

An address to the chairman & members of the house-committee of the London Hospital, on the subject of cholera / by Sir William Blizard.

Contributors

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King's College London

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on Cholera 1831.

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KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

CHAIRMAN & MEMBERS

Of the HOUSE-COMMITTEE of the

London Hospital,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

CHOLERA.

KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL
BY
MEDICAL SCHOOL.

Sir WILLIAM BLIZARD, Knt. F.R.S.&c.

LONDON:

SCHOOL-PRESS, GOWER'S WALK, WHITECHAPEL.

1831.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE



CHAIRMAN & MEMBERS

OF THE HOUSE-COMMITTEE OF THE



BY WILLIAM BLISSARD, M.A. F.R.S. &c.

LONDON:

SCHOOL-PRINTER, GOWER'S WALK, WHITECHAPEL.

1831.

*The HOUSE-COMMITTEE of the
LONDON HOSPITAL, at all times anxious
for the ample fulfilment of the public designs
of that Institution, having, under extraor-
dinary solicitude, induced by the general
apprehension of Cholera, expressed a desire
for any suggestion relating to special duties,
which might become incumbent on the
Committee to perform, have, in consequence,
received the annexed Address.*

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AN ADDRESS,

&c. &c.

To Christopher Richardson, Junior, Esq.
Chairman, and the Members of the
House-Committee of the LONDON
HOSPITAL.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg leave, respectfully, to submit a few observations, relating to the subject of general alarm, which appears to call for the special consideration of the Directors of public Institutions, for the benefit of persons under the affliction of injury or disease ; in the catalogue of which Establishments, the LONDON HOSPITAL holds distinguished rank.

These observations have not arisen from any vain or presumptuous opinion of novelty, or of new light on the subject of alarm ; but from the hope, and in the expectation, of

exciting that attention, and those consequent exertions, which apparent facts demand.

Some preliminary remarks will not only naturally lead to the immediate objects of this address, but may also, abstractedly considered, be productive of beneficial consequences.

The term "Cholera" has, probably, misled the mind by erroneous association ; for it is a very different disease from the autumnal epidemic of this Country.

Whether Cholera be communicable, by contact, or from pulmonary and cutaneous exhalation by the medium of the air ; or, from the same sources, by villous or spongy substances, as wool and cotton, fabricated or not ; or whether the disease be of an epidemical, and not of a communicable nature, are inquiries, in the results of which, mankind are deeply interested. Such inquiries, made with pure regard to truth, ought, therefore, to be promoted by every honorable inducement, not only from professional persons, but also from every enlightened mind, fraught with natural knowledge.

Decision, in a firm tone, on the ques-

tion, whether Cholera be, or be not, communicable in any of the ways mentioned, would tend to produce confidence in every step of precaution.

That it is not an epidemical disease, appears to be expressed by the limitation of its local presence ; and as to endemical supposition, the answer to that is, that no place in the world is safe from its visitation : surely, then, the inference may be drawn, that the disease *is* communicable, and that it should be guarded against accordingly.

But whether the malady be, or be not, communicable, various relative causes may accelerate or retard the accession of it, or may augment or lessen its violence or danger, without change of its essential character.

The symptoms of the disease, as perspicuously described by Drs. Russell and Barry, express the privation of the blood of oxygen, and the deadly influence of the carbonic principle. The assumption of this opinion as fact, would not only lead to consequences, agreeing, in every particular, with the preventive rules suggested in the Royal Proclamation, but would further extend

to the consideration of direct means of oxygenation of the blood, and of counter-action of fatal carbonic ascendancy.

The results of analyses of blood deprived of oxygen, should not be adduced in opposition to this doctrine ; as oxygen, by its due presence in the blood, might have proved a vinculum of the union of principles in the blood, the characters of which, in their decomposed state, might not have been recognised in their state of combination.

Still, by what means the blood becomes deprived of oxygen, if such be ever the case, would remain a secret, never, perhaps, to be unfolded.

Suggestions, however, relating to inquiry for light on the cause of Cholera, cannot be foreign to an address on the duties of an Hospital, on the present occasion.

In the histories of cases of Cholera, terminating in recovery or death, the following, with other important particulars, ought to be recorded :—sex, age, general articles of diet, ordinary action of bowels, employment, situation of dwelling, *supposed* cause of disease, symptoms, remedies used, event,—



and whether the case of inquiry afforded proof of a second affection of Cholera, or, on the contrary, an expression of exemption from such repeated attack ?

On examination after death, observations should be made on the viscera of the abdomen ; particularly on the liver, its vessels, and ducts ; the stomach, and the spleen ; in the thorax ; on the colour and texture of the lungs ; the condition of their air-vessels by inflation ; on the heart, its tricuspid and bicuspid valves ; the semilunar valves of the two arteries ; and on the appearance of the blood, which may be found in either side of that organ.

If the operator have fear of reception of disease from the examination, the subject might be previously imbued with chlorine, or vinegar.

Have trials been made of the effects of chlorine, by the absorbent vessels of the skin, also internally, in Sea Scurvy, Typhus Fever, and in Cholera ?

