

A plain and brief sketch of cholera : with a simple and economical mode for its treatment, submitted with confidence from repeated success in its application / by William Henry Williams.

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A
PLAIN AND BRIEF SKETCH
OF
C H O L E R A,
WITH
A SIMPLE AND ECONOMICAL MODE
FOR ITS
TREATMENT,
SUBMITTED WITH CONFIDENCE
FROM
REPEATED SUCCESS IN ITS APPLICATION.



BY
WILLIAM HENRY WILLIAMS, M. D., F. L. S.,
FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS,
AND
PRESIDENT OF THE IPSWICH CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

SECOND EDITION—REVISED AND ENLARGED.



“ In faith and hope the world will disagree;
“ But all mankind’s concern is CHARITY.”
POPE.



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1832.

PLAIN AND BRIEF TESTS

OF

CHOLERA

WITH

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REPEATED SUCCESS IN ITS APPLICATION

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WILLIAM HENRY WILLIAMS, M.D., F.R.S.

LECTURER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

AND

PRESIDENT OF THE NEW ENGLAND BOARD OF HEALTH

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"In plain and simple words, the author has shown
that an epidemic of cholera is preventable."

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TO
SIR HENRY HALFORD, BART., G. C. H.,
PHYSICIAN IN ORDINARY TO THEIR MAJESTIES,
AND
PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES
RELATING TO A DISEASE
WHICH HAS RECENTLY BEEN THE SCOURGE AND TERROR
OF VARIOUS FOREIGN STATES,
AND WHICH NOW SERIOUSLY AFFLICTS
MANY PARTS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE,
EXHIBITING
A CONCISE VIEW
OF THE NATURE OF CHOLERA;
AND DISCLOSING A SIMPLE AND SUCCESSFUL MODE OF
TREATMENT,

Are Inscribed

WITH SENTIMENTS OF ADMIRATION
FOR HIS
PROFESSIONAL TALENTS,
AND WITH FEELINGS OF UNFEIGNED ESTEEM
FOR HIS
UNVARIED PERSONAL KINDNESS,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

“ I AM DISPOSED TO BELIEVE NO REMEDY WILL EVER BE
EFFECTUAL IN ANY GENERAL DISEASE, THAT IS NOT CHEAP,
AND THAT CANNOT EASILY BE MADE UNIVERSAL.”—(*Account
of the Bilious Yellow Fever in 1797. By Benjamin Rush, M. D.,
Professor of the Institutes, and of Clinical Medicine in the University
of Pennsylvania.*—Page 125.)

ON CHOLERA.



When the combined skill and efforts of learning, experience, and zeal, have been long exercised in vain to accomplish the removal or mitigation of any afflicting malady, it is too apt to generate a belief, that relief is impracticable, and thus to relax both research and experiment. It is also observable, that continued disappointment, in the expected effects from the use of varied and complicated prescriptions, has a tendency rather to produce despondency, than to suggest a trial of more simple remedies. Thus, the Cholera, having so generally baffled the skill of medical practitioners of the highest character for talent and experience, an impression has too generally prevailed, that occasional recoveries are providential, and that the disease is incurable by human means. The alarm and dismay consequent on so pernicious

and erroneous a belief, predisposes to the malady and aggravates it. Perceiving the inefficacy of more elaborate and complicated remedies, on being myself called in to some Cholera patients, I was resolved to try more simple means to subdue and eradicate this frightful disease.

It may not be unimportant to remove a too popular and mischievous impression, that the disease is new in this country ; and that, therefore, the medical world are inexperienced and unprepared for its treatment—an impression that has, no doubt, assisted in promoting the dismay and despondency so injurious in accelerating or aggravating the disorder.

As far back as the year 1669, the Cholera was so frequently known in London at the close of summer and the beginning of autumn, that Dr. Sydenham, a Physician of deserved celebrity, in a chapter upon Cholera Morbus, quaintly alleges the visits of that disease, at those seasons, to be as constant as the appearance of swallows in the spring, or cuckoos towards midsummer. His description of the Cholera Morbus of 1669, represents with sufficient accuracy, nine cases in ten of the Cholera of the present day. That a particular or transient state of the atmosphere, or

the peculiar constitution or irregular habits of a few individuals, may occasion a peculiar malignity or singular symptoms in the disease, is not inconsistent with the fact, that the great majority of cases of the present day are identically the same as those described by Dr. Sydenham a hundred and sixty years ago; and it should be remarked, that Sydenham never intimated, that Cholera was then a new disease; but declares, that the disease was more epidemic in the year 1669, than he had ever known it before. This eminent man thus described the signs by which the disease was known in that day:—

“1. Immoderate vomiting, and a discharge of vitiated humors by stool with great difficulty and pain.

