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FELIX QUI POTUIT RERUM COGNOSCERE CAUSAS.

LISEZ ET VOUS SEREZ CONVAINCU

ON CHOLERA.

MUSEUM
MAY 12 1884
OF HYGIENE.

Neutralization and arrest of the poisonous effects of Miasmata, when absorbed by the mucous membrane of the stomach and bowels.

THE undersigned, moved by a sentiment of humanity in a moment of such alarming danger, takes the liberty to state (with all the respect and deference due to the medical faculty), that residing in Guadaloupe about twenty-five years ago, he was surprised at the little success of the physicians in curing the yellow fever, which so mortally attacked the soldiers, and new comers in general, that there died every day from forty to fifty in the hospital.

Having already observed that in that sickness, corrosion of the stomach and bowels preceded the putrefaction and gangrenous state of those parts, he was by reflection struck with the quite miraculous effects of charcoal, in preventing corruption, or even to restore the most putrid water to a wholesome beverage, and also in arresting the putrefaction of meat, and restore it to a wholesome and palatable food, though having already undergone putrefaction.

He then resolved to employ charcoal internally to cure yellow fever. Having already, with the doctors of the hospital, observed that after death the stomach and bowels of those who died of the yellow fever presented evident marks of gangrene, which even in many circumstances had entirely perforated them; from that observation, and the series of the symptoms in yellow fever, he likened or compared the effects of yellow fever, cholera morbus, and plague, to cases of death caused by corrosive sublimate, acetate of copper, acetate of lead, &c. &c.

Such is the striking resemblance of the effects of the miasmata in producing those dreadful diseases, to the effects of metalic poisons, that the whole population of Paris rose in riot at the first appearance of the cholera, under the belief that the waters of the city had been poisoned.

I may perhaps draw a comparison so just of the effects of miasmata on the stomach and bowels of a man to the effects of the absorption of poisonous substances, that it will bring conviction with it. Have we not too many examples of men employed in the manufactures of copper and lead dying by the absorption of those poisonous substances? What can resemble more a real cholera?

From this reflection, I concluded that castor oil, sweet oil, or even melted lard, ought to be employed to cure yellow fever, in order to prevent the fatal effect of the corrosive action of the miasmata on the membranes of the stomach and bowels, and to expel gently those malignant and offending matters as soon as possible.

Hence I feel confident in saying, that at the first attack of the cholera, two ounces of pulverized charcoal ought to be administered, diluted with about four table spoonsful of molasses, and about a pint of lime-water, or simple water if the

other be not at hand. The mixture ought to be well stirred up, so as to facilitate the deglutition of the charcoal—it may be divided into two draughts—soon after two ounces of castor oil ought to be given to the patient, say a quarter of an hour or half an hour after the first administration of the charcoal.

Two ounces of powdered charcoal prepared in the same way as before, to be administered; a table spoonful every quarter of an hour, and alternately administer a spoonful of sweet oil, or melted lard, every half hour. It is not blindly that the undersigned has made choice of the lime-water for the cure of the yellow fever, but because that substance is known to be the most powerful anti-emetic and anti-septic, that it decomposes carbonic acid, that it is the test of recognizing after death whether corrosive sublimate has been swallowed, and it precipitates it. It is for those reasons that he has employed it in the yellow fever, and that he recommends it as the best drink during the whole attack of the cholera morbus. It may be sweetened with lemon syrup or molasses; ice may be advantageously employed to cool that drink. He will add that frictions with camphorated sweet oil on the neck, breast, and abdomen of the patient, as well as under the armpits, will no doubt contribute to save the life of the patient. Small clysters of oil or melted lard with a strong decoction of linseed may also be administered with good effect. The only stimulants that with safety can be employed in the disease, are blisters or other rubefacients, to the legs and thighs, and other external parts. He is of opinion that no emetics, no violent purgatives, nor stimulants of any sort should be employed in cholera; as for bleeding, he will ask if any physician would resort to it in cases of poisoning, or highly putrid diseases? Has not Dr. Broussais, of Paris, declared in his lectures on the cholera, that the blood in that disorder turned soon to the consistence of currant jelly?

