

of the carbonate of soda, he was completely cured in three weeks. To those, however, who are disposed to see the contrast betwixt the effects of the neutral salts and the citric acid, in the treatment of scurvy, I would recommend the perusal of Mr. Cameron's paper, on this disease which they will find in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, in one of the numbers for 1829.

It has long been, and I am sorry to observe still is a common source of error, particularly in fever, to confound a similarity in certain symptoms with a sameness in kind. The sporadic cholera, which is occasionally met with during the hot months, both in this and in other countries, is evidently as totally different from the Indian Cholera as east is from west. The one is a symptomatic affection, followed by a mere momentary excitement, arising in part from a severe local irritation in the gastric organs; the other, however, is a most malignant disease, produced by the existence of a specific and virulent poison in the system, which contaminates every drop of the blood, and excites diseased action in every solid of the body. Such being the fact, it is evident that remedies which are successful in the one, may be not only inert, but even actually injurious in the other.

The Asiatic Cholera is, as we well know, a most fatal disease, and will require both an active and judicious treatment to overcome the evil effects of the morbid poison; while the sporadic or plumb cholera of this country may, I believe, in most cases, be almost entirely left to itself to work its own cure; and were it at all necessary, the cases which are now so numerous in most of the journals, might be faced by others, where the patients were obstinate, and refused to take any other remedy except a little warm brandy and water, which was given during the cold fit, on purpose to bring on reaction as speedily as possible. In one case, which I saw lately by accident, the symptoms for the time, were quite as severe as those described in the various journals; yet, though the patient refused all remedies except warm brandy and water during the cold stage, he was just as well (perhaps even better) on the following day, than if he had taken 125 drops of the capient oil.

There is one circumstance connected with the history of Cholera which renders it a much more formidable disease in northern latitudes than either the yellow fever or the plague. The poison which produces the yellow fever requires a given degree of heat to enable it to exist in the atmosphere; and when the thermometer either rises or falls above or below a given range, the plague disappears. But the poison of Cholera is not rendered inert by the first morning of frost, as is the case with the poison of yellow fever in the United States of America; for it appears that this poison like that of the small pox, can produce its fatal effects almost as certainly in the middle of winter in Russia, as in the burning plains of the Torrid Zone. When once introduced, the contagious poisons possess the power of multiplying themselves; and, as the Cholera poison acts in every temperature, it is more than probable that if it once finds its way into this country, it may remain here as a fatal scourge, not only to the present but to future generations. This, as well as the great mortality caused by the poison of Cholera, imposes a solemn responsibility on those who are,

or at least ought to be, the guardians of the public health.

At present I have merely given a general outline, but the same subject will be considered hereafter more in detail. The above has been written in haste and may probably contain more errors than one. Should the treatment, however, which has been so useful in the malignant diseases of the new World, be found, even in the slightest degree, to lessen the sufferings or diminish the mortality of fever in the other divisions of the globe, I shall then be repaid for the dislike which I now feel in appearing before the profession as the advocate of doctrines so much in opposition to the common opinions of the present day. That this may be put down to its proper account, is the wish of,

Sir, your obedient servant,

W. STEVENS, M. D.

September 5 1831.

I must here observe, that when the paper was read at the College of Physicians, about fifty copies of it were hastily printed, and most of them were distributed chiefly amongst my friends in this country. Three or four copies of it were also sent to Paris, and the same number to some of my friends in Germany. The experiments and facts contained in that paper, as well as the reviews of it which had appeared in this country, were translated into the French and German journals, and circulated by these all over Europe. It is, therefore, not improbable, that it was this which led the two German physicians* to the use of the saline treatment in Cholera. The muriate of soda was the remedy on which these gentlemen chiefly relied; and by way of having a theory of their own, they used it as an emetic, and gave it in the beginning in such quantities that it produced vomiting, after which they used it in smaller quantities; and to this in all probability they were entirely indebted to their great success.

In 1831, these gentlemen had charge of the Custom House Hospital at St. Petersburg, in which there were in all during the epidemic, thirty cases of cholera; and of this number they lost three patients, and twenty-seven recovered. I mention this fact on the authority of Sir William Crichton: who states also, that at the request of the Emperor, he had communicated this practice to the army physicians in Poland, by whom it had been found to be very advantageous†.

About the same time, Mr. Searle tried this treatment at Warsaw. He used it in eight cases, and in every one of them he succeeded in bringing on reaction. Most of them, however, died afterward,—not from cholera, but under circumstances of the most gross neglect on the part of their attendants. Mr. Searle, at that period, considered the muriate of soda as a valuable remedy; but when he had an opportunity afterward of giving the saline treatment a fair trial at Berlin, in place of doing this—by which he would probably have done much good, and gained great credit to himself—he returned to his old calomel practice; but the destructive effects of this were so obvious, that the German physicians compelled him to discontinue its use in that capital.

As soon as it was generally known that the Cholera had made its appearance in the north of England, I wrote to a physician in Sunderland, recommending him earnestly to give the non-purgative neutral salts

* Namely, the two that are referred to in the letter of Dr. Barry.

† See the Supplementary number of the Medical Gazette for January 7th, 1832.