

## CHOLERA AND ITS CURE.

(From the *Shilling Magazine*.)

How awful and universal was the panic throughout Europe when first this dire disease appeared advancing with rapid strides, and slaying its thousands and tens of thousands as it passed, sparing neither young or old, rich or poor! It is true that the ill-fed, dirty, and vicious were the surest and quickest victims, and also that death (generally speaking) was rife in low marshy ground, on the banks of a river, and in deep valleys, or wherever there was a stagnation of air.

Some years previously the population in the south of Spain, especially in Seville, Cadiz, and Malaga, had been decimated by the yellow fever, imported in vessels from the Havana and Puerto Rico.

The friendly (?) intervention of the French, in the year 1803, was of one benefit to the Spaniards. They strictly forbade and prevented the entrance, even, of any vessel from infected places into Spanish ports, from the month of May until November; they obliged them to perform a rigorous quarantine at Vigo or Mahon, when passengers and cargo were sent to the lazaretto, whilst the vessels were fumigated and purified. This quarantine was never under twenty-one days; and, if any deaths had taken place on board during the voyage, they were incarcerated for from forty to sixty days in that portion of the lazaretto apart for infected persons and goods. A French vessel of war was stationed just outside the bays of Cadiz and Malago, not allowing any vessel to enter without permission. Against the yellow fever these vigorous measures met with perfect success. This dreadful disease was completely banished from Spain. But not so the cholera.

The Spaniards, hoping to prevent by the same measures its progress into Spain, not only summarily forbade the entrance of all vessels from infected places, but obliged all other vessels carrying clean bills of health to pass a quarantine of from three to ten days before admitting them to *pratique*; they also sent a large force to the frontiers, to prevent any communication by land, hoping, by thus entirely isolating themselves, to ward off this dreaded enemy. But all in vain. The cholera took a leap over their heads, and alighted in a village about forty leagues in the interior; and their first knowledge of the fact was accompanied with the announcement that the village was empty, and all dead except some half-dozen. The news spread like wild-fire, augmenting the panic of the natives. In Spain, as elsewhere, each physician tried his theory; some half-killed their victims with calomel and purgatives, others intoxicated them with brandy or stupefied them with opiates. The strictest diet was enjoined, and in many places fruit and vegetables and fish were not allowed to be sold; thus causing almost a famine amongst the poor, whose general aliment they are; and ruined the agriculturists, whose subsistence depended on the sale of their produce. But this was of no avail either. Death was here, and death was there, and death was everywhere. This grim enemy, who commenced his ravages in Russia, proceeded to depopulate the whole of Europe. On his first visit, Cadiz seemed a favoured spot; his malignant breath seemed merely to have passed over the city, so few were attacked, and only two or three deaths occurred in the upper class; but in the years 1854-5, the disease was more virulent, and all classes were attacked; and many fancying they had caught it, or having it but slightly, died from fright. Almost all who, thinking to escape from the cholera, left an infected place for the pure air of the country, were victims to it. Servants, labourers, and even many of the family, fled as soon as anyone was attacked. Every non-infected town or village closed its gates against any new comers, and the corpses of those who died in the country had to be buried by the father, wife, or child who might survive.

One might fill scores of pages with heartrending accounts of the tragic scenes one witnessed and heard of. The reader, then, may judge of the reaction of feeling when it was known that some men from the Philippine Islands were curing numbers, and that the street they lived in was thronged with people to witness what they considered to be an immediate interposition of Providence on their behalf. Of course the doctors were all up in arms against these interlopers on their special demesne. Several of them waited on the Civil Governor to beg him to prevent these characters from imposing on the credulity of the people; but when the populace heard this, they surrounded the Municipality, threatening to break the windows if they were deprived of the assistance of the men who were working miracles amongst them. So it was decided that two of the complainants and a policeman should go with Lorenzo Martinez, the principal cholera-curer, to the hospital, and witness his skill on the cholera patients there. If he succeeded in curing them, they were to be allowed to continue doing so; if not, they were to be sent to prison as impostors.

There were ten patients in the hospital; one in a dying state, whom he refused to touch, as incurable; three were severely attacked, and the rest slightly. He cured them all, and most of them walked out of the hospital with him. The doctors then wished to oblige them to state what was their method of cure; but they would not, as they had been so badly treated. I sent for them, stating my full belief in them; and as the cholera was raging in my country, I entreated them to describe to me their method of cure, which I would willingly pay for, in the hopes that it might serve to stay the mortality in England.

Most willingly, lady, will I explain all to you, but without any remuneration. It is a common disease in our country, and we think little of it, as the medicines that cure it are indigenous there; and having the medicines with me, how could I see them dying around me, and refrain from administering them?

"The cholera," he said, "attacks the human frame in three places. If in the lowest part of the body, it produces dysentery, and, if taken in time, is easily cured by taking rice-water; but the rice must be roasted first, as the coffee-berry is, and then boiled. Let him drink nothing but that, and the more the better, with just the chill off it. Should the dysentery be obstinate, let injections of the same roasted rice-water be administered. No one need die of this kind of cholera, if they refrain from taking anything else. At other times, it attacks the large colon, and produces both dysentery and spasms. The first remedy is friction.

"The worst and most difficult to cure is when its first

appearance is felt in the pit of the stomach, when severe spasms and retching are produced, and, if not promptly cured, cramp sets in, and is often fatal.

