

Directions of the Privy Council in case of pestilence.

Contributors

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Publication/Creation

[London] : [John Murray], [1831]

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Tracts 178²⁶⁴ 13. (1)
ART. VIII.—*The London Gazette for October 20th 1831.*
Rules and Regulations of the Privy Council concerning the Cholera.

WE are obliged to recur to a very painful subject, in consequence of the impression left on our minds, by the perusal of these directions, that the government of this country neither have done, nor are doing, nor even as yet contemplate doing, what we conceive to be their duty in relation to that pestilence which hovers at our doors. A hundred and fifty years have elapsed since any such visitation occurred in this happy island, and men of all conditions had been lulled, through long security, into a practical disbelief that the like may occur again. We mean no reproach to the present ministers in particular, when we state the fact that they appear to us to have taken up the consideration of the subject too late, and to have at length entered upon it feebly. We cannot forget how narrowly the government of Lord Liverpool, but a few years ago, escaped being seduced by our anti-contagionist reasoners into the repeal of all our laws respecting the plague.

History records instances of pestilence in which the mortality has been as great as in the cholera—others, in which the suddenness of the transition from life to death has been as appalling—and perhaps some few, in which the agonies of death have been not less excruciating; but no disease has ever before presented so fearful a combination of these three features—of extensive mortality—concentrated power of destruction—and exquisite anguish of suffering.

What has been done to meet this fatal contagion? *One* Board of Health has been established, and it has issued *two* documents. The first of these (lithographed in July) was made up of recommendations totally inapplicable and impracticable in a society such as ours, and which, if enforced, must have burthened us with evils yet more intolerable than those of death by cholera. Our wives and daughters, in the event of illness, were to be torn from us and thrust into lazarehouses; the rest of our families were to choose between the alternative of accompanying their sick kindred to the pest-house, or being placed, perhaps among the refuse of society, in a lazaretto, until time had shown that they might return to their own dwellings without danger to the public safety. Our houses, meantime, if the malady had visited them, were to be surrendered into the absolute keeping of 'Expurgators'—outcasts, probably, capable of, and tempted to every crime! The government, we must suppose, have the merit of detecting—at their leisure—the absurdity of thus applying

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insurrectionary tactics. Lord Edward's reason for writing and intending to print this, was 'to remind the people of discussing military subjects.' How far the publication may tend now to answer a similar end to that for which it was originally designed, is a question that might have suggested itself to the Editor.

Mr. Moore has printed a noticeable passage in one of Lord Byron's letters to himself. 'I have been turning over Little,' says his Lordship, 'which I knew by heart in 1803, being then in my fifteenth summer. Heigh ho! I believe all the mischief I have ever done or sung, has been owing to that confounded book of yours.' Well will it be for Mr. Moore if this present work does not produce a similar effect, and that too in happier and better constituted minds. Well will it be, if some generous and noble-minded youth, like Robert Emmet, or Lord Edward himself, be not seduced by it to take as an example what, if it were exhibited at all, ought to have been exhibited as a warning. For that the concession of Catholic Emancipation *has* tranquillized Ireland, no man is impudent enough to assert; and that the largest measure of Reform *can* tranquillize it, which O'Connell could ask, or a ministry ready to accommodate him in anything would accord, is what O'Connell himself does not believe. He who prophesies of ills, has before him a mournful prospect; but far more dreadful will be the retrospect of those who have done all in their power to bring upon their country the miseries of rebellion and revolution!

We conclude with transcribing Lord Byron's graceful Sonnet to his late Majesty on the reversal of Lord Edward Fitzgerald's attainder:—

'To be the father of the fatherless,
To stretch the hand from the throne's height, and raise
His offspring, who expired in other days
To make thy sire's sway by a kingdom less—
This is to be a monarch, and repress
Envy into unutterable praise.
Dismiss thy guard, and trust thee to such traits,
For who would lift a hand, except to bless?
Were it not easy, Sir, and is 't not sweet
To make thyself beloved! and to be
Omnipotent by mercy's means! for thus
Thy sovereignty would grow but more complete,
A despot thou, and yet thy people free,
And by the heart, not hand, enslaving us.'

