to speak, from the entire morbid type, and become isolated in certain patients, so certain symptoms connected with the generative organs, forming part of the group of symptoms which constituted the reigning puerperal fever, presented themselves in an isolated form, in women who had been delivered twelve or fifteen days, and even in patients who were neither pregnant nor had been recently delivered. Among these were deep-seated hardness in the cellular tissue of the pelvis, pains of the kidneys, and of the lower part of the abdomen, &c.

Finally we may remark, that measles, for the most part of a malignant character, was very prevalent during the months of February and March, carrying off a considerable number of patients.

Such is a summary of the principal diseases which prevailed during the quarter; it remains to show on what common foundation these several variations of form rest. This foundation is extremely limited; adynamia and ataxia form its essential character, and are the only two expressions which can give the general physiognomy of all these affections, so different in their seat, anatomical alterations, and symptomatology, as the indication of the principal traits of this physiognomy, in each of the affections which have just been passed in review will shew.

(To be continued.)

TWO OUNCES OF POTASSÆ NITRAS TAKEN IN MISTAKE FOR EPSOM SALTS.

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(Read at the Annual Meeting of the South-Western Branch of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, held at Exeter, Thursday, July 16, 1846.)

January 14th, I was sent for by Captain C., residing about two miles from me, one of whose grooms had taken two ounces of nitrate of potass. He said about five minutes after having taken it, he felt a burning pain in his stomach, which was immediately followed by sickness; he then suspected it to be nitre, as he had that evening brought it home with the packet of Epsom salts. On finding it to be the case, he desired that Captain C. might be told of it, who requested him to take some mustard in hot water, and kept up the sickness until I arrived, which I considered sufficient to empty the stomach. As he still complained