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LETTERS
ADDRESSED TO
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF KENT,
ON
Consumption.

CONTAINING
REMARKS
ON THE
*EFFICACY OF EQUABLE AND ARTIFICIAL
TEMPERATURE*
IN
THE TREATMENT OF THAT DISEASE, &c.

BY
THOMAS SUTTON, M.D.
Of the Royal College of Physicians, late Physician to the Forces,
and Consulting Physician to the Kent Dispensary ;
AND
AUTHOR OF TRACTS ON DELIRIUM TREMENS, GOUT, &c.

LONDON :
Printed by J. Moyes, Greville Street, Hatton Garden ;
FOR THOMAS UNDERWOOD, 32, FLEET STREET.
1814.

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THOMAS SUTTON, M.D.

Of the Royal College of Physicians, and Physician to the Forces;
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AUTHOR OF TRACTS ON BRUISES, TREMORS, GOUT, &c.

LONDON:

Printed by A. MILLAR, in Pall-mall, near St. James's Palace.
FOR THOMAS TAYLOR, at THREE MARKS.

1794.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE Letters were written with an intention of inserting them in a daily newspaper. Upon mentioning the scheme to my Publisher, he proposed some objections; and finding, on consideration, that I should have less trouble in correcting the press than in giving a fair copy of the Letters to the paper, which I must have done, I determined on the present mode of publication. In this form, and with my first views, the discussion became more desultory, and repetitions unavoidable. These have been very little retrenched, because, by so doing, I might have been under the necessity of new-modelling the whole, which must have taken up some time. This I did not wish to do, because the subject discussed

is very interesting, at the present moment, and the plan of communication in a small publication is not of so much consequence, provided the sentiments are intelligibly expressed.

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ination and its effects on the community.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF KENT.

May it please your Royal Highness—

IN reading the Morning Post of yesterday, my eyes were attracted to the account there given of a Meeting for the purpose of establishing an Hospital or Infirmary for the cure of diseases of the chest and consumptions. I saw with great pleasure, mixed with regret, the conspicuous part your Royal Highness there took. In common with every Briton, I must feel and highly applaud your exertions in forwarding a plan apparently calculated to mitigate and subdue the evils connected with suffering humanity, and your desire to pro-

mote the good of Institutions whose objects are to relieve the distresses brought on by disease, among the lower orders of the community. The same conduct I have had the satisfaction of witnessing in you, when you undertook to patronize an Institution to which I am Physician, and which must be followed with most happy results, both in regard to its disembarassment, and its ultimate prosperity. I could not therefore be surprised to find your Royal Highness in a situation to foster an Institution, which has given rise to this Address, and that must have appeared to you to promise many advantages to the lower orders of the community in the metropolis. In this respect, therefore, I must join with heartfelt satisfaction, with every other man, in considering your conduct at the Meeting alluded to on that day, as arising from humane, exalted, and, I may say, princely motives.—Thus far then, with all men, I feel great satisfaction.

The regrets which I find it necessary to express also, cannot be connected with your Royal Highness's conduct, nor with that of any individual who composed this Meeting; to all of whom, comparatively, a just tribute of praise is due. The tenour of my own observations and inquiries, however, forms a material bar, and deduct much from the pleasure I should otherwise have felt in the spirit and views of this Meeting; and I must now proceed to state the causes of the regret I feel on this occasion. To bring the whole of my objections within the shortest compass, I must generally state, that I have reasons which make me doubt, if not wholly disapprove, of the principle upon which this Institution is supposed to be formed, in a professional point of view; and I shall now proceed to develop my objections in the best way I can. This Institution is not proposed to be founded upon principles of common humanity, by which we are led

to raise an Institution for the reception and recovery of the poor; but upon a particular principle, that diseases of the lungs, in the foremost ground of which are consumptions, require a peculiar mode of treatment, and constructions adapted for their peculiar nature; and the prominent object is to place persons subject to these diseases, and to retain them in an artificial or factitious atmosphere always equal to the temperature expressed by Fahrenheit's scale of 65 degrees; that is, the medium summer heat of this climate. This principle has been applied in practice by Doctor Buxton, with what he judges to be considerable success, in such diseases, as I have had the opportunity of learning, through a small publication of his, as well as through cases he has published in some of the monthly medical journals; and I doubt not that he is fully convinced of the utility of the plan.

When an assertion is made by an

intelligent and respectable man, we are bound to believe it, provided it is not contradictory of the established laws of Nature; and while that assertion rests upon such a person's evidence alone, allowing some degree of incredulity for the fallibility of human judgment—when such a fact comes under our own personal observations, we have a right to use our own judgments, at the same time allowing ourselves to be deliberate if we dissent, and our conclusions should happen to be different from such as have been asserted by persons of sufficient authority. When, however, we have a multitude who have been in the way of making observations on the same subject, and we do not find an acknowledged, or implied agreement, we must endeavour, by the best means we can, to come at the truth; and in such a state of the question a man's personal observations ought to have great weight with him in forming his opinion. This

is very nearly the situation in which I stand on the present subject.

