

Original Communications.

ON THE TREATMENT OF ASIATIC CHOLERA IN THE STAGE OF COLLAPSE.

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AMID all the nostrums and theories daily thrust before the notice of the public, and claiming the usual degree of infallibility, it is cheering to find a thoughtful physician offering, as an excuse for calling attention to a remedy for cholera, "that it is in perfect accordance with every rational view of the disease." Fully coinciding with my old friend, Dr. Joseph Bullar, that the treatment to which he has called attention merits this description, I am anxious to give him, and others who may be disposed to carry out his experiments, that support and encouragement which I believe my experience is calculated to afford. If, as he says, and truly I think, a single case such as that which he relates "should lead any thoughtful physician who observed it to try the remedy again," it will be admitted that analogous treatment adopted by me in 1849, has still stronger claims on the attention of all who may be called upon to renew the struggle between medical science and a disease which has hitherto proved but too victorious. For Dr. Bullar will be as ready as anyone to acknowledge that a single successful case has, after all, comparatively little value.

In 1849, a considerable number of cases of cholera came under my care at St. Thomas's Hospital, soon after the death of my predecessor, Dr. Burton (who himself fell a victim to the disease), and when the epidemic was at its height. On first taking charge of the cholera-ward, I determined to give a full and fair trial to the following treatment. My patients, on their admission, were stripped and packed in blankets wrung out of hot water, as hot as it was possible for the nurses to use; large mustard-plasters were applied to the feet, calves, and abdomen; and the patients were then covered up with dry blankets and counterpane. This treatment, as in Dr. Bullar's case, was frequently complained of at first, and the patients would have rid themselves of it, had it been possible. Ice and iced drinks, with light fluid nourishment, were then given freely. The iced water was, for the most part, acidulated with mineral acids; and sometimes I gave small quantities of stimulants in a dilute form, or champagne; but, generally, no medicine till reaction was fairly established. Under this treatment I had, in the hospital, *sixteen consecutive recoveries*. They were, for the most part, in a state of profound collapse when brought in; but all, whatever the degree of collapse, were treated alike till reaction set in. In the subsequent stages, the treatment varied. But, after this cheering amount of success, by which I admit that I was greatly elated, there came, alas! a number of fatal cases under precisely the same treatment.

In private consulting practice, my experience was similar; that is to say, I met with a number of cases in which this simple treatment appeared to be highly successful, and others in which it failed. But the general result of my experience in 1849 was such as

to impress me very strongly with the conviction, that this sort of treatment was both the most rational and the most successful of any that I had tried, so far as regards the stage of collapse.

The *rationale* of the treatment I will not attempt to discuss; but I should like to know what evidence there is to sustain the assertion that "the rice-water secretion in the stomach is known to be a virulent poison." I know some disgusting experiments which directly negative such an assertion. Few physicians who have seen much of cholera will be disposed to deny that as yet we have very little ground for placing much confidence in any of the various specific forms of treatment that have been put forth; but there is now a considerable amount of evidence to prove that the simple treatment here described is attended by great relief to the chief sufferings of the patients, and is followed by success in many cases presenting all the worst features of the disease in its most dangerous stage. It has, moreover, the advantage of being readily and in almost all circumstances available. The hot wet blanket may be obtained even where neither a hip nor slipper bath can be had; and both mustard and cold water are easily procured.

No doubt this and all other modes of treatment will, as Dr. Bullar says, fail in those cases where, from the effects of a concentrated dose of the poison, "the disease begins with death". But this is only saying of cholera what may be said with equal truth of scarlatina, small-pox, or typhus. Most of us have seen cases of scarlatina where all remedies are manifestly as hopeless as they would be if the patient had taken a fatal dose of prussic acid or of aconite. Nor is it likely that our knowledge either of the pathology or therapeutics of cholera will be so much advanced by the study of the disease merely in this, its fully developed fatal stage, as by its careful observation in its milder phases, in the stage of premonitory diarrhoea, and in the important subsequent stage of secondary fever, as it occurs in cases that have not been complicated and aggravated by violent disturbing treatment.

In conclusion, I would beg to direct anew the attention of the profession at this time to the invaluable Reports of the Cholera Committee of the College of Physicians, as not only containing a vast amount of carefully sifted evidence on all points connected with the origin, spread, and pathology of this mysterious disease, but also as affording very important evidence corroborative of the opinion which it has been the object of these brief remarks to sustain; viz., that the simple treatment advocated by Dr. Bullar is in accordance with rational views of the pathology, and has been attended with no small amount of encouraging success.

NOTES OF CASES OF DIARRHŒA AND CHOLERA.

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DURING the past hot and dry month of September, several cases of diarrhoea occurred, of two or three days' duration, amongst young and middle-aged persons living in this country district, and who were pretty healthy previously to being attacked suddenly, without any assignable cause. All of them I have treated with either acid or alkaline mixtures and sedatives internally, with occasional sinapisms of mustard externally, according as the nature and symptoms individually seemed to indicate; each becoming well again speedily. I beg to subjoin also the following case of cholera, which happened