The fast and the cholera : a sermon, preached in the Unitarian chapel, Boston, on Tuesday, September 25th, 1849, (being the day agreed upon to be observed in the borough, as a day of fasting and humiliation, in consequence of the extreme prevalence of the cholera) / by James Malcolm, ... to which is appended, a brief, practical view of the Asiatic cholera, by A.G. Malcolm, M.D.

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THE FAST
AND THE CHOLERA

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THE FAST AND THE CHOLERA:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE UNITARIAN CHAPEL, BOSTON,

On Tuesday, September 25th, 1849,

(BEING THE DAY AGREED UPON TO BE OBSERVED IN THE BOROUGH, AS A DAY OF FASTING AND HUMILIATION, IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE EXTREME PREVALENCE OF THE CHOLERA.)

BY JAMES MALCOLM,

MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.

TO WHICH IS APPENDED,

A BRIEF PRACTICAL VIEW OF THE ASIATIC CHOLERA,

BY A. G. MALCOLM, M. D.,

PHYSICIAN TO THE GENERAL HOSPITAL, BELFAST; SECRETARY TO THE BELFAST SANITARY COMMITTEE, &c.

PUBLISHED BY E. T. WHITFIELD, 2, ESSEX-STREET, STRAND, LONDON; AND J. CLARKE, BOSTON.

1849.

Price Sixpence.

The Writer of the accompanying Discourse has been induced to make it public, not from any claim it possesses to originality either of thought or expression, but from an intimation he received that a more extensive circulation of the sentiments expressed, might be productive of public advantage. The haste of preparation must plead in extenuation of its crudity of thought, and imperfection of arrangement.

The Appendix has been furnished, by the kindness of a brother, in the hope that the respite we now enjoy from the Cholera, may be turned to useful purpose, and that we be not induced to spend in fancied security the present time, on whose energetic employment rests our hope of general amelioration, and of preventing a recurrence of the mortality next Summer.

THE FAST, AND THE CHOLERA.

A SERMON,

&c.

LUKE xiii. 1, 2, 3.—There were present at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay:* but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

ROMANS viii. 26.—Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, *for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.*

THE relation of cause and effect, has always afforded an interesting subject for human speculation: and the more profound the ignorance, the more inclined were men to connect thus events and operations, coincident merely in time and place; while the occasional and more terrific occurrences of nature were uniformly interpreted as warnings or tokens of the Divine displeasure. Many of these imaginary connexions knowledge has now exploded. Thunder storms are no longer interpreted as being Divine judgments—comets dreaded as being the forerunners of war and pestilence—or eclipses of the sun as prognosticating the fall of nations.

But affliction and calamity have at all times, led men especially to speculate upon their immediate causes, and the religious principle inherent in humanity, has generally ascribed them to the displeasure of God, on account of some sin, known or secret. The Jews believed that even

bodily ailments were the consequence of sin, personal or hereditary:—"Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, *Neither*." The crowd that surrounded the Saviour's cross cried out, "If thou be the Christ, come down." And even Christians have not hesitated to infer, from his extreme sufferings, that he was a sinner, by imputation, the greatest that ever appeared upon the earth.* But not so, my friends, have you read the life and character of that gentle and blameless One. *You* suppose not that this Galilean was a sinner above all the Galileans *because he suffered such things.*

It is indeed, true piety to refer ALL things to God, and to regard even the seeming *evils* of life as part of the same wise and benevolent plan. But it is *gross superstition* to ascribe the different events of our lives to different final causes,—to trace up sufferings, however severe or awful, to the wrath of God, and to represent the Supreme Ruler as governing the world by a series of arbitrary interpositions—occasional miracles of anger. For, in addition to the unrighteous judgments our ignorance of God's purposes would necessarily inflict, the supposition is contrary to fact. We receive not always manifest inflictions according to our deserts, nor direct blessings in proportion to our merits. Providence is established and secured by *general laws*, whose constant and uniform operation is decidedly most beneficial on the whole—though sometimes partially, and for a time, injurious: and in this, more than in any direct manifestation, consists the moral discipline by which the inhabitants of earth are being trained for heaven. However amiable and natural, therefore, the old custom may have been, of propitiating the Deity by prayer, when lightnings and storms, earthquakes and pestilences devastated the lands, now that science has banished from among us the notion that these are messengers of wrath, and taught us that they are phenomena of nature that follow certain fixed laws, as immutably as light and heat follow from the sun,—the custom now seems scarcely in accordance with the advancing knowledge of mankind.