2. Violent pain and distension of the abdomen and intestines.

3. Heart-burn, thirst, quick pulse, heat and anxiety, and frequently a small and irregular pulse.

4. Great nausea, and sometimes colliquative sweats.

5. Contraction of the limbs.

6. Fainting.

7. Coldness of the extremities, and other like symptoms, which greatly terrify the attendants, and often destroy the patient in twenty-four hours.”*—(*Sydenham's Works, translated by Swan, page 137, chap. 2.*)

* Any five, or even four, of the symptoms, enumerated by Dr. Sydenham, occurring at one and the same time in a more or less rapid succession, I feel disposed to consider as constituting the Cholera of the present day.

After reading this description, it is not too much to assume, that the disease of 1669 is the disease of 1832. It is obvious, that the suddenness of the seizure, the rapid progress of the disorder, and the fearful nature of the spasms, are calculated to excite alarm or despondency in the attendants, which perniciously aggravates the fears and malady of the patient.

In every practicable degree to diminish the injurious effects of such alarm, the Practitioner should firmly interpose a cheerful confidence and assurance of hope; to soften fear and soothe excitement, is in a measure to allay the disorder, and to prepare and predispose the Patient to submission and comparative tranquillity, a great auxiliary to any remedy that may be afterwards prescribed.

The Professional Man has been perplexed and thwarted in his attempts to subdue this frightful malady, by continually perceiving that many important and potent medicines, when administered in this disorder, have failed of their wonted effects. Some have revolted the stomach and augmented the pain and excitement they were designed to remove or diminish; and opiates, having disappointed the intentions and expecta-

tion of the Practitioner, in consequence chiefly of the mode of exhibiting them, led me to attempt some new method of administering them in this complaint.

It occurred to me, that if an opiate, sufficiently powerful to allay the dreadful irritation and excitement of the system which characterize this disease, could be introduced into the bowels, in a shape that would gradually, but increasingly mitigate, and early subdue the painfully excited state of the alimentary canal, that the pains and cramps in various parts of the body, together with the vitiated secretions and irregular action of the stomach and bowels, would soon cease. Whether this reasoning be correct or defective, it induced me to resort to a method of administering opiates through the medium of the lower bowel, and at the commencement of the disorder, which in my humble judgement, has been attended with effects so strikingly salutary, and so immediately remedial, and eventually so successful, that I dare venture to congratulate the suffering community on its discovery.

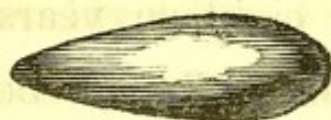
Long practice, and the frequent disappointment of justifiable expectation, make me mistrustful of my own judgement and timid in predi-

cating successful effort in a malady that seems to have mocked the art and science of medicine, and to have multiplied its victims by the dominion of early terror and despondency. I trust I am not too sanguine in my belief of having accomplished what all have so intensely desired.

I will briefly state the nature of my remedy, and then narrate the cases in which its efficacy has been decidedly manifest. Its simplicity, and its resemblance or approach to the nature of any other attempted remedy, will not disparage it with the learned and eminent practitioner, or the humane philanthropist; the former will possess a familiar recollection of the signal benefits conferred on mankind by accidental discoveries which have been often touched, but never before grasped; and the latter will forget the humble pretensions of the discoverer in a grateful acceptance of the benefit to his afflicted fellow creatures.

The remedy, then, which I propose, is the introduction into the Rectum, or lower bowels, of a mild but efficient Opiate; consisting of one dram of the best *soft* crude opium, *not dried or powdered*, and seven drams of hard soap, which being intimately blended together from

having been well pounded in a mortar, forms a solid paste,* of which the quantity introduced into the Rectum on each application, is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ grains of soft opium, and $17\frac{1}{2}$ grains of soap. The shape of the Paste, which, if requisite, may be reduced to a smaller size, should be agreeably to this plate, and forms, what is technically termed, a Suppository—



Provided the bowels be severely excited, it will be desirable to delay the application of the Paste till some pause or relief in such excitement take place, or till after such exhaustion or weakness be felt. In either event, the Anodyne Paste may be safely inserted into the Rectum, either by the patient or nurse, with the fore-finger and thumb; the smaller end of the paste being first introduced.

