

Arrest of cholera by dilute acid and sanitary observance ; Treatment of cholera outbreaks.

Contributors

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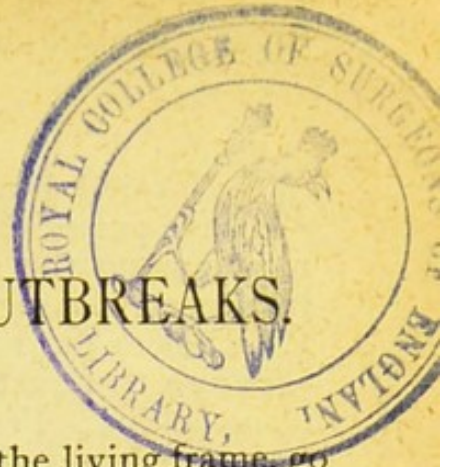
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POSTSCRIPT.

TREATMENT OF CHOLERA OUTBREAKS.



The homologies, structural and functional of the living frame, go to show that the treatment, with whatever exceptions, suitable in single cases of cholera, is also successfully available in many, and that the apathy neglect and ignorance, so fatal in individuals, prove not less destructive to multitudes.* Few diseases, when dealt with early, are more remediable than is cholera, or so intractable when the malady gains a certain head unchecked.† I found it, for the most part, communicated or communicable, directly or indirectly, from individual to individual. But all excreta are dangerous, and should be at once destroyed or rendered harmless. In the event of a cholera outbreak, and holding in view the efficacy of prophylaxis, I should at once administer, from house to house, to every adult, children in proportion, a daily half drachm dose of dilute sulphuric acid. And further, I would place the dilute acid at every street corner to be given free of charge to all comers. Thirty drops of laudanum, administered at the very onset of cholera, is perhaps not less efficient, but opiates are relatively costly as well as liable to be taken in unsafe doses,‡ a risk from which dilute sulphuric acid is exempt. This is also one of the cheapest and most efficient of remedies, seeing that a pound of strong sulphuric acid, costing about a penny, diluted ten times, and in half drachm doses, confers potential safety on more than two thousand persons. All plagues, by undoing so far as possible the causes immediately and generally productive of them, might, I believe, with a firm hand and under medical direction be stamped out speedily in any locality. That this is practicable with regard to cholera, turning to account the means here indicated, I entertain no doubt whatever.

* The poor indeed are miserable sufferers. I once had twenty cases from a wretched lane of only six houses, while in whole streets of a better class of houses there would not perhaps be more than one or two.

† I have gone to places where the dead were lying and people going about uncomplaining, yet labouring under diarrhoea, quite unaware of the extreme danger of their position. In Glasgow, where medicine had been exhibited during house to house visitation, to persons labouring under the diarrhoea which ushers in cholera, there was but one death in each 1400 cases. That is to say, had the diarrhoea not been as thus arrested, there might have been for every 1400 cases, 1400 deaths instead of one.

‡ During the course of some inquiries made to determine the state of the internal organs in fatal cases of cholera, I once detected ten grains of solid opium in the stomach, how much of fluid opium or laudanum, one could not say.

HENRY MAC CORMAC, M.D.

BELFAST, 6th August, 1883.

Arrest of Cholera by Dilute Acid and Sanitary Observance.

AS Hospital Physician, some 3000 cases of Asiatic Cholera may have passed through my hands. Like all plagues, cholera rages most among the poor. The poor, however, with efficient medical treatment, recover in a larger proportion than do the rich. Like fire, cholera once it gets headway, is hard to check.* Some, upon exposure, contract the malady at once, others are comparatively insusceptible. Persons, after coming in contact with cholera, may transmit the disease to others, remaining themselves intact. A kind-hearted merchant handed a poor woman, turned out of her infected dwelling, a cordial draught! When I saw him next day, he was cold and livid. Wash ~~her~~ women suffer much. Once I found three lying lifeless in the same house. The poor things had neglected every precaution, and thus perished unaided and unseen.

Strict temperance is expedient absolutely. But extremes are undesirable. Drinking water ought invariably to be boiled and filtered. It may be qualified with a fragment of high toasted bread, a pinch of tea or coffee to the gallon. All foulness should be consumed by fire or buried deep in the soil. The air of rooms needs renewal ceaselessly. It is well to hold the breath when one comes in close contact with the disease. Some food should if possible be taken before visiting the sick. A weak solution of sulphate of iron ought to be poured into latrines daily, and soiled linen and flannels treated forthwith with chlorine. Cleanliness, personal and general, is indispensable.

In 1832, the tincture of opium, common laudanum, was advantageously employed, afterwards dilute sulphuric acid, in drachm or half drachm doses, was much and beneficially resorted to. The dilute acid is made by adding ten parts water to one of strong acid. A common teaspoon holds from half a drachm to a drachm. The dilute acid may be taken in a little plain or peppermint water, and, as thus, once or oftener, proves highly useful in arresting diarrhoea.

It occurred to me, on the principle of *principiis obsta*; that what was found to allay diarrhoea might, if taken *beforehand*, prevent both diarrhoea and cholera. In an institution to which I was visiting physician, Asiatic Cholera broke out by reason of some hired workmen holding communication with the infected town. Forty persons were attacked, and seventeen died presently. At once, I gave the dilute acid in drachm doses, to every member of the establishment. The malady was forthwith arrested. No other case ensued.

The like acid regimen, coupled with daily house to house visitation and strict sanitary observances, would, I believe, give a good account of most cholera outbreaks and, during such, prove, as it certainly seemed to do in the instance I have cited, an approximately effective barrier against preventible disease and death.

* "*Principiis obsta, sero medicina paratur
Cum mala per longas convaluere moras.*"

HENRY MAC CORMAC, M.D.,

Consulting Physician to the Royal Hospital.

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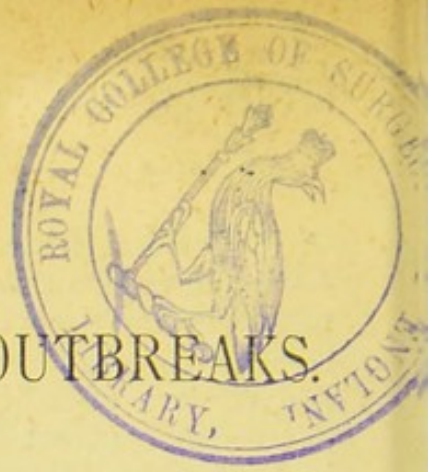
It occurred to me, on the principle of *principiis obsta*, that what was found to allay diarrhea might, if taken *beforehand*, prevent both diarrhea and cholera. In an institution to which I was visiting physician, Asiatic Cholera broke out by reason of some hired workmen holding communication with the infected town. Forty persons were attacked, and seventeen died presently. At once, I gave the dilute acid in drachm doses, to every member of the establishment. The malady was forthwith arrested. No other case ensued.

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