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* Luther says, "Christ became the greatest transgressor, murderer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, that ever was or could be in the whole world; for he, being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person, and without sin; is not now the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, but a Sinner. When, therefore, the law found him among thieves, it condemned him and killed him as a thief."—*Vide* MONTHLY REPOSITORY, vol. xii. p. 414.

My friends, we are recommended, in a circular issued by those who have been most active in promoting the present celebration, to observe this day, "as a day of fasting and humiliation before Almighty God, in consequence of the very extensive and long continued prevalence of that most fearful and mysterious disease, which has carried off, in an awfully sudden manner, so many thousands of the inhabitants of this country." To this recommendation no one can take the smallest exception—so long as it is thus left to individual judgment to decide *how* the day is most appropriately to be observed. The *spontaneousness* of the movement gives to it, in my eyes, much of its interest and value. Had it been a mere *state command*, I should have been inclined both to question its authority, and demur at its utility. In addition to our instinctive suspicion of state interference in matters of religion, I should have seen in a *compulsory universal* holiday, a gratuitous tax upon the fruits of labor, that the majority could but badly spare. For many persons, too, a day of general idleness, would be but a day of general dissipation. Many would be induced to spend on a day's pleasure, what should be preserved for the sustenance and education of their families; and neither morals nor health would be promoted by such a day's idleness. But as it is what may be called a *local* and *spontaneous* movement, in which there is no *compulsory* neglect of labor, nor arbitrary restraint upon the conscience, I have the more readily joined in the celebration, and invited you, my friends, to meet me here, that the occasion may not be wholly a mockery, a delusion, or fruitless ceremony. At the same time, I feel bound to state to you my own views of its utility, and for what it is we ought to pray.

In the form of prayer that has been lately issued to be used in all churches and chapels of the Establishment, there seems much with which we can agree. It is especially gratifying to observe, that in this, and in other recent forms of a similar discription, no phrase that could be *doctrinally* offensive has been introduced. Much of Scripture language has been adhered to:—it is such (doctrinally) as I could myself use, and to which I could most heartily respond, Amen: and on the whole, it seems such as could be repulsive to no sincere worshipper of God the Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. In this, we rejoice to behold a silent testimony to the scripturality, and correctness of our views. Here is an incidental acknowledgement that the doctrines for which we contend are not consi-

dered so abhorrent to truth, when the phraseology in which we have long uttered our prayers, comes to be the same now used in high places of the Church. But the *purport* of the prayer seems not to be altogether so unobjectionable. That we should ask God to remove from us any physical suffering, or not visit us with any affliction which, in the order of his providence, and according to the immutable laws of nature, may come upon us—the immediate causes of which we can often ascertain, and over which we ourselves have much control—seems to me to be a flying in the face of Providence, an appeal to God to reverse his own laws, to work a miracle on our behalf, while we ourselves use not all the ordinary means of mitigation that lie within our own power—in fact, a prayer for the removal of *the effect*, while *the superinducing cause* still remains in all its virulent activity! Should it, for instance, be clearly ascertained that the present pestilence has been caused, or at the least, aggravated, by long neglected deposits of filth, or want of drainage, or want of cleanliness, or from crowding ourselves too closely together, while there is room elsewhere, in abundance, the disease must take its place among the ascertained and regular phenomena of the universe. Now, my friends, already much of this has been done. We are told that the course of the pestilence has been observed to be almost as regular as that of a stream. Twice, within eighteen years, it has now visited Europe, pursuing nearly the same course, falling most heavily on the same cities, and on similar classes of persons, and sparing others. It has confined itself also, only to some parts of those cities, and, with some exceptions, spared and afflicted the same parts each time. Its march is calculable, if not exactly regular. It is, therefore, more systematic to our senses, and submissive to our calculations, than the atmosphere.* Do you expect, then, with these *facts* before you, that a miracle will be wrought by this day's humiliation;†—that