"In both of these cases the stomach is as hard as a drum, and friction must be applied until the hardness and tension is removed; and then we give three drops of our medicine in a cup of strong green tea, which produces a profuse sweat, and the cholera has gone. The friction must be applied in a particular way or it will be of no good.

"Grease the hand with cocoa-nut oil if you have it, if not, with hog's lard or common oil; but if you can get neither, then apply the hand from the region of the heart to the pit of the stomach, and then straight down to the abdomen—taking care never to apply the friction upwards or in a rotatory movement. The patient, meanwhile, should lie between blankets. Begin the friction rather gently, increasing in force. All at once the tension and tightness and hardness will disappear. Then give the medicine; but if not to be had, give camomile or tilia (flower of the lime or linden tree), a decoction as hot as the patient can swallow it. Keep the patient a quarter of an hour in bed after the sweat bursts out, then change him to a fresh one, and continue to administer every half hour one of the two mentioned beverages, and simple beef tea after some hours, without any salt in it. The medicines are the pepita (a seed) of the Camalanga, and the madera (or wood) of the San Paca, dissolved in spirits of wine. Three drops in a cup of green tea produce immediate perspiration.

"For the cramp we rub the joints, and apply, with wet bandages, a mixture of white wine vinegar, ginger, and cocoa-nut oil."

They kindly gave me some of their medicine; both mixed with spirits of wine and in a raw state. A very small quantity of the Pepita de Camalanga, in a glass of water, cures spasms; and ditto of the Madera de San Paca, cures dysentery.

From a friend, a native of the Philippine Islands, I obtained a botanical book, written two hundred years ago by a friar, giving a description of the uses of several indigenous trees, shrubs, and herbs of these Islands, which seem to abound in medicinal plants. He says, "The Pepita de Camalanga is in size and appearance very like a nutmeg; it is rank poison, but held in such high estimation that the women generally carry one suspended round the neck, and if attacked with sudden spasms they suck it, and swallow two or three times the saliva impregnated with it, and are so immediately relieved as to continue their work. The wood of the San Paca is given in water, and cures dysentery.

So I found my Philippine friend was no impostor, and I sent his description of the mode of cure, and some of the medicines, to Sir Benjamin Hall. He acknowledged the receipt of them, and said both should be laid before a medical board; but with what result I never heard.

After my interview with the Malaysians, one of my servants was attacked with cholera, spasms, and retching. I had none of their medicine except cocoa-nut oil; but I had him placed between two blankets, gave him half a tea-spoonful of carbonate of soda in hot water, and applied the friction as explained. The pit of the stomach was as hard as a board; but in about ten or fifteen minutes the tension suddenly ceased. I administered immediately a large cup of hot camomile tea, and a minute after the water actually ran down him, so profuse was the sweat that burst from him. By this time the Malay arrived and pronounced him cured.

I have a book, called "Deeds, not Words," containing a list, but by no means of one half, of the persons cured by this treatment. Many who owed their lives to this man would not allow their names to be included for fear of offending their own medical attendants; besides, hundreds went to his house to be cured, neither giving their names or address. I found one hundred and eleven names as cured in the first and second pages; thirty-six dangerously ill with cramp, sickness, and dysentery; and ten left as incurable and dying by their doctors. On his return home one day, he found his wife alarmingly ill, and he feared he was too late; but providentially he cured her.

On one occasion he met some people carrying, as was supposed, the corpse of a young girl to the deposit for the dead, whom they said had died in an hour after being attacked. He told them to lay her down, and he would see if she were quite dead. She was the only child of a bed-ridden mother, whom she supported. He applied the friction as above described, brought her back to life, ran in for two blankets, and, as no one would receive her, wrapped her up, and laid her in the sun; gave her the medicine, and desired her to remain quiet until the perspiration subsided. She walked back in an hour to her home, cured; but so great was the panic of the poor mother at seeing her child's ghost (as she thought) that it killed her.

My Malayan friend was a great botanist and herbalist. He told me "that a person was safer remaining in an infected place than going away; that the system had got accustomed to the atmosphere, and did not run so much chance of taking the disease as if suddenly transferred to another atmosphere; that no person should ever take strong purgatives or much medicine of any kind where the cholera was, as it predisposed the body to catch it."

One or two ounces of oil of sweet almonds, mixed with an equal quantity of syrup of mallows, was the best purgative, if any was required, whilst the cholera was raging. No great difference should be made in the usual diet; but the first water used in boiling vegetables should be thrown away as soon as it boils, and fresh boiling water substituted.

All windows should be closed before the dew begins to fall, and not opened again till two hours after sunset; and if left open during the night, they should be shut an hour before dawn, and not re-opened till the sun is well up. I have tried, and always with great success, the toasted rice-water for dysentery. When toasted, it should have hot water poured on it, and boiled for twenty minutes at least.

In the north of England I fell in with a poor woman who had had the cholera seven weeks previously very badly, with cramps, spasms, and dysentery; the last complaint had never left her day or night. I cured her of it in three days with the rice, and brought back the tone of the stomach by a small cup of camomile tea, and a piece of dry thin toast given very early in the morning; and then for several days I recommended, to assist the digestion, of rhubarb and magnesia equal proportions, and one half of the quantity of soda. Of this well-mixed combination she

was to take what would lie on a sixpence just before each meal. She quite recovered.

I have written this in the hope that these simple remedies may, with God's help, be the means of curing many of that fell disease that in India and elsewhere is so fatal, and now seems again about to visit Europe.