* As the expense attending the purchase of it for one family would be very trifling, every house in the kingdom may be provided with it; the wealthy and respectable having it in readiness for themselves and their families; it may be desirable for them in this hour of distress to provide the same for their labourers and poorer neighbours, who, without such assistance, might be unable to procure it. The additional expense of having the paste properly divided for different ages, and enclosed in a light box, would add but little to the cost of it.

In case the paste should be removed by any evacuation of the bowels, or other cause, before the desired relief be effected, the application of a similar quantity, in a similar shape, should be repeated; and again in one, two, four, six, or eight hours, as may be required by the continuance of pain, spasm, vomiting, or purging.

The size and quantity of the paste is for a person exceeding eighteen years of age; whilst two-thirds will be sufficient between six and eighteen; and one-third for those from infancy to six years old.

The salutary effects of the Anodyne Paste has exceeded my most sanguine hopes; an assertion which, I trust, may be justified by the following incipient and other Cases of Cholera, which have fallen under my own immediate observation:—

CASE I.

W. T., a young woman aged 21, was attacked about eight in the evening with violent cramps in her legs and stomach; during that day, she had two evacuations in the bowels of a nature not very relaxed—she vomited once, and frequently retched—the surface was warm, countenance natural, pulse 80, and of fair strength, and tongue furred. Sixty drops of tincture of opium, at half-

past eight, in brandy and water, and also an anodyne stimulating liniment, were directed by the professional attendant, at whose request I visited her soon after ten, when I advised the application of the paste to the rectum, which was afterwards twice repeated in the interval of two hours. The pain, however, continued most excruciating till twelve o'clock, when she was considerably relieved; and soon afterwards fell into a comfortable sleep of some hours, and awoke greatly refreshed and free from pain; but the succeeding day at half-past three she was again tried with the recurrence of spasm, at which time, having had recourse to the paste, and repeating its application an hour afterwards, the pain soon yielded to the means. Nothing was taken during the complaint except tea and thin gruel, with which she was fully satisfied, and recommended to continue it a few days. Friction with the anodyne stimulating liniment, which was powerfully rubbed on the body, and the 60 drops of laudanum taken in brandy and water before I saw her, seemed to have afforded no relief, for so severe were the cramps in her stomach and legs, and so terrified was the patient that three individuals

were required to keep her in bed, till after the third application of the paste.

CASE II.

E. A., a man, upwards of 50, and of a nervous temperament, after some indisposition and loathing of food, accompanied by slight pains in the loins, was attacked about the middle of the day with retching and vomiting, severe pains in the stomach and bowels, which were soon succeeded by three rapid and liquid evacuations from the bowels, great prostration of strength, and much thirst, deep anxiety of mind, violent pains in the back and legs, pulse small and intermitting, tongue slightly coated. I visited him in the evening about nine o'clock, and immediately directed the paste, together with friction; the latter was soon discontinued, because it seemed to increase the pains. In two hours he experienced great mitigation of pain generally, and in the two successive hours he fell into a comfortable sleep, from which he awoke about five the following morning free from pain and in a tranquil state of mind; he soon took a cup of tea, followed a short time afterwards by a little thin gruel, which he enjoyed. At eleven, nausea and vomiting returned in a small degree, and also in the evening, but

ceased about eight; at nine I visited him, when his pulse was steady at 80, and as he was free from all pain, the paste was not repeated; the succeeding night he became rather restless, but in the morning he felt very comfortable, enjoying several times during the day a small tea-cup full of weak mutton broth; and the following day, with the exception of slight nausea and vomiting, the patient appearing quite convalescent, I took my leave, directing for several days a steady perseverance in gruel, broth, and tea.

It may not be unnecessary to observe here—

I. That it was in the case of this patient, as well as in most others I have visited, that no evacuation from the bowels took place for three days after the introduction of the Paste, occasioning, however, not the slightest inconvenience by distension of the abdomen or otherwise.

II. That a gentle and warm perspiration usually accompanies the use of the Paste.

CASE III.

J. H., a female, aged 17, was attacked about ten in the morning with Cholera, the more prominent symptoms of which were severe purging, great thirst, the surface of the body rather cold,

cramps in the stomach and thighs, a small irregular pulse, and a dread of dying. In the evening, when I first saw her, the anodyne paste was applied by her mother; she was soon released from the purging and cramps, and in about three hours, having fallen into a comfortable sleep, which continued six hours, she awoke with feelings of convalescence; in four days, having used the paste each successive night, she may be said to have recovered; but in the intermediate time she occasionally experienced slight nausea and vomiting. No medicine was taken by the stomach, nor any support beyond tea, thin gruel, and cold water. Previously to the attack of Cholera she was in good health.