The principle on which Doctor Buxton and his friends recommend a peculiar Institution, is not a new one; it was acted upon in effect probably before Doctor Buxton or myself came into practice, and has been recommended by, and under the observations of, I am inclined to believe, every physician in the country. If, therefore, it is so salutary in operation, it must have been proved to be so by great numbers, for it is the common plan of conducting consumptions by medical advice among the wealthy class of the inhabitants of this kingdom.

I have the honour to be

Your Royal Highness's

Most obedient humble Servant,

THOMAS SUTTON.

Greenwich, March 30, 1814.

May it please your Royal Highness—

IN my former Letter I ventured to state my dissent generally, from the principle upon which the proposed Institution for diseases of the chest and consumption was recommended to the public; but it may be proper here to remark, that my principal and strongest objection to this measure is in so far as the disease called consumption of the lungs is concerned. I shall now begin to give some particulars on which I found my objections; but, previously, it may be necessary to say a few words respecting the mode I proposed to adopt of communicating and disseminating my opinions on this subject. It may be objected generally, that the public are very inadequate judges of medical topics, and therefore that an appeal through a newspaper, which was my

first intention, is an objectionable method of communicating such information, because it can only be thoroughly understood and appreciated by those who are truly professional. To this it may be generally answered, that the public mind becomes possessed of certain sentiments on medical subjects and the treatment of diseases, which cannot be better weakened, if wrong, and at last eradicated, than by a very public and plain appeal to their understanding, and a narration of facts in such language as may be generally comprehended. I did not therefore think this channel objectionable; because the principle against which I contend, or propose my doubts, is a very common property of the public, which has been acted upon for many years, and is fixed strongly in the mind as a leading point of conduct; and therefore those possessing it should be appealed to, for the purpose of causing a revision. On the present occasion an

appeal is made to the public for the establishment of an Institution upon a particular principle, which I judge to be erroneous, or at least very doubtful. If, then, this principle should prove either the one or the other, its being recognised and strengthened by an Institution such as the present is proposed to be, must be calculated to rivet it farther in the minds of the community and of medical men in general; and in proportion to its being more strongly fixed, to such extent is it likely to do harm. This Institution is particularly promoted by Doctor Buxton; but I beg that he and the public will have the goodness to observe, that my objections to the principle on which the Institution is to be founded, are not particularly objections to the opinion of this gentleman, but objections to the opinion of the faculty and the community in general in this respect, who hold, and have long held, the doctrine alluded to.

I shall first submit, as a refutation of the principle, the practice and opinions of medical men, either acknowledged or implied, against the object which this new Institution is calculated to foster.

I have stated, that this principle of applying a factitious and regularly equable temperature at about 65 degrees, has been a common mode of proceeding for many years with the faculty, and very generally adopted by the opulent: though Doctor Buxton may have suggested some contrivances by which this may be more commodiously put in effect, though the principle has been so long acted upon. But notwithstanding a perseverance in this plan, do we not in almost every medical writing on consumption perceive an avowal of equal want of success? Where shall we find any work of credit that acknowledges this disease to be less fatal when the patient is placed in a factitious warmth and a regulated atmosphere, according to the

mode prescribed? There has been, therefore, enough of trial, and particularly among those physicians who live at the west end of the town, of this mode of treatment: but we see none come forward with an avowal that the practice is successful: and in a disease so interesting as consumption is, both in regard to it intrinsically, and in respect to it in so far as it very frequently attacks parties at an interesting period of life, if the powers of this regulated temperature could have done a little, or could be supposed even to have made any thing like an abatement from the mortality of this insatiable disease, surely we should not have found a silence maintained respecting its efficacy, and only acknowledgments of the still highly prevailing mortality of consumption.

I have the honour to be, &c.

May it please your Royal Highness—

I HERE beg leave to say something in answer to objections that may occur to be made to my last statement and conclusion, that the increased regulated temperature is of no service; or, at least, prominently of none. It may be said, why then do almost all respectable and regular medical men recommend and employ it? Would they not reject it, if of no utility? To this I answer, that they necessarily recommend what has become a customary remedy, because they feel, or seem to think it, at least, of no prominent harm, and find the mortality in the disease going on equally. The friends of patients also readily come into the notion, that a warm room is the properest place, under this disease, because they refer all the evil to cold; and,

therefore, are soon convinced of the propriety of adopting a different temperature to that in which the patient is supposed to have contracted the disorder. Besides, popular sentiments on subjects relating to health, and even of medical men on these subjects, must never be held to be absolutely decisive of a question; because we have very many and convincing proofs, that opinions which were supported and tenaciously maintained on these questions, have been found to be wrong, and even acknowledged to be pernicious. Among the catalogue of these I trust the subject of gout will, by universal consent, in a few years, be inserted: and I doubt not, that the astonishment, in after times, of medical men, will be excited at the folly of mankind and the profession; the one party for submitting themselves to an evil, such as the gout is, by promoting the continuance of the disease to the great detriment of their health, the destruction of their future happiness and

usefulness, by means which could only tend to aggravate and prolong the disease; and the other for recommending such proceedings*.

