

The Treatment of Cholera.

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CHAPTER I.

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CHOLERA.

PREDISPOSING CAUSES.—A weak state of health increases the probability of taking the disease, for a man in sound health is seldom attacked. Occasionally an apparently strong and healthy man is struck down without making any fight of it, but a careful investigation invariably reveals the fact that he had been ailing off and on, for some time previously, and that he had "not been himself." Fatigue, dissipation, the eating of unwholesome food—especially tinned preparations, unripe and overripe fruit, and anything which tends to lower the tone of the general health, favours the development, though they do not actually produce the disease. Fear is a strong predisposing cause, only second to that of intoxication.

Stimulants.—A popular idea exists that stimulants destroy the germs in the water and make it safe to drink; the fallacy of this doctrine is too well known to need any further discussion on the subject. During the times of a cholera epidemic, moderation is essentially necessary, for artificial stimulation leads to subsequent depression. It is not, however, desirable to select this time for conversion to temperance, and those who have been accustomed to drink in moderation should continue to do so, and postpone their good resolution to some future date. Stimulants, however, should only be taken with food, and not on an empty stomach.

Total Abstinence.—Without entering upon a discussion of the relative merits of total abstinence and moderation, it is a noteworthy fact, that the proportionate number of abstainers who were attacked with cholera was much smaller than that of moderate drinkers, and that not a single death occurred amongst them. This is the more astonishing, considering that water-drinkers presumably incurred greater risks.

The Contagion of Cholera.—The question of the contagion of cholera is a matter of grave consideration. There is a wide distinction between contagion and infection. The contagious nature of the disease is opposed to practical experience.

Nurses are occasionally attacked, due solely to the fact that at the time of an epidemic, unless the most stringent rules are laid down for their guidance and observance, their strength is overtaxed, and their powers of resistance enfeebled.

The Health of Nurses.—In all cases of severe illness it is the duty of the doctor to consider the health and welfare of the Nurses under his charge, not alone for their sakes, but to ensure that his instructions are faithfully performed. No matter how willing a Nurse may be, her strength is not superhuman, and unless a perfect system is strictly enforced, many details are neglected, the omission of which makes all the difference between life and death.

Four hours consecutive nursing is the maximum time a Nurse should be on duty.

A Nurse requires two changes of clothing, one to wear whilst on duty, and the other when she goes out.

A Nurse should take two hours open-air exercise daily.

A Nurse should have a warm bath every morning or evening.

A Nurse should put in six hours of sleep.

A Nurse should have her meals regularly and in comfort.

A Nurse should undress and go to bed, and not sleep with her clothes on.

The Infection of Cholera.—The poison, which exists in the vomit and diarrhoea, is at first inert and powerless, and it is not until it has undergone a change allied with that of fermentation, that it becomes infective. How long the poison retains its infective power is a matter of controversy, but probably for not more than a few days. The immediate and complete destruction of the *excreta*, either by burning, or disinfection with strong solutions of carbolic acid, corrosive sublimate, or sulphate of iron, before the infective process has commenced, ensures perfect safety from infection.

Isolation.—The isolation of a cholera patient is for the public good, and is a wise precaution for checking the spread of the disease, though it is questionable whether it is very effective. It ensures the proper disinfection and destruction of the *excreta*, but it possesses the undoubted drawback of inducing many persons to conceal the true nature of their illness or to postpone any mention of it till enforced to do so. Much valuable time is therefore lost and much mischief may have occurred before the patient is isolated. A liberal and free distribution of disinfectants is a practical benefit, and certainly more efficacious in arresting the disease, for no one who might be averse to

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