The undersigned, in October 1822, published in Philadelphia a pamphlet on the yellow fever; he there describes the same treatment as having been successful in Guadaloupe for curing yellow fever; he is happy in finding that his conjectures were well founded, since many newspapers attest that the same treatment has proved to be the most successful in Canada, against the Asiatic cholera, as he had published it would be, as well as against the plague—those three scourges being only the effects of the same causes. He farther advances that powdered charcoal, in the dose of two drachms taken daily in the morning and going to bed, mixed with lemon syrup, lime water, or simple water, would no doubt diminish the predisposition, and neutralize the miasmata before a too great accumulation could take place in the stomach; even a piece of maple charcoal, or of willow, it being the softer, would be better and cleaner in the mouth than a quid of tobacco—it should be used also for purifying our culinary and drinking water; then a real attack of the cholera would be avoided, having also regard to temperance, which all physicians and reasonable people recommend. This powerful remedy is innocently used (as he has experienced himself on many occasions.) It does not impair digestion, on the contrary it facilitates it, and has no bad taste. He solemnly declares that three years ago, his son having a very severe attack of this country's cholera, he administered the charcoal and sweet oil, which acted as magic in causing his intolerable pains to cease.

Every body is now convinced of the virtues of charcoal in preventing the corruption of water and meat, and of other substances, and in restoring them to their former purity; but some are sceptical or doubtful of its action on living substances, while in his opinion it ought to act yet more powerfully than on dead ones. That which has been already and evidently proved by many experiments on foul ulcers, approaching gangrene or really in that state, as well as on recent wounds received in the summer season, and ready to undergo putrefaction, or being nearly in a gangrenous state, which the simple application of charcoal poultices have arrested and restored to a healthy appearance; the effects of which have prevented the amputation of many limbs and saved many valuable lives.

Since the publication of my pamphlet on the yellow fever, I said that the combination of charcoal, oil, and lime water, was applicable to all kinds of putrid and malignant diseases, and also to cases of poisoning by mineral or vegetable substances. I must relate the experiments which I made at the time, and of which the results were as follow:

I took four pieces of fresh veal, it was in the month of August,—the first I simply suspended in my garret, and in the sun; the second I powdered over with charcoal, and suspended it also, next to the other; the third I placed on a plate, and powdered it all over with corrosive sublimate; the fourth I powdered with charcoal all over, then poured sweet oil and lime water sufficiently to cover it; and then I added the same quantity of corrosive sublimate which I had put on the third piece. The first piece was in three days entirely putrified and full of worms; the second had dried up without the least

corruption or bad smell, and was fit for nourishment. I had observed that flies never went over it, while the other was covered with them. The third piece, which I had powdered with sublimate, was completely contracted, dried up, and decomposed; all its substance had turned into viscous and bloody-colored water. The fourth had been perfectly preserved in its form and substance, and had contracted no putrefaction, which evidently proves the virtues of that combination to be a real antidote. I leave to better and abler experimentalists and men of science to try what I have done; and it is to them that I leave the honor to tear up the vail which I believe I happily tried to raise, and then it is to be hoped that physic which has so often been attacked with the epithet of *scientia occulta*, will not so much deserve that name; and I hope that with their help my observations will turn out to be useful to mankind, which is my most ardent wish.

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P. S. It has judiciously been observed that drunkards and intemperate persons are more liable and predisposed to the attacks of cholera, than those of more rational and moral habits.

Then how is it that when a drunkard is taken with the cholera, some physicians will pour into his stomach the most powerful draught he has ever taken? Is it not the most palpable and unreasonable contradiction? Is it not augmenting the conflagration? Is it not hastening the moment of gangrene? Ought the physician to be deaf to the lamenting cries of the patient, who says that he feels as if burning coals were in his stomach and bowels?

This observation, which I believe reasonable, strikes with the same reprobation the use of emetics, given at the beginning of the attack of the cholera, with the intention to help the patient to vomit. Such means help death alone—not the patient. I do not know whether if to give such a dose of opium as will make a bull sleep forever, is a good mean to preserve life. But I will say, that since the Asiatic Cholera is so thirsty of the fat of its victims, that in the space of a few hours it has devoured it all, and leaves only to the affrighted eye of the observer a blackened, parched skin and bones, as if an internal fire had calcined the whole; if then the physician were to pour sweet oil or melted lard into the stomach and bowels of the patient, so as to quench the thirst of the monster, would it not be probable that by such proceeding he would better succeed to keep alive or even to revive the taper of life?

