

There are historic instances of slower death by the diluted carbonic acid of a close room filled with people—from that of the famous Black Hole of Calcutta down—which are so familiar to all medical men that they need not be repeated here. There can be no doubt that death in cholera is chiefly due to poisoning by carbonic acid. The blood corpuscles lose their power of taking up oxygen, and as a consequence we find the air of expiration containing oxygen alone, while carbonic acid accumulates in the tissues.

Having seen the effect of undiluted carbonic acid gas upon the healthy system, let us inquire what influence it has upon subjects of acute disease, when diluted to the proportion in which it is commonly found in an ill-ventilated apartment. I will present a very striking instance, taken from a paper on *The Causes of Typhoid Fever in Massachusetts*, published in the Second Annual Report of the State Board of Health of Massachusetts :

“A young butcher, between twenty and thirty years of age, was attacked with typhoid fever. He was a bachelor, and occupied a good-sized chamber, lighted by two windows, and having an open fireplace.

“The fever was mild, with daily febrile exacerbation, hot skin, thirst, slight diarrhoea, and rose spots, with no violent symptoms. There was no indication for drugs. He was bathed two or three times a day with tepid water, and was allowed water freely, iced or not, according to his taste. The covering of his body was regulated by his sensations. A slight wood fire, just enough to insure ventilation, was kept in the fireplace, and one of the windows was raised a little.

“As soon as his family, who lived in the country, heard of his illness, two of them, a maiden aunt and a sister, came to the city to take care of him. They reached his house one afternoon, just after my visit. My patient was, as described above, comfortably sick, with a pulse about eighty, and without delirium. They were frightened to find their relative, who was sick with typhoid fever, so poorly cared for. Guided by their theory of the proper treatment of fever, they proceeded without informing me to reform matters.

“They pinned a blanket over each window so as to exclude the light, and closed the open window; they closed the chimney with a fireboard and set up an ‘air tight’ stove, in which they made a fire. In order to make him sweat he was packed in blankets, and hot herb tea was given him.