I am sorry the subject of the present letters cannot be so readily settled as the one last mentioned, and as ample proofs of the benefits of any mode of cure of consumption be adduced as of gout; for then a most satisfactory arrangement might be made. But it is certainly not desirable to block up the avenue to in-

* One of my tracts lately published is on the subject of gout. In some of the reviews of this publication, it seems to have been intimated, that I have not had a sufficiently ample experience to decide on the propriety and efficacy of the practice there recommended. I may here, therefore, observe, that since the publication alluded to, I have, in every case of gout, adopted the practice recommended, and can safely say, that it is a prompt and efficacious cure for the disease; and I have a most thorough belief, that its safety is as great to the patient, as the means employed for curing intermittents.

vestigation on the subject of consumption, which the measure in contemplation would to a certain degree do ; though, at present, the progress in the successful road of cure is not very great.

I have given a presumptive proof of the inefficacy of the regulated temperature, recommended by those about to form this Institution ; from the silence of medical men in this country, the best able to judge on the subject, and from their constant confession of the mortality of the disease, notwithstanding this remedy, if so it may be called, has been extensively applied. So far as my own experience has gone, its effects do not appear to me to be so useful as to merit to be generally adopted, nor for a particular Institution to be raised to foster, maintain, and protect the practice. On the contrary, from the best observations I have been able to make, the patients who have submitted to this regulated temperature, or an attempt

at it, have recovered in less proportion, and been the soonest precipitated to the grave. These are inductions, which I can confidently say I have made; and which, in my mind, render more than doubtful and suspicious the intrinsic benefit which has ever flowed to patients under actual pulmonary consumption from this practice. But the point of proof should not certainly rest in individual judgment, but also be sought for in situations where some more decisive conclusion can be formed. We ought to look beyond the neighbourhood of Wapping or of this great metropolis, and carry on our investigations in parts where Nature will raise the most abundant proofs for or against the question. On the principle that warmth is of so much use in consumption, our wealthy consumptive patients are sent frequently into temperate climates, and the inquiry may be made, Whether, in these situations, the disease

is at all prevalent? I am sorry I have not all the materials to dispose of this question which I could wish, in reference to various climates ; but it may be said, that the medical authors of France and Italy abound with observations on this disease, which must show it to be a tolerably frequent complaint among them ; and it is so very common in some parts of Italy, as to be suspected to be contagious*. In respect to the Island of Madeira, to which many of the consumptive resort, we have a proof worth thousands of conjectures or inferences, in the direct testimony of a physician who has long lived there, respecting the effects of that temperate climate, in discouraging consumption. I shall give the passage in the author's own words.—“ It is not to be concealed

* I am informed, that in some parts of Spain consumption is also a very common and fatal disease.

that no malady is more prevalent here (Madeira), than phthisis (pulmonary consumption), with the natives of the island. Persons of all ages, and of both sexes, fall victims to it; nay, whole families, at times, have been suddenly swept away by it*."

I have the honor to be, &c.

* Vide Observations on the Natural History, Climate, and Diseases of Madeira, during a Period of Eighteen Years. By William Gourlay, M.D., Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, and Physician to the British Factory at Madeira.

May it please your Royal Highness—

IN my former communications I have rendered it evident that the factitious and equable temperature of 65° , as employed in this climate, has not been so effectual as to have prompted those who have been able the most to recommend it, to make statements from which we can conclude, that much advantage has been derived. We still hear, as before, that consumption is a very fatal disease; there is no change in the tone of practitioners, on account of the employment of this atmosphere, which might lead to the inference that we are more successful than usual in its treatment. It has likewise been stated, on good grounds, that consumption is as fatal in those countries whose equable and mild temperature has been considered to be highly favourable to

the cure of the disease ; and in those very countries whose atmosphere we have attempted to imitate, in a certain degree, by artificial means ; which is also peculiarly the object of the Institution, for which a Meeting was some time ago called, in which your Royal Highness presided. There can, therefore, I presume, be very little encouragement, with these facts before our eyes, to suppose that the proposed plan is likely to be very advantageous, and worthy of particular exertion. I have, likewise, stated to your Royal Highness my particular belief, derived from a series of observations of many years, and from the nature of my practice, which has allowed me to observe the progress of this disease in those who have been capable of using the factitious equable temperate atmosphere, and in those whose situations of life would not allow it ; according to the best of my judgment, and the most accurate

estimate I could make, that a greater number of the latter recovered, and, without all doubt, that the progress of the disease was much slower to a fatal termination in them.

The artificial, temperate, and unvaried atmosphere is such an one, that Nature, under no circumstances, supplies. We know, indeed, that man is so formed, as to be capable of adapting himself to various climates, though not without suffering inconveniences, with less of them, however, than might be imagined. A desire to enlarge the bounds of observation, by visiting different and distant countries, is one of the common effects of civilization : it likewise gives rise to many wants, to be sought for in various climates : it also tends to encourage innumerable diseases, and more successful remedies for some of these may be found in distant countries. These, therefore, and many other motives, prompt men

to the risks of subjecting themselves to a variety of temperature, which, as has been said, is borne with comparatively less inconvenience than could well be imagined. Still it will be difficult to find any climate similar to the artificial one used in this kingdom for the cure of consumption. No climate exhibits an unvaried temperature: if the days are hot, the nights bring with them a comparatively refreshing coolness.