plying to Great Britain the plague code of the *garrison of Malta!* and hence certain important modifications of the Board's original views, in the regulations of the 20th of October. But this second document, however superior to the first is, still far from being a satisfactory one. The *advice* it contains (for it is but *advice*) is of so general a nature, and so loosely worded, that we doubt if any individual has been thereby guided to frame for himself and his household a more efficient system of prophylactics than a very moderate exercise of unprofessional common sense might have at once suggested. It may be said that the Board have been deterred from going into details, by the dread of exaggerating alarm; but we cannot shut our eyes to the equal impolicy and inhumanity of being held back, under such circumstances, by such considerations. The fatal consequences of *ignorance* have been written black and strong in every history of pestilence. The amount of evil has always been in proportion to the want of knowledge and preparation. Witness Marseilles, where, in the language of an eye-witness, 'the rich found no protection—the poor no aid;' witness the massacres during the plague of Messina—the fearful anarchy which has attended the footsteps of this cholera throughout Persia—witness various towns of Hindostan, where the whole population rushed in despair into the country, and leaving their own valuables to destruction, spread the pestilence far and wide about them—and the islands of the Indian Ocean, where Europeans were butchered on the shore, in sight of British ships and Spanish soldiery. We are, in fact, inclined to attribute the diminishing mortality of cholera, as it has advanced into comparatively civilized regions, much less to any considerable mitigation of its virus, than to the superior arrangements as to hospitals and police, especially adopted in foresight of its eruption.

When we compare our own country with those European states as yet ravaged by cholera, so far from finding grounds to justify comparative neglect on the part either of government or of individuals here, we are constrained to arrive at a far different conclusion. Allowing all that can be asked for, as to the many points in which we are favourably distinguished—especially the morality and cleanliness characteristic of great classes not elsewhere so far advanced—and the skilfulness of our medical men—we are still forced to suspect, that on the whole, the balance may be struck against us. We have great towns in a proportion prodigiously beyond any other European empire—London with probably 1,500,000 inhabitants, Dublin with 400,000, Glasgow and Manchester with 200,000 each—five cities all above 100,000—Edinburgh, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol, and Cork—at least fourteen, of from 30,000 to 60,000—and about thirty, ranging from
15,000

far as is possible imitated here. At Frankfort-on-the-Maine, for example (we speak on the authority of a friend of ours, that has just arrived from that city), the arrangements are complete. The roads are patrolled and strict quarantine enforced. Each street has had, for some weeks past, its cholera committee, consisting of two or three of the chief inhabitants. These gentlemen visit every house daily, to see that rooms are white-washed, decayed fruit, vegetables, filth of every kind removed, and that at least one slipper-bath of tin is kept ready to be filled with hot water, under every roof. Soup kitchens have been prepared in every district. Very large supplies of medicines, and of provisions of all sorts, have been laid up. The medical professors have had their districts allotted to them. Bands of trustworthy persons have been sworn in to act as attendants on the sick. (At Berlin, the servants of families often ran off, and left their afflicted superiors utterly destitute.) Extensive hospitals have been erected in the fields, about a quarter of a mile out of the town; and, in a word, every precaution that two skilful physicians, who had been sent to Warsaw, could suggest, has been adopted under their immediate inspection.

In Catholic countries, the monastic buildings and religious persons have always been of the greatest service on occasions of this description; we have no such resources, and should therefore attend the more closely to the example of Protestant communities such as Frankfort. We believe the regulations of that town have been judged worthy of adoption by the government of Holland, and that arrangements similar to those above described are now in rapid progress throughout the various towns and villages of that well governed country.

Meantime such families as mean to quit, in case of pestilence, the town in which they reside, ought to hold themselves in readiness for immediate flight; and the civil power should be prepared to take charge of the houses and property which they are to leave behind them. The opulent must be content to pay dearly for such protection, but they have a right to expect it.

In such cases the excitement and alarm at the first outburst are so great, that, after a few days, people are apt to follow into the opposite extreme of indifference. We get accustomed to anything; and the progress of the mischief being probably slower than fancy had pictured, every hour the impression gets fainter. It is now that the vigilance of the police is most called for. The people must be saved in spite of themselves. The obtuseness and rashness of the lower orders, on such occasions, are such as none but an eye-witness will believe. At Vienna, the proportion of mortality among the very highest orders has been extraordinary, and is accounted for

for solely by the vast troops of ignorant domestics which swarm about the palaces of the Austrian nobility. All vagabonds, beggars, and old-clothesmen must disappear. The least semblance of a crowd must not be tolerated; and all public conveyances must be *open ones*. The cholera took seventeen days to advance one hundred and fifty fathoms in the Mauritius. If due exertions be made, the malady may be arrested and suppressed at this early stage.