CASE IV.

C. R., a female, aged 21, who was attacked with Cholera about four in the afternoon, was previously in good health—vomiting and retching, and cramps in the stomach and bowels, and intense thirst, with a slight blueness of the skin, were the chief symptoms. With a view to relieve the pain and sickness, the mother gave her, without the slightest mitigation of suffering, from a quarter to half a pint of pure

brandy. Between nine and ten that night I visited her ; the paste was soon applied, which gave her almost immediate relief, and she had a comfortable night ; in four days she was quite well, the paste having been continued every night. Medicine was not taken by the stomach, nor any thing besides tea, cold water, & weak mutton broth.

CASE V.

M. D., aged thirty-eight, a widow with a large family, who had lately suffered great mental anxiety from the death of her husband, and laboured under violent purging and vomiting for three days. At ten in the morning, she sent for medical assistance, when she was apparently in a sinking state, with general coldness on the surface of the body, the muscles of the neck and head considerably affected with spasms or cramp, the pulse scarcely perceptible, varying from 90 to 100 ; a slight blue cast on the countenance, with an expression of great anxiety ; voice extremely weak, tongue thickly furred, but not cold ; and the stomach so irritable, that the least quantity of fluid could not be retained. Her professional attendant directed the paste, with the efficacy of which I had previously made him acquainted, and calling upon her again in about an hour and half, he found an in-

crease in the warmth of the body, and also in the force of the pulse; the spasms in the head and neck had ceased, but had attacked the lower extremities. He ordered a repetition of the paste, and gave her also a pill, consisting of one grain and half of opium and three grains of soap, which was soon rejected by the stomach. At eight, the same evening, my assistance was requested in conjunction with her medical attendant, when, having found the heat of the body considerable, the perspiration general, & the severe spasms in the lower extremities much abated, tea and thin gruel alone were directed during the night; in the course of which, slight vomiting having returned at intervals and several watery evacuations from the bowels having taken place, the paste was repeated. Visiting her again at seven in the evening, we found that she had slept several times, and was much refreshed by it; that her bowels had not been moved, and that she had taken nearly a pint of gruel; pulse still feeble, and the tongue much furred; on the following morning she was free from pain, and her countenance considerably improved, although in the night the vomiting returned—pulse 76. In the evening she was comfortable. The next morning, about four o'clock, hiccup came on and continued till

ten, when it ceased upon taking a little mutton broth, which she enjoyed at intervals during the day. In the evening, found her in a tranquil state, and the succeeding morning, at ten, apparently convalescent—pulse 66, and steady.—In a few days, by the additional aid of a teaspoonful of port wine every hour or two during the day, and occasionally during the night, her health and appetite were much restored.*

Soon after the first edition of this little work was sent to the press, the following case was communicated to me by an intelligent medical friend of mine, at some distance from hence: A gentleman, between 50 & 60 years of age, was suddenly seized with violent Cholera. "I found him," says my friend, "at eight in the morning, in an agony of pain confined to the lower region of the Hypogastrium, in great anxiety of mind, restlessness, and general distress over the whole frame—every alteration of position was followed by increased suffering, especially if he attempted the erect posture—pulse full at 80. Copious

* It may be noticed that in the above five cases nausea and vomiting after the first day of the disease occasionally attended each patient; but I have little doubt, that the patients would have been harassed with a great increase of both these distressing symptoms, had medicine, wine, spirituous or other liquors, been taken into the stomach. I may here add, that in the event of nausea or vomiting continuing, however trifling, till the fourth day, it will be advisable to administer a clyster consisting of half a pint of warm water or thin gruel; repeating it, if necessary, either to relieve nausea or vomiting, or to procure an evacuation from the bowels.

evacuations from the bowels had produced but transient relief, and he was laboring under severe cramp, nausea and rigor, and complained of extreme burning pain in the whole course of the alimentary canal. Soon after my arrival, I exhibited your paste into the rectum—at ten o'clock the spasms and pain continuing, though with some abatement, I repeated the application, which in less than two hours gave material relief and comfort to the whole system. A profuse perspiration was followed by quiet and refreshing sleep during the remainder of the night. At ten the following morning, vomiting returned, and two copious evacuations from the bowels were passed. The suppository was again administered as on the preceding evening with equal success ; in less than an hour, my patient became tranquil and comfortable, and I left him three hours afterwards free from all Cholera symptoms.