In our efforts against disease there generally are two objects in view; the one to cure the disease, the other to mitigate its symptoms. These may be either separately acted upon, or jointly. If it should happen that we know the cause of a disease within the body so well as to be sure, by a certain determinate process, to overcome it, and in a certain determinate time, attention to the mitigation of symptoms, though they may be a little oppressive, does not become so essential a duty

of the medical practitioner. But oppressive symptoms may concur, much to increase the evils of disease, by lowering the habit; and, in that case, demand more especial attention. Again, the circumstances of the disease may be such as to be very obscure in its cause, and uncertain in its treatment; and, in such case, the only road that a medical man can take, must be to apply all his art to the mitigation of symptoms. Our object in doing this, is to repress and alleviate uneasy sensations, and to endeavour to bring all the functions of the body as near to their natural action as possible. Consumption of the lungs is a disease about which, respecting its cause or causes, in so far as regards its cure, much conjecture has been employed; and it may be said, in the present state of our knowledge on this subject, to be entirely an unsettled question. The method of proceeding in its treatment, therefore, can-

not be otherwise than such as is derived from a view of its symptoms, and the best plan of conduct must be that which tends to mitigate the symptoms the most effectually, and by these efforts to place the patient in the greatest degree of comfort, with the least loss of the powers of life. By such means we give the constitution a greater chance of righting herself, than when the functions of the body are burthened with pains and irregular actions.

The equable atmosphere of 65° , as employed in consumption, tends rather to increase than to assuage certain material symptoms of the disease. In the treatment of the hot fits of many fevers, we grant the comfort, if it can be obtained, of a lowered temperature; we are glad to admit cool air into the room; we are willing to subduct from the heat by sprinkling vinegar on the floor; and we go to the extent of sponging the

body with cold liquids, and of throwing cold water, in some cases, over the whole surface. By such means the body is brought nearer to its healthy temperature, a relative degree of comfort is obtained, and the patient comes out of the fit, much less exhausted than if allowed to be tormented with the burning heat which he would otherwise have suffered. It is true that these efforts may not cure the disease, but they tend to husband the strength, give opportunities for stronger efforts of Nature, and allow her to make a firmer opposition to the attacks of future paroxysms, &c. By the plan of regulated temperature none of these proceedings can be adopted. Instead of decreasing as much as we can the paroxysms of fever, we tend to encourage them in length and severity. Hence we allow them to lower the habit, and to act conspicuously in precipitating the patient to the last stage of the dis-

ease, when the powers of Nature can act no longer, either to raise fever or to preserve life.

I have the honour to be, &c.

May it please your Royal Highness—

It must be very evident, that what is taken very frequently, and that necessarily so, if suitable in itself, must tend much to the promotion of health. No proofs need be given that the regulation of diet is of the utmost service in preserving health and in curing disease. This, however, may be much intermitted, and is not so constantly necessary as respiration. But air must be considered also to act a part of as great importance for the lungs in particular, and for the body generally, as food to the stomach. If, therefore, the proper admixture and temperature of respirable air could be arrived at, there can be no doubt but the results would be as favourable in the treatment of consumption as the nature of things would allow. I am not so sanguine as to think

it probable, that equally certain remedies, whether derived from medicine or regimen, or both, will be found for consumption, as we possess for agues: because, before the disorder can take that name, a diseased state in some degree has taken place of a very important organ; and such an one as we know, by past experience, cannot allow any medical man positively to say he has the power of actually overcoming, in individual cases. But, under such circumstances, I should recommend that the path of Nature should not be wholly deserted, and that some attention should be paid to the circumstances in which Providence has naturally placed us in order to enjoy health.

It must be evident that heated rooms cannot concur to health and vigour; invariable in temperature, confined in circulation, unpleasant to the parties inhabiting them; and who, on this account, are rendered listless, and by no

means desirous of the least exercise, which would soon tend to an increase of heat highly uncomfortable to the feelings. But if these objections exist to such rooms set apart for equable temperature, there is another consideration worthy of attention, which is, that not only the temperature possesses the objections I have stated, but the air is invariably dry: and that this is important to be considered, must be clear from the circumstance, that those who respire the most dry air are the most subject to pulmonary consumption. This fact is evident, from the disease occurring most among the higher classes in this country, and more particularly among the females in that class; also among those whose sedentary occupations allow them to be very little in the external air; also among bakers, whose occupations lead them to respire the dry air of their bake-houses; and manufacturers, whose employments are con-

nected with fires. It is true that there are those who suffer from the disease under all circumstances ; but the greater number by far will be found to be those who, from various circumstances, are placed in situations to respire a dry atmosphere*.

