

42. But the bewildering variety of symptoms which would certainly show themselves at such a period does not prevent this ancient master of diagnosis from distinguishing a type of fever which was not accurately distinguished or described again till the 19th century. "In another class of cases," he remarks, "the critical days were different." In this class, he tells us, most patients had a crisis on the 6th day. The fever then left them for 6 days. Then there was a relapse and the crisis came on the 5th day, after which they generally recovered. Then he describes other cases of a similar kind in which the critical days differed slightly in the following manner: First crisis on 7th day, fever absent for 7 days, then relapse for 3 days. First crisis on 6th day, fever absent for 7 days, relapse for 4 days. First crisis on 7th day, absence of fever for 3 days, relapse for 7 days. The figures vary slightly, but generally make up 17 days.

Hippocrates does not distinguish this relapsing fever as a different species from typhus—that was not done till the 19th century—but he marks very clearly characteristic differences between it and the more deadly typhus. "All those," he says, "whose crisis occurred in this order, as far as I observed, recovered;" and he notes that all those who had good and liberal bleedings at the nose (*epistaxis*, which may occur in relapsing fever, but not as a rule in typhus,) came happily through the disease.

The *Epidemics* of Hippocrates, from which I have taken the above, is the earliest medical description of an epidemic which we possess. We can see that it is an excellent and accurate record of an epidemic, once common, in which typhus and relapsing fever were conjoined. And it is a fact that until the 19th century there is nothing so good or exact in medical history. Till that time later physicians seem to have known nothing about relapsing fever, not even enough to recognize the value of the clinical records which Hippocrates left of the epidemic at Thasos. It is a good example of the value of true and careful observation in medical science, even when there is nothing to help it in the way of scientific aetiology. When we consider how variable and confusing the symptoms of those