I gave him not a particle of medicine, and his support consisted of tea, thin rice gruel, and toast and water.”

It is unnecessary for me to say whether I could have ventured to predict effects so constant and potent from the administration of this Anodyne Paste before the experiment. I felt a sufficient temptation and excuse for trying it in the acknowledged defeat of other attempts, and

the deplorable consequences to the afflicted. That the malady originates in the morbid influence of a peculiar atmosphere, the effect of which is promoted or resisted by the state of health, or particular habits of individuals, is now, I presume, sufficiently evident—its sudden appearance, rapid progress, and terrifying symptoms, have perplexed the learned and experienced, and the early fatal termination of life has scarcely left time to vary expedients and remedies. My mind suggested the remedy I have pointed out, because, in the shape administered, it seemed to me to possess all the powers of the opiate, divested of some qualities which operate injuriously in any other shape. The result I now lay before the public, without any other feeling than that of deep gratification from anticipating the saving of human life, and the diminution of human suffering. I cannot refrain from adding, that the anxiety which I felt on the approach of Cholera, from the accounts in Medical and other Reports of the fatal and irresistible nature of its attacks, has so much subsided by witnessing the effects of the Anodyne Paste, that I enter the chamber of a Cholera patient with no apprehension or solicitude beyond that which accompanies me to the bed-side of individuals under fever usually denominated Typhus.

That my confidence may be justified by the experience of my Medical Brethren is my animating hope, and will prove my encouragement. I should not omit to remark, that in the fervour of zeal on the chief subject of solicitude, attention to subordinate, though highly important considerations, must not be forgotten. The exclusion from the stomach of every description of medicine, and of all vinous, spirituous, and fermenting liquors, of sugar, and every species of animal food, except beef tea, plain chicken broth, or *weak* mutton or veal broth, is indispensable until a week after the removal of the complaint; during which period, as well as during the existence of the disease, the diet should consist only of tea, water, toast and water, barley or rice water, thin gruel, whey, or milk taken cold or warm, agreeably to the palate of the individual—to which simple articles may be added, if required, oranges and ripe fruit, chewed in the mouth at any time, but not swallowed. A great attention to cleanliness, quietude in the sick chamber, unbroken by any thing but the encouragement of hope—friction with the hand only, or with the aid of a small quantity of pomatum or pork lard, or of common treacle, on any part of the body affected by pain or spasms, are all of them valuable auxiliaries in soothing and subduing the malady.

PRACTICAL CAUTIONS

AND

ADMONITIONS.



I. No disease demands greater circumspection than Cholera, nor requires more prompt measures either to prevent or cure it.

II. Whether the attack be violent or not, the individual should instantly be put to bed, and as soon as convenient there should be a small fire in the chamber (*if practicable*) and constantly kept up as a chief means of maintaining a proper circulation of air, which is of great value to the sick and the attendants—but even in the absence of a fire, the chimney board should be taken down—the evacuations of every kind be immediately removed from the room, the bed-curtains kept open, and no carpet should be suffered to cover the floor.

III. Sprinkling the bed-room occasionally with cold water during the day and night is highly desirable, and refreshing both to the sick and attendants; and after each evacuation from the stomach or bowels, a piece of old linen cloth, of brown paper, or of cork, being burnt in the chamber or passage adjoining, is preferable to the use of vinegar, camphor, tobacco, or pastiles,

which not unfrequently occasion giddiness and head-ache. In case of a desire to sprinkle the room or bed-cloths with chloride of lime or soda, a mixture, consisting of a table-spoon full either of liquid chloride of lime or soda, and a wine quart of cold water, may be employed.

IV. However great the thirst or retching, a small quantity only of liquids should be taken at one time, not exceeding a wine-glass full, which, however, may often be repeated.

V. Fear should be resisted as much as possible, being one of the principle causes of keeping up or aggravating the disease.

VI. In cases where head-ache shall occur after the vomiting and the action of the bowels have nearly or altogether subsided, four or six leeches should be applied to the temples—a safe and essential remedy, which the more affluent will feel called upon to have in readiness for their own use, and for their poorer neighbours, when required.

VII. As a means of avoiding Cholera, temperance *in all things* should be steadily kept in view, and violent exercise most carefully avoided.