* Consumptions in this country have been almost uniformly considered to be caused by the variable-ness of our climate, and humid atmosphere ; and we have been supposed to be more afflicted with this disorder than other parts of the world not so affected. Hence have arisen the efforts to cause an artificial climate of great uniformity. But it must be suspected that there is error in these suppositions, since we learn that consumptions prevail much even in the most favoured regions as to temperature and dryness. We undoubtedly find inflammatory affections to abound with us in very variable weather, and inflammations of the lungs among the rest ; but these latter more frequently tend to excite into activity the consumptive disposition already existing, than become the real causes and grounds of the disease ; for when this disposition does not prevail, ulcerations of the lungs very frequently heal both kindly and rapidly. There can also be no doubt, that with this disposi-

Some observations made to prove, that where intermittents prevail, consumption is less common; and the contrary tend also to *elucidate* this statement. The world is indebted to Doctor Wells for investigating these facts; who on this, and other subjects, has given much excellent information *. The intermittent, as is known, prevails in marshy situations, where the atmosphere must be constantly loaded with a considerable degree of moisture. It must be evident, that the constant return of this disease tends to render the inhabitants of such situations very unhealthy; but they suffer comparatively less from consumption than their neighbours who inhabit drier situations. One would at first imagine, that intermittents would promote the prevalence of
 tion a considerable proneness to inflammation in these organs exists, which will cause the disease often to commence in such seasons, and most frequently to be wholly attributed to them.

* Vide Medico-Chirurgical Transactions.

consumption, as we find it in other situations frequently to follow every species of disorder that tends to lower the habit. But though marshy districts do supply a multitude of disease, consumption is not one of them, contrary to what happens under different circumstances. As, therefore, we find unhealthiness in other situations not to counteract consumption, we can hardly, with any species of propriety, attribute this greater freedom from that disorder to the effects of the agues, but ought to conclude that it is caused by something common in the one country, and which is not equally possessed by the other ; and this, it may readily be concluded, to be the moisture of the atmosphere.

Another circumstance that has fallen under my observation, which has tended to strengthen this opinion in my mind, is, that consumptive patients appear to derive advantage in the winter time from some parts of Devonshire,

such as Sidmouth, &c., which is a country, as I am informed, subject to great fogs at that time of the year. Several instances have occurred in my connexion, of such patients passing their time very beneficially in these situations. Something of the same kind also appears to have been observed by the justly celebrated Doctor Cullen. "In his Lectures on this Disease (Consumption), he was wont to observe, in directing a change of climate," (says Doctor Gourlay,) "that it was as pernicious for phthisical patients to pass the summer in a very warm climate, such as Madeira, as to remain in England in winter; and, indeed, that the most benign climate, in such cases, was found in the south of England, and in the winter of southern latitudes*." In fact, it is probable that Doctor Cullen had more opportunities of noticing the effects

* Vide Gourlay on Madeira.

of the climate of the south of England on consumption, than of any other southern climate; and though he might not advert to the circumstances I have alluded to above, yet his testimony may be in favour, perhaps, of the very places I have hinted at, because they are much resorted to by the consumptive, who are led to take up a residence in that part of the world. It is not improbable also, that voyages by sea produce their beneficial effects on the disease, through the moisture of the air. Their utility to the consumptive, has very long been held in estimation; and among the Romans this remedy was recommended, with the object of profiting by the advantage of a denser atmosphere*.

I have the honour to be, &c.

* “ Quod si mali plus et vera phthisis est, inter initia protinus occurrere necessarium est: neque facile enim hic morbus cum inveteraverit, evincitur. Opus est, si vires patiuntur longa navigatione, cœli

mutatione sic, ut densius quam id est ex quo descendit æger, petatur."—Vide *Celsus*.

The observations just given respecting the necessity of a more humid atmosphere than usually sought for consumptive patients, must tend to render the propriety of sending such patients to the Island of Madeira at least doubtful. In the meteorological account of sixteen years, kept by Doctor Gourlay, we very seldom find the words fog or mist used to designate the state of the weather: we meet with hazy more frequently. And to show that this island is particularly dry, Doctor G. states, that "a drop of dew seldom falls, except in the higher parts of the island." In his meteorological register, however, we frequently find mention made of rains; but the nature of the soil appears to be so dry, and absorbent, as not to allow them to promote any length of moisture on the surface, or in the lower parts of atmosphere. Another circumstance that also proves this great degree of dryness is, that in the account Doctor G. has given of the diseases of this island, he has entirely omitted any mention of remittent or intermittent fevers; which could not have happened if they had occurred, even though unfrequently. This also plainly proves that there is no moist land or sources of moisture within the island.—From the decided terms in which Doctor Gourlay mentions the fatality of consumption at Madeira, among its

natives, it seems probable, that the aridity of the air contributes full as much, even in this temperate climate, to the encouragement of consumption, as in the northern parts of our island it is known to be detrimental, occasioned and accompanied by the dry north and east winds.

In Sicily also, a climate which would be considered as favourable for consumptive patients, according to the present ideas of its treatment, in so far as regards temperature and air, it is related in full as strong terms as those employed by Doctor Gourlay, that consumption is very frequent and fatal, and a disease held in the greatest dread by the inhabitants on both these accounts, and also on the supposition of its highly contagious nature; which last circumstance at least clearly proves its great prevalence.—Vide Irvine on the Diseases of Sicily.