* "It is important," observes the Registrar General, in his last Report, "to bear in mind, that cholera only brings into a strong light, the localities in which elaborate calculation in the annual Reports proves to be *at all times fatal* to the health and life of the inhabitants! The returns of the last three months have supplied the means of *shading out a map of the metropolis, in exact accordance with the sanitary needs of each locality.* Without any actual visitation, we could put our finger on *every spot*, where the breath of life was vitiated by foul odours, imperfect drainage, or, worst of all, by graveyards overgorged with corpses."—THE TIMES, Sep. 8th.

† *The Standard*, I observe, when advocating the propriety of a

imperfect sewerage, and filthy accumulations, will henceforth be forbidden by Divine command, to send forth their poisonous exhalations ; -- that the pestiferous gases of which foul atmosphere is composed, will be deprived of their noxious qualities, and become promotive of health and pleasure ;—that they shall no longer continue to be what they have hitherto been, God's warnings and messages to man, to remind him by their noisome presence, that death lurks in his neighbourhood, and that he must be up and active, and remove *the cause,* or else the invariariable and resistless consequence of disobedience to God's laws, must ensue ? Or, think you, that it would be even *beneficial* if such a miracle were wrought ;—that we should be more happy, more free from disease, if the elements of nature were to lose their qualities, or be changed, at our petition ;—if we were permitted to live without injury amid the filth, and the crowd, and the heat that the ignorance and laziness of man would soon accumulate around him ? Oh ! think you, my friends, that your arrangements would, on the whole, be better than those of the All-seeing, All-wise, and All-good ? So true it is, indeed, that, often, "*we know not what we should pray for* as we ought."

Besides, "it is not by our supplication," as an eminent preacher * has said, "that we can pretend to produce any alteration in the Deity, but by an alteration *in ourselves,* we may alter the relation or respect lying between *Him* and *us.*" The tendency of modern philosophy is to strengthen the irresistible conviction of the undeviating certainty of natural sequences—the permanency, regularity, and universal operation of fixed and established laws. This fact is illustrated by all experiments, links together every chain of argument, and has become a universal axiom, an admitted principle, upon which we act with as unhesitating certainty, as we do upon any truth cognizable by our senses. If, therefore, any one be told, that if he would understand prayer aright, he must at once lay aside this axiom, dis-

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general public fast, as a means of dispelling the Cholera, triumphantly quoted its success on the former occasion of the visitation ; and, doubtless, to something of the same kind, will be ascribed by many, its present mitigation. It is unfortunate, however, that the same means have not been *universally* successful. The potatoe disease in Ireland, for instance, last year, was regarded by the same authority as a Divine judgment, and a day of public fast and humiliation "was appointed" in consequence ; with what effect, let the mournful details still brought to our ears, bear witness.

* Dr. Price.

turb this regularity, and divest himself of this conviction, can we wonder that he immediately starts back with doubt, and henceforth treats the entire subject with contempt? And could we utterly blame such an one? The guilt, in my mind, lies more at the door of those whose *perversion of the doctrine* has, in such an instance, led to its rejection.

But, my friends, does Scripture any where assert the *precise mode* in which the petition will be realized? Many may be astonished to learn, that its statement simply is,—"Ask, and it (an answer) shall be given you." The way, the manner, the instrumentality, it no where divulges. And, with reference to *the object* for which we pray, does Scripture teach, that every object shall be realized—that, no matter for what we pray, it and it alone, we shall receive? No: All will surely reply, that *temporal* things for instance, —if they form at all a fit subject for Christian devotion, (of which I am more than doubtful, observing the spirituality of that religion, and learning that it was uniformly after the *soul's* riches and the *soul's* life Christ taught us to aspire,)—that temporal things should be desired only when truly *good* for us. But will every thing temporal *we* esteem good be given us? Surely not to short-sighted beings, who so often put good for evil, and evil for good! But to the efficacy of all prayer, there is yet another important condition attached: there is ever something to be *done by ourselves,* before it can be fit and consistent with the Divine Government to grant us particular blessings. What warrant have we, that, if we simply ask, withont using *means,* God will put into our hands the good for which we crave? Why the most ordinary of our daily blessings—the food that nourishes our mortal frames, drops not spontaneously into idle hands, but as we have received powers, so we have been told, by the ever active energy of the brain, the stout muscle of the arm, and the delicate tracery of the finger, to apply these powers to their legitimate purposes. And shall we dare imagine that the *spiritual* gifts of heaven shall be showered upon us through any other medium, than that of our own exertions too? Oh! my friends! that is alone the prayer of faith, which anticipates the enjoyment of those things God has promised to grant, whilst *the means* are used, through which alone they can be obtained.

