

It is evident that we must first ascertain the causes and consequences or terminations of a disease, before we can form a correct notion of its proper treatment; for without this we know not what is to be effected, and what prevented; and, therefore, have no guide in selecting remedies. The present opinion respecting scarlet fever is, that in common with typhus, cholera and other epidemics, it is caused by the introduction of some poison into the system, from inhaling air mixed with miasma or a noxious gas; that when the poison is got rid of soon, recovery takes place; but when it is not, it induces disease of one or more organs which often destroys life. The kidneys, bronchi, and lungs are most often affected, and scarlet fever may therefore end in Bright's kidney, bronchitis or pneumonia. Rheumatism has been seen by Dr. Golding Bird to succeed it.

The first indication of treatment after the introduction of a poison is to give its antidote, and this we should do in epidemics if we could; but we know of no medicine which can destroy an animal poison within the body; we therefore strive to counteract its effects, and aid the system to throw it off through some of its emunctories. The first effects are usually chilliness, rigors, oppressed circulation, and a torpid depressed state of the nervous system—sometimes speedily fatal. I have known scarlet fever kill within twenty-four hours after the appearance of the eruption, and small pox has often done the same. To counteract these effects, many give emetics as early as possible after the disease has set in, as tending to cool and soften the skin and induce it to perspire; they also divert the blood from the internal organs to the surface, and aid in eliminating the poison. The medicines next given are to fulfil one of the following indications, according to the view of the practitioner—to increase some natural secretion, in the hope of its carrying off the poison—to strengthen and support the system under its own efforts to get rid of it—or to destroy its power by chemical action. With the first view Hamilton advised purgatives; with the second, others recommend carbonate of ammonia, bark and stimulants. With the third, hydrochloric acid and chlorine, with gentle aperients, have long been used in this hospital and elsewhere. The chlorine mixture is made by mixing chlorat potass gr. x with hydrochloric acid ʒi; and when the chlorine is all evolved, adding water to it by degrees, until it is taken up. Diluents and liquid nutriment are also given freely; and under this treatment the large majority recover. Thus, is scarlet fever to be treated, for we have no antidote to its poison; belladonna has been asserted to be one, as well as a prophylactic against it, simply from its causing the same symptoms, but its frequent failures prove that it possesses neither power.

So that these principles might be partially carried out. Stamford was given at first an emetic of sulphate of zinc and then a mixture of antimony and ipecacuanha; he was to drink freely warm rennet whey, which contains much of the nutritive matter of milk and is readily absorbed by the veins without much effort of the stomach to digest it; weak beef tea and veal broth were also ordered. Flannel, soaked in a saturated solution of camphor in spirits of wine—a valuable stimulant—was put round his throat, with very good effect, as suggested by Mr. George of Kensington, in his book on its utility in small pox. On the 23rd, an infusion of cinchona was substituted for the former medicine, and he left