When the terror revives,—when the indifference consequent on the first paroxysm of alarm gives way before the knowledge that the disease is indeed creeping on from quarter to quarter, from street to street, the desire to quit the town becomes general, and a new mass of difficulties must be grappled with. The more that go the better; but none must go unless they have the means of conveyance, and know whither they are going, or without the license of the district board; and they that do go must submit to travel under regulations of the strictest kind.

The stagnation of trade becomes, of course, more and more oppressive as the pestilence advances; and they who deal in articles of luxury would do well to secure their goods in time, in some part of their own premises, and consign the key to the civil power. In case the disease should ultimately break out in the family, their property may thus escape the fumigation necessarily enforced as to all merchandize with which the infected *may* have been in contact,—and which must in most cases be attended with great damage, in many ruinous.

There should, if possible, be lazarettoes out of town, to which families might, if they pleased, remove,—care being taken that families of the same class, as to manners, be placed together, and that families thus secluded shall abstain from all intercourse with the city. They who have seen out a week or two of the pestilence in any one place should remember that the visitation generally terminates in six weeks or two months, and on no account think of removing. And when the disease is fast disappearing, persons who have been secluded, either in such asylums or in their own houses, must put great restraint on their feelings, and not go out too soon. Such, when the pestilence is believed to have at last ceased its ravages, such is the delirium of joy, and such the impatience of curiosity, that too much vigilance cannot be recommended to the police in the last hours of their labour. Thousands rush into danger in the search of friends,—in the eager yearning to ascertain what link of life has been spared to them.

Finally, a most painful and thorough examination and purification of all infected houses must be enforced on the disappearance of the pest. Owing to the neglect of this, the disease soon reappeared

peared in Moscow,—and that great city endured its miseries for five months in place of two.

Knowing, as we do, the kind-heartedness of the English nobility and gentry, we can have no doubt that families, not themselves possessed of country houses, would find hospitable gates thrown open to them far and near; while the commons in the vicinity of London, and the numerous parks and pleasure grounds, would of course be at the service of parties disposed to encamp, under proper regulations, and the surveillance of the health police of the next town. Our readers will do well to turn to Russell's Narrative of the Plague at Aleppo, for a lively description of the manner in which certain Frank families encamped at a distance from the infected city, the perfect success of their precautions, and the occupations with which they diverted the period of their seclusion.

We shall now submit a few notes, drawn up for a private family, whom we suppose to have determined to remain in London during the prevalence of the cholera. They are, we well know, far from complete, but they may be of service, if it were but in stimulating persons better qualified than ourselves, to consider the matter in its details, and lay their views before the public.

1. To the utmost practicable extent disfurnish the house, removing to an outhouse, or at least locking up in a separate room, all carpets and hangings whatever, and all needless articles of clothing.
2. Get rid of all superfluous domestics; and take care that it shall be impossible for those that are retained to communicate with any one out of doors.
3. Strip entirely of furniture, except bedsteads, &c., one or two rooms for the infirmary,—the nearer the door, the more distant from the apartments of the healthy, and the airier, of course the better. To these alone must the physician and the police inspector have access.
4. Be provided, if possible, with the means and materials for washing and even for baking in-doors; with hot or vapour baths; wines (the best of which seem to be port and sherry); brandy; opium, in its solid and liquid state; calomel; mustard and lintseed meal; æther; some of the essential oils, as cajeput, peppermint, or cloves; and a case of lancets.
5. All windows should be opened and every room thoroughly aired several times a-day. Our fire-places are admirably adapted for ventilating as well as heating apartments; and in their use we have a great advantage over the northern nations, whose stove system has contributed much to the ravages of this pestilence, enabling its virulence to withstand even a Russian winter.