Let us therefore understand the true nature of prayer—let us analyze even our own thoughts upon this subject—and I think that our own consciences will tell us, that, with reference again to *the objects* for which we pray, there are many things which we should not ask God to grant, and

thus a lesson of modesty, and moderation in our requests, may be learned. There are, for instance, intuitively known purposes of God, against the operations of which no depth of impiety could tempt us to pray. Thus, inordinate passion has no piety: there is no room for the two in the same heart; they are Christ and Belial in the same temple. Ambition has no prayer. No man, with any proper apprehensions of its real purpose and sanctity, dare come to ask the Father of men for power to crush His own image in His creatures. I know that there are who hesitate not to pray for success in battle over their enemies, but I know not the impiety that would dare embody the sentiment in these truthful words. Again, there is no prayer of envy, or of revenge, or of luxury, or of covetousness. The envious man would instantly feel his own sin, that he wanted admiration for God's work—the vengeful, sympathy with God's mercy—and the covetous and luxurious would in their contrary vices be equally convinced that their desires were in opposition to His appointment. Thus, although "we know not always what we ought to pray for," we all feel with an irresistible instinct, that there are some things for which we ought *not* to pray. Prayer therefore, is, not only, often, silently the rebuker of evil thoughts, but when properly understood, admonishes us against seeking, with our short-sighted wisdom, to change those laws that Infinite Wisdom has established.

In these convictions, my friends, *true piety* seems to be enshrined. For what is true piety, if reliance upon the Supreme Wisdom be not entitled to that lofty appellation —a becoming respect for the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Almighty—an acting with a devout conviction that God is not a capricious or vengeful Ruler, but that, as his laws are just, so they are fixed, and that as sufferings come to us under these laws, so, under them too, remedies are to be found. To call upon Deity, therefore, arbitrarily to remove a disease, when we may ourselves remove its aggravating causes, is simply *superstition*—nay, worse, for we suggest thereby, that we are wiser than the Omniscient One—that He has done wrong, and ought to be guided by us. Let us, then, confine prayer to its legitimate object—a devout aspiration after the highest things in the Universe, *riches* and *life*—the riches of the spirit, and the ever-growing life of the soul:—let us ask for these in sincerity and truth, and the blessing of God will assuredly descend upon our righteous exertions to obey all his laws, and we will feel strengthened in mind and body, to resist any threaten-

ing calamity, or to bear it becomingly, when, in the dispensations of His Providence, it may at length overtake us.

But we now come upon more delicate ground, when we come to consider the present attempt of explaining the Divine judgments, and the confident declaration that the pestilence is a punishment for our sins. In the circular to which I have already referred, we are told,—" In this visitation we cannot but recognize the hand of God, and *must view it as directly* SENT TO BE A PUNISHMENT FOR SIN." My friends, I believe that this delusion, that the calamities of life are Divine judgments for the punishment of sin, and that we can by our humiliation and prayer change the fixed laws of God—by fasting and penance, alter the consequences of imperfect sewerage, and filthy industry, cause the rank grave-yard to pour forth only vivifying qualities, and the dank ditch no longer to emit its pestiferous nuisance—that all this prejudice has arisen from the unguarded application of the laws and maxims of the *Jewish* dispensation to the *Christian.* I think we might safely affirm that nearly all the sermons to be preached this day, will be delivered from texts taken from the *Jewish* and not the Christian Scriptures :—that the preachers, instead of seeking their inspiration from the words of the divine Master, and copying from his faith and trust in Providence, and drawing from the exhibition of his obedience encouragement, and from his sufferings, resignation,—will go back two thousand years, to a dispensation intended for an infant people, and long since superseded, and will exhibit themselves in this respect to be more Jews than Christians. To this antiquated authority, rather than to any *evangelical* source, is to be ascribed the superstitious eagerness to receive implicitly tales of the punishments that have fallen from the Divine justice upon supposed sinners, sabbath breakers, profane swearers, and such like, as detailed in the popular tracts of the day.* But what warrant have we