May it please your Royal Highness—

It may be urged, notwithstanding the statements which I have made, that there are many examples of unlooked-for recoveries among those who go to Madeira in consumption. And this has been replied to any doubt thrown out by me respecting the salubrious influence of that temperate climate on this disease. Doctor Gourlay also, although he has given a very candid statement respecting the ravages of consumption among the inhabitants of Madeira, has spoken very strongly in favour of the climate for this disease, though he certainly corrects, by after explanation, his general and undefined praise. The first expression that I allude to is:—
 “ Though (Madeira is) so highly bene-

ficial in this disease" (consumption), he afterwards adds; " before such patients repair to this last haven of health, their malady is, unfortunately, in too many cases, in its last stage, when neither change of climate nor any other remedy whatever can be of service. From what cause this backwardness to an earlier trial of a southern climate proceeds, is not for me to determine; but it would be well if the physicians of such patients were to recommend a change of temperature in the first stage of the malady," &c. Thus acknowledging the fatality of the disease among those who repair thither for the purpose of recovery. It may also be urged, if the plan of regulated temperature, as generally applied, and about to be the foundation of a peculiar Institution, is actually inimical to pulmonary consumption, that then there could not be produced instances of health restored under the use of this

remedy, which, however, has proved otherwise.

To these statements it may be answered, that the human body is not such as to be capable of being at all times measured with every precision in respect to the effects of various powers upon it, whether salutary or otherwise; nor in the state of an obscure disease can it always be ascertained whether the cause which bars recovery has taken place or not: nor can the quantum of power in the habit tending to restoration be estimated, which will sometimes overcome all adverse, and apparently relatively insuperable circumstances, insuperable as they may appear under consumption, from the general observation, that they are most frequently connected with a certainty of dissolution. In apparent pulmonary consumption I have witnessed the most adverse circumstances to be overcome, and those not unfre-

quently ; and therefore a few cases of this nature ought not to tend to establish the propriety of any plan. Every place and every plan may lay claim to some of these ; but the only testimony that can be admitted to be conclusive on such a subject, must be derived from the accumulated comparative advantages of different methods of proceeding, not from few and infrequent occurrences. My own judgment, in this way, therefore, is decidedly unfavourable to regulated and equable temperature, when recommended as proper in all cases of consumption.

Pulmonary affections also may often seem to take on them the appearance of consumption, that really do not prove so, and may frequently be overcome without much trouble, though apparently very threatening. If Doctor Gourlay's recommendation of sending patients, in what is called the incipient stage of

consumption, was to be adopted, Madeira would soon furnish abundant examples of recovery, though they would probably not be more numerous than if they had never traversed the seas: we, however, except the advantage that might be derived from the voyage. And, in the same way, any Institution may soon have cases enough of recovery from pulmonary consumption, if patients, apparently in the incipient stage, are admitted to be under the actual disease; and even though the plan of cure might not be the best; for Nature will often triumph over the most adverse circumstances, and go on to complete her work of restoration, though opposed and thwarted by ill-advised, and, occasionally, pernicious measures*. To verify the truth of recoveries in pulmonary consumption, under the most threatening circumstances, I could give many

* See note at the end.

instances. But I choose to select some cases that were under my care at the same time, and in this immediate neighbourhood, and who recovered under the observation of other medical men.

The first I shall mention was a respectable woman, who was greatly emaciated, expectorated much matter, had hectic fever to a considerable degree, and who was in her seventh month of pregnancy. A short time after I saw her she miscarried of a dead child. The medical man who usually attended her, and who visited her with me, not being on the spot, a neighbouring practitioner of respectability was sent for on her delivery; and who inquired of me, about a week afterwards, when this patient died? not entertaining the least notion that she could have survived a week. Yet this patient recovered.

A patient of the Kent Dispensary, a hair-dresser by trade, first attended that Institution at the house, under the

direction of one of the surgeons: afterwards he became too ill to attend, and was visited at home for some time by the apothecary. Lastly, I was earnestly desired by his relatives to see him, as a person beyond all hope, and, in fact, dying. He had now taken to his chamber, and was confined to his bed. He was very much emaciated, had violent hectic fever, and profuse night sweats; he expectorated a considerable quantity of matter, a little streaked with blood, and was so weak as not to be able to get out of bed without assistance. Yet this patient recovered from a state apparently so hopeless, and walked to the Dispensary, a distance of half a mile from his habitation, in the course of three weeks, or somewhat less.

The next is a case of disease of an aspect not so immediately threatening, but which I relate, as happening at the same time the others occurred, and carrying with it so many suspicious cir-

cumstances as to satisfy the friends that the patient was in consumption.—The wife of a respectable tradesman, who had been subject to violent fits of spasmodic asthma, was taken with cough, shortness of breath, and pain in the side and chest. She had been under the care of a surgeon of respectability in this neighbourhood for upwards of three months, without any alleviation of her disease; the chest affection had gained considerable ground, though moderate sized blisters, and other aids, had been resorted to; and it was now proposed to apply a blister of considerable magnitude. I was then consulted: I found her much thinner, and, in fact, approaching to emaciation: she told me she felt herself weak; that her cough troubled her much, but particularly at night; and that she never breathed but with pain; she had night sweats; and expectorated considerably. From these threatening circumstances she was re-

lieved in a very short space of time, and regained her health. In fact, she was so well upon my second visit, as to cause me not to think it necessary to repeat it.