- winter: Chloride of lime should be used to sprinkle all floors occasionally, and a small vase containing it should be in the rooms principally inhabited. Sudden changes of temperature should be avoided: hot days succeeded by cold nights have been found powerfully to predispose to infection.
6. All letters and supplies of food must be received from the police messengers and purveyors, with the precautions adopted in lazarettoes. They must be drawn up to a window of the first floor, by means of a rope having a yard of chain and an iron pail attached to it. Whatever is not injured by wet should be then plunged into a metal or earthen vessel filled with a weak solution of chloride of lime, or vinegar and water. Bread, flour, and anything that would be injured by moisture, should be exposed to the heat of an oven before handling. Papers must be fumigated thoroughly with sulphur.
 7. That regimen which the individual has found best suited to his constitution should be adhered to; those who have been used to an active life of course diminishing the quantum of their food in proportion as they are debarred from exercise.* It being universally admitted that whatever disorders the stomach and bowels predisposes to the cholera,—all unripe fruits, watery vegetables, as melons, cucumbers, &c., and all sharp liquors, as cyder, &c., must be avoided. The use of the weak acid beer of the Prussians (the weiss-bier) has been found extremely injurious; and the sale, both of that sort of beer and cyder, has been entirely prohibited at Frankfort. Wine should be used, but in moderation. The system should neither be lowered by unwonted abstemiousness, nor excited by any violent stimulus.
 8. It is needless to say, that personal cleanliness, at all times of great, is now of vital importance. We need not point out the usefulness of baths. The whole body should be rubbed daily with soap and water, and afterwards sponged with vinegar. The sympathy existing between the functions of the skin and those of the intestinal canal are most intimate. Linen, especially bed-linen, cannot be changed too often.

Those who are obliged to go abroad during the prevalence of a pestilence, ought to know that furs are, of all articles of clothing, the most likely to catch and retain morbid exhalations; that woollen stuffs are more likely to do so than cottons, and cottons than silks. The furs and flannel-bands of the Russians and Poles

* The diminution of bodily exercise, provided the air be pure, is found much less injurious than might be supposed. Women, who take very little exercise, live longer than men.

are particularly condemned by all the physicians who have watched the pestilence among them. The greatest care should be taken to avoid cold or wet feet—for diarrhœa is the worst of the predisponents.

As we are ignorant whether the pestilential matter enters the healthy body through the pores of the skin, the lungs, or the alimentary canal, prudence requires that we should act as if it may enter by all of them. In many parts of Europe the attendants on cholera patients, and those who come into contact with the dead, use garments pitched over, or made of oilskin; and in former times, when the plague was here, physicians were obliged to wear such dresses, both because their own lives were considered as of the highest value, and that they might be at once distinguished in the streets. A false shame, or falser courage, might prevent many from spontaneously adopting such precautions, who would be happy to obey an official regulation enforcing them. The physician should carry a phial of chloride with him wherever he goes. His hands, after touching a patient, should be carefully washed with soap and water, and then sponged with the solution of chloride. The attendants on the plague wear a double handkerchief, steeped in vinegar, over the lower part of the face. The following pastile has been recommended :

Dried chloride of lime,	12 grains,
Sugar	1 ounce,
Gum tragacanth	20 grains.

This, being flavoured with some essential oil, should be made into lozenges of 18 or 20 grains, and one of them held in the mouth during the visit.

In conclusion, we must entreat the public not to be swayed by the nonsense daily poured out in the newspapers, by persons the least entitled to be heard on this subject. Your merchant, whose traffic is likely to be interrupted, converts himself for the nonce into *Medicus, Senex, Detector, &c. &c.*, and hazards assertions of the most unblushing audacity. In spite of the fearful ravages of this pest in all the islands of the Indian Ocean, we are told that England is safe—for cholera never crosses seas. Another assures us, that, at all events, a sea-voyage must prodigiously diminish its virulence;—and yet it was after a voyage of three thousand miles—something more than the passage from Hamburg!—that it carried off, by thousands, the inhabitants of Mauritius. A third is ready with his assertion, that no medical man or attendant on the sick has died of the disorder; and this, in the face of the Madras Report, which records the death of thirteen medical men in that presidency, and the illness of twenty more—of the St. Petersburg Reports, which show that every tenth medical
man

man in that capital was attacked, and that a very large proportion died; although we know, that of the small number of medical men at Cronstadt, four died; that in Astracan *all* the nurses and almost all the doctors were attacked; and that in Vienna, out of the first one hundred deaths in the whole of that great capital, three were medical men.