* Some of my readers may be edified by an extract or two. " *Divine vengeance on a card-playing Parson.*—A clergyman was spending an evening, not in *wrestling* with his God, but at the card-table; after stating that it was his turn to deal, he dropt down dead. It is worthy of remark (says the writer,) that within a very few years, this was the third character in the neighbourhood which had been summoned from the card table to the bar of God."—EVANG. MAG.

" *A Bee, the instrument of Divine punishment on a Swearer.*—A young man is stung by a bee, gets into a passion thereupon, and utters the most dreadful oaths and imprecations. In the midst of his fury, one of the little creatures stung him on the tip of that unruly

from experience, or the *Christian* religion, to believe that such are exceptions to the general rule of moral responsibility and probation, and are selected for signal punishment before the great decisive day? If the few of these classes that suffer in their sins are to be marked out by us as objects of a Divine judicial visitation, the multitudes that escape might with equal reason be adduced in favour of a conclusion at which all piety revolts. Oh! let us remember, my friends, that we are now living under an ordinary state of Providence, and no longer under a dispensation of miracles and prophecy, in accordance with which, we are told, judgments, emphatically so called, were often inflicted by the hand of God. Besides, *we*, who would thus venture to interpret the Divine dispensations, are not in the same position with the *sacred* historians who profess to reveal to us the very objects and intentions of the Deity. They claimed to behold the secrets of Providence, and in every event the moral reason that explains and justifies it. But until *we* have the same power and authority, let us beware of confounding acts performed and interpreted under a Theocracy, with similar appearances in times in which we have ceased to be educated by sensible manifestations, and let us not dare with erring judgment to measure out the Divine dispensations. How do *we* know that the pestilence that now afflicts us, may not be an instrument of *general* good, though of individual evil,—of permanent blessing, though of temporary suffering? It has been, and promises to be still further, a source of much eventual social improvement, by exciting a greater regard for the decency, comfort, and elevation of the multitude. Let us not, then, attempt to be wiser than God; but, in humble confidence in his unfailing justice and goodness, endeavour to conform ourselves more to his will, search into his laws, and apply them according to our condition and our wants—according to our duty to Him, and our relation to the world in which we live.

It is gratifying to observe, that in these sentiments I am fully borne out by one of the highest dignitaries of the Established Church. Dr. Whateley, Archbishop of Dublin, whose words must ever carry much weight and authority, in a recent charge to his Clergy, thus speaks:—

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member (the tongue) which was then employed in blaspheming his Maker. Thus can the Lord engage one of the meanest of his creatures in reproving the bold transgressor who dares to take his name in vain."—*Ib.*