My plan is not to make the medicine for the symptoms, but to prevent them, and by following the two celebrated axioms of the god of Physick—*Contrariis contraria currantur*—and that other—*Sublata causa tollitur effectus*, knowing too well, that when they have arrived clad in all their horrors, they are even above the Herculean powers of the physicians.

I compare health to a balance in perfect equilibrium; when disease is thrown into one of the scales, the equilibrium is destroyed; and the physician is called to restore that by placing the remedy in the opposite scale.

I am of opinion that neither yellow fever, cholera, nor plague is contagious; that they are the offspring of the miasmata ambient in the air, and of the predisposing causes in the individuals. However, this pestilence (which is nothing to compare to that terrible plague which existed about five hundred and fifty years ago, and which depopulated half the globe), offers to the observer a very peculiar feature, which is its having carried its havoc into Russia during the rigors of the winter, while we have ever seen the plague ceasing its ravages in Constantinople at the approach of that season. Then the only reasonable means to diminish its severity is to remove all the sources of miasmata at home; even so far as to imitate Paris, which in 1554, by a miracle of reason, transformed a focus of pestilence, the churchyard of the Innocents, into a cornucopia. That place is now the greatest market of that immense capital. Such precautions are more necessary than quarantine laws and sanitary cordons, which barriers only stop useful communications and commerce, without shutting the door on that fatal enemy, who travels over seas and land on the untired wings of the wind!

As epidemic pestilence effects cities and countries more or less, according to their topographical situations and the surrounding causes of generating or attracting miasmata, I am of opinion, that London, having been visited so much lighter than Paris, is owing to the two following causes: 1st, That in the diet of the former, they consume more animal food, and render the absorption less dangerous. 2nd, That London was less impregnated with the poisonous miasmata, in con-

sequence of the consumption of bituminous coal, which creates a quality of atmosphere that resists the approach of the poison. This will account for the disastrous attack of that vampyre on the United States troops on board the steamboats. conveying them to Chicago against the hostile Indians. They have no doubt fallen in a current of his pestilential breath.

In 1822, I forwarded my pamphlet to the different courts of Europe, and was honored with the answer of many prime ministers of state, among whom were Chateau Brillant and Canning. I sent it also through all the United States, and one of course to the Board of Health of New York, who as on this occasion honored my observations on cholera only by lying them on the table. Would it not have been worthy of the vigilance of that Board, so near to Montreal, to ascertain the truth of those many articles contained in the newspapers of that ill fated city, saying that a man like the Samaritan of the Scriptures, gave without reward pulverized charcoal, melted lard, and sugar, mixed together, to hundreds attacked with Asiatic cholera, who were miraculously cured? Has this Board thought that this mode of saving life would be too cheap, and not scientific enough? It is true that it would not afford to Doctors the occasion of performing those wonders such as to make human blood, &c. &c.!!! That indifference will not abate my determination to do good if I can. I even already have the very agreeable satisfaction to see that I have done so, since doctors truly deserving the name of ministers of health, prescribe that innocent and powerful remedy, unknown before my publications. Twenty years ago I communicated my discovery to Doctor Ricamier, at that time chief physician of the Hotel Dieu, of Paris. I was presented to him by a friend of mine, Doctor Coutens, of Martinique; it was even before many pupils, the professor giving at that time his lesson on clinics. I farther prophesy that the more charcoal will be in use the more good it will do. It will not, like many renowned remedies, leave behind fatal traces. Charcoal will cure diseases by imparting to the stomach the power of improving digestion; in consequence of which a better chyle will be formed, which being our restorer and nourisher, will give health and vigor to the general system. It will be found preferable to Peruvian bark. It will remove diseases without (like that remedy) causing obstructions of the liver and of the mesenteric glands, and also dangerous constipations. Why should it not be used in preference to the former, since it possesses greater virtues, and is so cheap; what saving would it not be to individuals and to governments? I believe I was the first who recommended it as one of the best dentifrices, and I hope now that experience will soon illustrate that wonderful truth, that charcoal is really a diamond, and that bountiful nature has spread it over the whole world, so as to be in time of woful danger more precious to the rich and poor, than those glittering gems, which shine with such splendor in the crowns of kings!

Quel est le noble esprit, qui n' aspire a la gloire?
Les talents, les vertus font vivre dans l'histoire;
Puisse un si grand bienfait envers l'humanité;
Faire passer mon nom à la postérité!

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