I beg to apologize to your Royal Highness for troubling you with any thing like a detail of cases ; but I wish to impress you with full proof, that instances of pulmonary consumption, of a threatening nature, may happen, and recovery ensue, without the aid of a foreign climate, or particular attention to regulated temperature. If such cases could be increased by the latter means, I should have had great satisfaction to have given the projected Institution all the support in my power : but, as I feel otherwise, I must beg respectfully to apologize for taking the liberty of addressing my remarks to your Royal Highness on the subject, with a hope that the sincerity of my motives will

tend to diminish the impropriety of thus intruding upon your time and attention.

I have the honour to be, &c.

May it please your Royal Highness—

SINCE I believe I have said what ought to excite some doubts respecting the propriety of using a regulated, equable temperature in consumption, as a general remedy; 1st, from the tacit acknowledgments of the faculty of its inutility; 2dly, from the circumstance of the disease of consumption being very common in mild climates, which this temperature is proposed to imitate; 3dly, because some oppressive symptoms, under such circumstances, cannot be alleviated, but rather exacerbated; 4thly, from the air respired being kept very dry, and there being reasons to conclude that a humid air is discouraging of consumption; it may be thought that I

should conclude by making some remarks on the state of atmosphere that may most conduce to the recovery of such patients. The objections I have made to the plan of the equable temperature proposed, will, in some measure, lead to conclusions respecting the sort of atmosphere which might seem to me to be the best suited to the consumptive; and I beg particularly to state, that my objections are levelled against the employment of the proposed temperature in consumption, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, and connected with hectic fever: but I do not pretend to give any precise rule on the subject of any temperature that I should invariably follow, as in the present state of our knowledge respecting the cure of this disease, attention must be paid to symptoms, which should be mitigated by medicines, and temperature, and other things, according to what the feelings of patients may

occasionally indicate. Some of these cases will not admit cool air to be received into the lungs, without producing much spasmodic irritation; while to others the external atmosphere, at a degree not much short of the freezing point, is particularly pleasant. I should certainly not often advise such patients to shut themselves up entirely; or, if so, I should recommend them to allow their apartments to be frequently and freely pervaded by the external atmosphere. In the milder climate of South Britain, patients may, in the winter season, much oftener go into the open air, which is a benefit of a very desirable nature. My opinion on the subject of temperature, when circumstances occur to render a confinement to apartments necessary, is, that a range of from 50° to 60° of Fahrenheit should be allowed, which is not too cool for the feelings of a hectic patient, whose surface displays always an increase of heat greater than natural, and whose

feelings will be a better measure of the degree that tends to his comfort, than can be obtained by a person in a state of health, who may in inactivity find the temperature of 50° too cold to be pleasant.

I have not contended, nor do I wish to be understood to have done so, that an atmosphere much warmer than that which we breathe in the winter season may not be of considerable advantage in some sorts of affections of the lungs; for I judge the aged with pulmonary affections, and such as labour under chronic asthma, are certainly much benefited by it; and apartments heated in the most convenient way to enjoy a degree of pleasant warmth, and to regulate it gradually, either by lowering or increasing it, may be of great use. I believe also that persons under some such complaints may be convenienced by a heat amounting to 65 degrees, but I can perceive no advantage in pre-

serving an unvaried equable temperature. The class of people, however, whom it is intended immediately to aid by the projected Institution, must form a strong objection to this practice, unless it is proposed to keep every patient until the return of the genial warmth of summer. For if we suppose that they have been cured of their diseases by being in a regulated temperature in the degree of 65, both by night and by day; how can we imagine that they will be capable of continuing well when subjected to the diversities of weather, and when they are obliged to sleep in rooms without fire, or any other aid to keep the temperature around them at any approach to the one in which they have been placed for their cure? In this way the temporary good experienced, I should fear, would lead to more serious evils, and the persons whose sensations have been accommodated to a

degree of warmth which their line of life will not often allow them to enjoy, would feel all the disadvantages arising from a change of circumstances so materially different.

If I did not also know that the persons were destined again to breathe the atmosphere of London, who are the objects of the projected Institution, I should be inclined to doubt the propriety of placing such an establishment in the metropolis or in its immediate environs. But the reasons which would prompt me to doubt altogether the propriety of placing persons invariably, while under diseases of the lungs, for some time in an atmosphere which they cannot, when discharged from the Institution, by any means enjoy, would induce me to wish that those who are absolutely destined to live in London should, if possible, breathe its air when under the cure of diseases, and more

especially of those of the lungs, that they may thereby be better fitted to encounter the inconveniences of an atmosphere loaded with so much foreign matter as that of London contains.

It would not be fit for me to ask your Royal Highness's attention to the other means that may be employed in the cure of consumption, and other pectoral affections, as this would deviate from the express design on these letters, and because these means are more particularly adapted to the comprehension of medical men. I shall therefore conclude, by again soliciting your forgiveness for endeavouring to excite your consideration to my views on the subject of artificial temperature, as connected with the cure of consumption; which I have been prompted to do from a hope that this discussion may tend to a reconsideration of the question, and the public be ultimately benefited by it; and

thus create an apology for me, which would, I am sure, be such an one as to be particularly grateful to your Royal Highness's feelings.

I have the honour to be

Your Royal Highness's

Most obedient humble Servant,

THOMAS SUTTON.