"Permit me to repeat the caution given in my last, and in some former addresses, against *the presumption of undertaking to explain those dispensations of Providence respecting which we have received no Revelation*, and where human reason cannot guide us aright. Reason does, indeed teach us to judge from experience, that, as a general rule, virtue leads to a greater amount of temporal blessings than vice..... And Revelation, again, informs us of many instances of temporal calamities sent as special Divine judgments on sins with which they had no natural connexion.....But the connexion of the plagues of Egypt with the sin committed is known to us only through the inspired record of the predictions and their fulfilment.....And we learn, also, from our Lord's express declaration, that we must not presume to pronounce, on human conjecture, those who may be overtaken by any sudden calamity, to be "sinners above all men that dwelt in the city." .....Anything, indeed, that can be proved to be sinful, we are justified in protesting against. But it would be both absurd and fruitless to attempt, in any case, to prove this by assuming that such and such temporal afflictions are judgments for this alleged sin, *unless we were enabled*—like Moses in the case of Korah, or Paul in the case of Elymas—*to predict the fate of the offender*.....Wherefore, 'judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who shall both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have (his) praise of God.'—There is the more need that we should be assiduous in pointing out to our people the *presumptuous profaneness, as well as the uncharitableness* of thus venturing to pronounce temporal afflictions to be tokens of Divine displeasure against the sufferers: we have the more need, I say, to be careful in guarding them against this error, because there is *a specious appearance of piety* in thus assuming the tone of God's inspired messengers, and a semblance of Scriptural authority, which may mislead those who do not distinguish between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations. And, moreover, there is the more temptation to commit the error in question from the circumstance that its tendency is, (as I observed in my last charge) 'to set men upon judging their *neighbours* rather than themselves.' I appealed to your own testimony, as able to confirm from your own experience the remark, that most of those who represent some national sin as calling down or as about to call down, a national judgment, usually attribute this sin, not to themselves, but to some Church, or party, or class of persons, to whom they are opposed..... .The inefficiency, therefore, and, indeed, dangerous tendency of such doctrines and such a procedure as I have been deprecating, may be as easily shown as their unsoundness in principle. But it is by a right understanding of the Gospel, and a resolution to conform to its principles, that we should wish to see our people principally and primarily guided; and it will then afford both to us and to them a consolatory confirmation of their faith, to find the coincidence of the principles of the Gospel, when rightly understood, and fairly followed out in practice, with the dictates of sound policy."

Finally, then, what is our duty, but to put ourselves ever in harmony with the great laws of nature, and thus work out our own salvation, and the salvation of our kind. If the Providence of God consists in giving to His established laws, efficiency to produce their proper effects, then it becomes our solemn duty to put ourselves into a state of obedience to them, and thus secure the great object which the Deity had in view in their appointment. To this end, we should diligently study those great laws appointed by God, through which alone that well-being can be attained: and not merely those of social, national, and political economy,—but, since *Religion* is the most powerful principle in our nature—since *its* relations lie at the base of all other relations—and since *it* influences most the character of individuals and of nations—we must throw off the shackles of all prejudices, authorities, and creeds, and, with an earnest spirit, ask light and truth of our Maker, who will answer to our souls in letters of fire, blazing upon the pages of nature and Revelation.

With such sentiments I cordially join in this day's celebration. I desire to express the utmost *humility* before God, now, and at all times, considering our constant dependence on Divine favour. I desire to offer up *confession of sins* before God, now, and at all times—sins both of omission and of commission,—that we have in many instances violated God's laws fixed for our guidance and our good—those immutable, physical, and moral laws, that are promotive of health, and life, and happiness. I desire also, to offer up *prayer* to Almighty God, that he would so dispose our hearts to know the truth, and practise the right, that we may live in harmony with Him, and His Providence, and so be stimulated to the performance of all that is true, excellent, and everlasting: I pray to Him that our hearts may be opened to the cry of the poor, and the wants of our race—that we may be animated to the discharge of all our duties, personal and social, and thus manifest ourselves to be worthy of enjoying the blessings of Providence, and of escaping its punishments.

Nor, would I desire, my Friends, in any way to seem insensible to the fact that the great destroyer has been among us. O Death! stern, inexorable, that with leaden wing, hoverest over our cities and our homes—awful are thy visitations at all times, most awful when thou strikest friend or fellow-citizen by our side *in a moment*, to the dust! O Death! mysterious power, that walkest with silent step and shadowless form, among the living, who is there

that shudders not as thy cold breath breathes upon his temples, and feels not awe-stricken and sick at heart as thou takest away the loved ones from the earth? Oh! who could refuse the meed of their sorrow for those who have been so abruptly summoned from among us? Yet not for *the dead only* would we sorrow—they are at peace now, they have gone home, they are with their Father, as safe as when they slept the quiet sleep of repose on earth. It is with those they have left behind, we would especially sympathise. In many a family circle there is now a vacant place, and who would forbid the tears of righteous sorrow to flow over the victims of premature decay? Yet even to such, we would say, sorrow not as those without hope:—Believe in the Lord, and He will be thy strength and thy consolation—obey Him, and He will be thy recompense—trust in Him, and He will be thy salvation.

"Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only (wise *) God, be honour and glory [through Jesus Christ,] for ever and ever. Amen."

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* See Griesbach, *in loco*.

A BRIEF PRACTICAL VIEW OF THE ASIATIC CHOLERA.

"OUR FAULTS ARE AT THE BOTTOM OF OUR PAINS."

THE first appearance of this remarkable pestilence is generally dated 1817, and placed in our Indian Territories, though there are good reasons for believing that the disease was known to the Ancients, at least in an isolated form. It is authentically reported that at Jessore, in the Sunderbunds of Hindostan, in the month of August of the year mentioned, upwards of ten thousand persons fell victims to its first outbreak, in the course of a few weeks. Subsequently, within a brief period, it traversed, with destructive steps, the greater part of this vast district. Thence it passed into Arabia and Persia, carrying off, in several of the larger towns, as many as one-third of the entire population, and spreading unbounded terror wherever it appeared. In 1829, it at length crossed the European frontier, and in 1831, appeared successively in Orenburg and St. Petersburg, in Russia, and all Western Europe. On 2nd of November, of the same year, it reached our own country at Sunderland, and thence spread over the entire kingdom, which it did not entirely leave till the year 1833. Since this date, our accounts are limited to occasional outbreaks in its original haunts, and especially the Persian territories. It again, however, set out for another devastating campaign in October, 1846, when it ap-

peared in Eastern Russia. In June, 1848, it reached St. Petersburg, and last October appeared in England for the second time. From this period to the present, its dreaded ravages have visited almost every community of any magnitude in the three kingdoms, and it is only now, after a year's sojourn, that we can with any degree of certainty, calculate upon a respite from its devastation.

I. Much has been written about the mode of its propagation. Contagion, electricity, magnetism, and an unknown telluric influence, and other hypothetical causes have been alleged in strong and equal terms, by their respective advocates, as having induced the calamity. As yet, little decisive is established, and it would only occupy unnecessary space to speculate here. Suffice it, therefore, that its course along the great human highways, seems influenced by various palpable circumstances, amongst which we may safely enumerate the following, viz., low and ill-drained countries, especially along the banks of rivers, crowded cities, and communities whose atmosphere must be contaminated by animal exhalations, and localities characterized by the exceedingly filthy habits of the masses, such as is the state of Asiatic Turkey. These and similar situations, it is well known to have preferred before all others; thus pointing, in the most convincing manner, to the influence of sanitary causes.

In the present age, this Epidemic has no parallel. Typhus—the Irish plague,—has a few similarities; but its moderate mortality, and its slow progress, divest it of all essential points of resemblance. The plague of the Turkish and Egyptian Territories is now limited to those regions, as likewise is yellow fever to the tropical world. We must look to past times, for epidemics resembling it in rapidity and fatality. We must turn to the epidemics of the middle ages, and in the sweating sickness of England, and the black death of the Continent, observe a similitude. Those fearful times have long since passed away, and with them all traces of those awful pestilences. May our posterity have a similar observation to make regarding our present calamity!

II. The confirmed symptoms of Asiatic Cholera are Diarrhœa, vomiting, and cramps, with general depression, more or less marked; when the body becomes cold, the extremities livid and shrivelled, the pulse imperceptible, the voice infantile, and the powers generally prostrated, the case is designated one of "Collapse," which is incomparably the most fatal form. Prior, however, to the appearance of these marked characters, there is present a greater or less degree of *malaise*, a sense of weakness and squeamishness, with generally an obscure feeling of impending danger. In other cases again, the confirmed state is ushered in by a few days' bowel complaint, which, as it is almost invariably unattended by pain, deceives the victim, who thus, not unfrequently, is rendered an easy prey. One great feature of the disease is the extraordinary profusion of the *egesta* as compared with the *ingesta*. During its progress, suppression of the urinary secretion is present to some extent, and the evacuations are observed to be completely deficient in bile. These leading points will sufficiently indicate the general character of a disease which, in point of rapidity and fatality combined, has no rival. No age, no condition is exempt from its appalling horrors.