Much is said, or whispered, as to the impolicy of exciting fear. We suspect that the influence of this passion in predisposing the body to contagion, has been exaggerated; but if that were otherwise, which would be likely to produce the more injurious effects,—the fear that *may* be excited now, or that which must be excited in case of the sudden apparition of this pestilence in the very bosom of our families? The system of discountenancing fear has been tried abundantly. *Before* the plague appeared at Marseilles, a wise man gave two pieces of advice to the magistracy of that town.—‘Consider every sudden death as suspicious—Despise the squabbles of physicians.’ The magistrates despised his advice, and fifty thousand of the inhabitants perished before the doctors admitted that the disease was contagious. At Messina the same course was followed. No precaution was adopted. All at once the pest was found raging, and the populace rose in the frenzy of wrath and despair, and glutted themselves with murder.

As to individuals, in our humble opinion, the manly discipline of mind for impending danger, is to contemplate its coming, calculate its effects, and prepare; and we warn our rulers that if they neglect those preparations which they alone can make, the responsibility they incur is solemn. The question of contagiousness or non-contagiousness, having in prudence established the quarantine, they may safely leave to the physicians: the fact of the mortality of cholera, when it once reaches any country, is that which ought now to occupy their minds and direct their measures. This pest destroys here a sixth, there a fourth, and in a third town a half of the population. When such things *are* going on in a great town, what business is it that must not stop? What art can hinder thousands from being plunged into absolute want? or who will pause to ask whether the poison hovers in the air, or is transmitted from person to person? The instinct is to avoid the place—and it is all but uncontrollable. Nothing will induce any man to remain, who has it in his power to remove, except the knowledge that the government has done its duty—that all precautions have been adopted, and all pre-arrangements made. The more rigorous the laws, and the more strictly they are enforced, the more certainly will the government be pronounced a merciful one, at the time by the intelligent, in the sequel by all.

ART. IX.—*Letter to the Lords.* By a Member of the House of Commons. Sept. 22, 1831. London. 8vo.

THE House of Lords has, as we anticipated, done its duty. It has vindicated its own constitutional rights, and has, for a season at least, arrested the progress of revolution. It always seemed to us one of the strangest, and indeed one of the most alarming signs of the times, of the unconstitutional spirit and illegal designs which are afloat, that any doubt should have been entertained as to what the Lords would do; yet certainly, up even to the last moment, ministers affected to believe, and very solemnly asserted, that the result would be different. We at first attributed such absurd rumours to mere ignorance, but we now believe them to have been the offspring of an artful design to inflame the public mind, and aggravate, by such fallacious expectations, the ultimate disappointment of the populace. We are the rather induced to notice this device, because we see that a similar delusion will be, or rather already is, attempted for a similar purpose. Every 'blind Tiresias' of the administration who, ten days ago, so confidently predicted that the Lords would pass *the Bill*, is, notwithstanding the affront which his sagacity has just received, equally loud and confident in now assuring us that, in about six weeks' time, or even less, their lordships will *have passed another bill*, quite as efficient as the former. We flatter ourselves that our prophecies would appear better entitled to confidence than those whose fallacies have been so lately exposed; but until we see this other—*different* but equally *efficient*—something, we put so little trust in either the integrity or the common sense of the Ministers, and can so little guess what they may choose to think or call '*equally efficient*,' that we shall not waste our readers' time in casting the horoscope of the unborn bill. Suffice it for the present that the two *first-born* of the union between the monarch and the mob *are no more*, and that from such an unnatural conjunction there seems, every hour, less probability of any other progeny than mis-shapen embryos or short-lived monsters.

If vexation and rage are proofs of sincerity, the ministerialists are certainly sincerely disappointed by the majority in the Lords:—they are surprised at its numbers,—they are mortified by its respectability,—they are confounded by its talents,—and they are dismayed at its spirit;—but, instead of reading the lesson they have received according to the old constitutional rule and to their own recent pledges of '*standing or falling by the bill*,' they have determined to *stand by their own salaries*; and every engine of popular excitement has been employed to procure the sanction of the people to this liberal adherence to office,—this patriotic pertinacity of place! The first point to be established for this purpose was to persuade the public that the
the