Has the efficacy of means by pulmonary inhalation, and by injection of the bowels, been fully tried in Cholera ?

The acetic acid, with spring water, has

many years been employed externally in this Hospital, with great success, in cases of putrefactive tendency ; and the instances in an Hospital are few, in which such tendency does not exist. The expression of *Hospital Sore* must be in the recollection of old surgeons ; but such implied Sore ought not at this day to be found in any Hospital.

Reflections, on the subject of the apprehended disease, naturally direct the mind to the consideration of duties relating to it, in the several Hospitals of the Metropolis. Such duties must, necessarily, vary according to local circumstances.

The situation of the London Hospital renders it, at this time, of peculiar consideration ; being near to parts, where seamen, in mercantile service, from every quarter of the world, numerously congregate, and take their abodes in small and filthy dwellings, in uncleansed narrow streets, lanes, and alleys ; which abodes are generally kept by the most abandoned females.

These parts claim, and doubtless will receive, due magisterial attention.

Should, unhappily, the disease occur in

any part of such described neighbourhood, the London Hospital would soon become sensible of its local existence.

The long-accustomed annual process of quick-lime washing the walls and ceilings of all the wards in the Hospital, is now imperatively called for, in the spirit of the measures proposed by the Royal Proclamation.

The practice of hot lime-washing, regularly and properly performed in the Hospital, might, probably, produce more extensively beneficial effects than may be generally contemplated. The acknowledged utility of the practice might induce inhabitants, of small dwellings, in crowded and confined situations, to follow the example; and thereby save themselves from many evils, the consequences of impurity of the atmosphere.

There are certain surgical occurrences, which manifest, in an extraordinary degree, the unfavorable influence of stagnant air, and of atmosphere, polluted by deleterious vapour: compound fracture, and fracture of the scull, generally; and other cases, in various degrees, evince such influence.

About forty years since the present covered sewer, of considerable breadth, behind the Hospital, was open ; whence constantly proceeded a sensible and contaminating vapour. During the time the sewer remained thus open, the successful treatment of compound fracture, and fracture of the scull, was of rare occurrence ; when the commissioners of sewers became duly impressed, by the representation of these facts, they directed the described sewer to be cleaned and arched with brick-work. The recollection is delightful, that soon after such change in the sewer, compound fractures, and other cases, demonstrated a favorable alteration ; which happy effects have since been heightened, perhaps to the utmost practicable degree, by improvements in ventilation, and by the condition of the privies.

The universally acknowledged noxious quality of marshy effluvia, illustrates these remarks.

The state of the atmosphere, in and surrounding the Hospital, justifies, at this moment, any suggestion for the prevention of its deterioration.

The foregoing observations prove, that the condition of the specified sewer ought to be ascertained ; that all the drains into it should be clear and open ; and that examination of them should be made accordingly. That in further conformity with what was once judged proper towards free ventilation, any tree, which might impede the current of air, should be removed.

In a comprehensive view of what may vitiate the air within the sphere of influence on the Hospital, the enclosed ground, next to the sewer, is a fit object of consideration ; but whether the plough or the spade be or not immediately required, conduively to the salubrity of the air, hope is entertained, that the completion of the preceptive system of the Hospital will be accomplished, by the conversion of that piece of ground into a botanic garden, the fragrance and vegetative energies of the herbs and flowers of which, would enliven and purify the air, and cheer the benevolent heart, and the scientific mind.

Every Hospital, as at the London Hospital, ought to be fully provided with the means

for bathing; and also, in a neighbouring part, with a capacious oven, for the subjection of clothes, and other articles, to such a degree of confined heat, as would prove destructive of insects, and of imbibed animal vapour.

Persons in a state of fever, require attention to the condition of the air, equal to what is described as called for preventively, and remedially, in Cholera; whence follows, that congregating of persons in fever, whether in any part of an Hospital, or, in any other place, must be contrary to principles of science relating to atmospheric influence on health and life.

Such reflections would not now have been submitted, except for practical application.

The Governors of the London Hospital will, doubtless, on the present occasion, in accordance with the liberal designs of the Institution, take into consideration the propriety of obtaining a place, as isolated as possible, in the eastern district, for the immediate reception, and thereby the abstraction from society, of any person found, or suspected, to be infected by Cholera.

The liberality of the Public might be depended upon, in support of any measure of expense, which, under such awful circumstances, might be required.

From the tenor of the Royal Proclamation, and of the observations offered in this paper, the inference may be drawn, that the observance of the rules proposed for the promotion of the purity of the air, would, at all times, and in all places, *mutatis mutandis*, tend to the prevention of disease, and to the prolongation of life.

Thus would the domestic habits, and the moral economy, of the Community, become more and more improved; and constitute the people, a beneficial exemplar, to surrounding Nations.

WILLIAM BLIZARD.

27th October, 1831.

KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL
MEDICAL SCHOOL.

Signed, Printed & Circulated, by Order of the Committee,

J. CECIL, Secretary.



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WILLIAM BISHOP.

27th October, 1831.

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