III. But the early symptoms are of most importance to the public at large—the incipient stage being the only one quite amenable to treatment. But to be effective, it must be prompt. An hour's delay is occasionally irremediable. The painless Diarrhœa must be checked by the common Chalk mixture, with tincture of *Capsicum*, Camphor, or any other aromatic combined, or by one-grain Opium pills, in similar combination. Should vomiting or cramps be present, then a large dose of Calomel (at least ten grains) should be given in addition, and if depression threatens, brandy cannot be safely omitted. If there be any tendency to chilliness, or even without this, if the cramps persist, the most assiduous friction with heated turpentine, must be made and carried on, until the limbs and body resume a natural glow. These measures I recommend to be taken while the Doctor is being sent for—*and only so*, as the judicious treatment of the disease varies, necessarily, with the differences of each case. As yet, we have discovered no specific.

IV. With all our experience of the present and the former epidemic, we must confess our inability to combat with any certainty of success, the mature disease.

It is gratifying, then, that we can turn to its sanitary preventive means, with satisfaction and confidence. The immense mass of information regarding its progress collected by Government, and private commissions, and individual observation, has so elucidated many of its palpable causes, that we are justified in laying down certain general principles, calculated to ward off the horrors of the pestilence from communities, and even individuals. These means comprise its *preventive treatment*, which may be thus conveniently arranged.

1. A locality, to be rendered insusceptible of the cholera poison, should be thoroughly drained, and if possible, rather elevated; its thoroughfares should be wide and free, permitting the uncontrolled range of atmospheric currents; and its entire surface contaminated as little as possible by animal and vegetable remains.

2. The dead, in such a locality, should, in no case, be buried in the midst of the living.

3. Every house should be constructed with a view to the most perfect ventilation, and be kept in all matters, especially in rear accommodation, scrupulously clean; water-closets, and underground sewerage, especially of old houses, should be thoroughly examined.

4. Every *person* should particularly endeavour to ensure unremitting regularity in meals, exercise, and rest. Diet may be such as is usual in ordinary health; but it is safer to partake more of solids than of fluids. Vegetables, good, and in moderate quantities, are by no means proscribed; but temperance in the use of stimulants, aye, even in all things, is especially enjoined.

Exercise should be regular and moderate, never excessive; and the night repose, if possible, unbroken. Night duty is one of the severest tests of the constitution.

The functions of the skin demand our continual attention. The shower bath (tepid, if desired), or cold sponging, or dry rubbing of the *entire body* should be performed daily, and the freshening, cleansing, and grateful luxury of the warm bath should be partaken of once or twice a fortnight, at least.

Lastly, the occupation of the mind should be of moderate extent, and sufficiently varied. Nothing determines so materially to the deterioration of the nervous system, and consequently, of the stamina of the frame, as excessive mental exertion, or inordinate anxiety and care; cheerfulness should preside in the mental world. The harmony of the physical functions cannot be ensured independently of that tranquility of the spirit which the Christian is expected to preserve.

But let us not be misunderstood in recommending the foregoing plain and easily realized instructions. Though particularly calculated to destroy, or at least, counteract the influence of the Asiatic cholera, either in a community, or an individual, yet it must be observed that these instructions are applicable to *all* epidemic and infectious diseases. Now, though we may, and already are congratulating ourselves at the probably approaching cessation of the Eastern scourge, yet we have other pestilences not less absolutely fatal, harboured amongst us, whose causes are too evident. These are daily cutting off one half of our infantile population by Scrofula, a tenth of our adults by Typhus, and generally, slowly producing a degraded organization of the masses. We must, then, on no account, relax our studious attention to Sanitary regulations, but proceed permanently with the work of physical reformation which has been so ably commenced by our Sanitary Reformers. The watch-word should be, onward, onward! ere those foul creations of man's ignorance or carelessness—those fearful pestilences that have at all times loudly called us, but called in vain, to a saving repentance, shall cease to plague the world. The Sanitary cause is however firmly planted, and time and the favouring hand of Providence are alone necessary to spread its health-bearing roots far and wide throughout the land.

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