Greenwich, April 3, 1814

Note referred to at p. 41.

I may with propriety employ these expressions in regard to the treatment of acute rheumatism, which of late I believe to have been overcome by the efforts of nature, while in a great degree opposed by the means employed by art. A comparative view of the success of the treatment which has become popular in this country, and that which I have recommended to the public, will, I think, settle this question in favour of my assertion. This disease is of indefinite length in point

of time and misery, when treated as it has been for many years; in addition to which, it is fatal not in a trifling degree, and often terminated by evils, such as contractions of the joints, diseases of the heart, &c., many cases of which only terminate with existence. I have, however, recommended a plan of cure for this disease very opposite indeed to the popular one in every respect. By this method the patient is generally convalescent in a week, his pains are very soon mitigated, and he neither runs the risk of a protracted disease with its evils, nor, what is of more importance, that of life, in any thing like the proportion the disease has of late years been observed to be accompanied with.

As holding a high and important station in the army, I venture to detain your Royal Highness with some observations on the benefits that would accompany this method of practice, if generally adopted among that part of his Majesty's forces and subjects*; through which an estimate may be formed of the advantages to

* This remark was made on the 3d of the present instant, between which day and the 30th of March these letters and notes were written; but a delay in printing them (unexpected by the author) has occurred. Happily, at present, in a political point of view, a constant effective army is not so much wanted; still the other parts of the considerations alluded to remain the same. (April 20th).

be derived from it by the community at large. And when I address your Royal Highness on this subject, I know I am making a communication to one whose knowledge of what occurs in military hospitals is very complete. I gave the communication I allude to in a very concise form, in the Medical and Physical Journal, some months ago, with cases. I shall not swell out their number, but beg leave to present the substance of a paper, by a medical gentleman with whom I am wholly unacquainted, who has followed up my suggestions in regard to the treatment alluded to, and with similar results to those I gave an expectation of in my account. The paper I allude to is from Doctor H. S. Belcombe, of Newcastle-under-Line, and inserted in the Medical and Physical Journal of the present month, whose statement is as follows, verbatim:—"In pointing out remedies serviceable to our fellow creatures, the best reward to a liberal mind is the knowledge of their adoption. I am confident, therefore, Doctor Sutton will hear with pleasure, that amid various cases of acute rheumatism, I have followed his directions with the earliest and happiest effects. But as facts are the soul of medicine, I shall give an account of two of the severest cases." (Here follows the account of the treatment of these two cases, which is upon the plan I recommended). Doctor Belcombe concludes this subject, in so far as it is connected

with my plan, by stating:—"From these circumstances, connected with others, I am convinced that Doctor Sutton has pointed out a most valuable remedy for acute rheumatism; and by this method its former agonies of weeks and months are resolved into a week's illness." The latter part of this paper states just the same conclusion as I have intimated: only I beg to make this remark, that the method of treatment recommended by me embraces many objects and considerations, all of which require to be particularly kept in view, for the purpose of gaining every advantage by the plan proposed, which may therefore more properly be called a recommendation of a method of treatment for the disease, than a recommendation of a remedy. This paper, however, because it is the spontaneous act of a person, not in the most distant manner connected with me, becomes a very ample document in confirmation of the benefits of the practice.

I shall now beg leave to take a view of its advantages, if generally adopted in the army. I may confidently state, that, upon an average, twenty men out of every thousand soldiers are attacked with acute rheumatism each year in this country. This proportion may vary in different regiments and in different years, but may be taken as a standard of the aggregate of years. If we estimate the military force employed in Great Britain at

40,000, we shall find that 800 of these will labour under acute rheumatism annually. In estimating the time in which this disease is under cure in the military hospitals, it will not be too much to take the average at six weeks; and in estimating the time in which the disease will be got rid of through the method I recommend, the full average of the whole may be taken to be a fortnight. By this plan, therefore, his Majesty's service will be bettered in the effective force of 800 men annually, for a month each year, independent of considerations of humanity, which would cause us to rejoice at the great alleviation of disease. Besides, the deaths would be in a great proportion less than the difference of time gained in the cure of the disease. Doctor Huygarth's statement of deaths under acute rheumatism, in his practice, exceeds one in fifteen, which in 800 cases would be more than fifty deaths. But if we take them at an average of twenty-five, I am confident, that by a strict attention to my directions, not one-third of that number would die. Another evil which is attached to acute rheumatism, in a military point of view, is, that many men have been so crippled by the disease as to be obliged to be discharged, which evil would, on my plan, almost entirely vanish.

The treatment which I allude to is not very far different from that adopted by the celebrated Syden-

ham for the cure of this disease: and in so far as modern practitioners have receded from him, in such proportion the disease appears to have tended to an aggravated form, and been rendered intractable. The custom which has some time prevailed of having recourse to antimonials for the cure of this disease, under the idea that raising perspiration was the direct remedy, has tended frequently to aggravate it: and the fashionable plan of curing every pain with flannel has raised it into torment. Thus the treatment of this disease, almost without being perceived by medical men, has receded, for years, as far as possible from the road which can conduct it with celerity, security, and comfort, to a happy termination.

FINIS.

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