

DISEASES OF THE TROPICS.

Before proceeding to notice the diseases of the tropics in detail, it is proper to mention a circumstance of some importance to be known by those who visit those regions. Although, as has been before observed in these pages, no precaution will, in every case, suffice to ward off the attack of disease; though the temperate on many occasions, to fall victims alike with the intemperate, it is nevertheless a notorious and indisputable fact, that the French and Spanish do not suffer from the effects of a residence in the tropics in the same proportion as the English and North Americans. That their exemption is, in part, owing to constitutional causes, will not be denied; but this very constitutional safeguard has been obtained by means which still continue to operate, and afford additional protection from disease: These means are, a prudent, active, and temperate life. This is in general despised by the Englishman and the Anglo-American. They drink more wine and spirits, and consume more animal food, than the French, and these last more than the Spaniards; and this is an excellent test by which to calculate the mortality of each. It is on the same principle we must explain the comparatively superior health which northern females enjoy in those climates—their habits and occupations being so much less exciting than those of the opposite sex.

THE YELLOW FEVER, OR CAUSUS OF THE TROPICS.

Symptoms.—Whenever a stranger in the torrid zone experiences the least change in his feeling of health, it is necessary that he be immediately on his guard. However slight such change may appear in the first instance, it is impossible to foresee the extent to which the evil will reach; and it is therefore imperatively necessary that the worst should be apprehended, and, as far as may be possible, guarded against. A sudden loss of strength and great restlessness, perhaps a slight chill, and a giddiness in the head, are the first symptoms which announce the invasion of this frightful disease. It not unfrequently happens, however, that a person is seized suddenly, either at his meals, or during his sleep, with all the confirmed symptoms of the affection. These are a violent excitement in the whole system, great heat of skin, quickened circulation, sharp pains in the head, over the eyeball, down the spine, and extending thence along the thighs to the calves of the legs. Flushing of the face, red eyeballs, and beating of the arteries in the temple, tingling of the ears, great thirst, and white fur on the tongue. These are followed by sickness of the stomach, and a sense of heaviness amounting in many instances to pain, and burning at the pit of the stomach. Retching and vomiting soon succeed, first of the ordinary contents of the stomach, soon becoming darker coloured, and finally black matter, with a slate-coloured sediment. The patient breathes heavily, sighs, and is very restless, finding no ease in any position in which he may lie. The bowels are bound, and the urine is scanty and very high coloured. This is the first stage and lasts from twenty-four to sixty hours.

The second stage is that in which an apparent abatement of all the symptoms takes place, and seldom lasts longer than twelve or twenty hours. There is a deceitful calm; but it is disturbed by the increased distress of the stomach. The pulse is not so quick, nor the heat of the skin so great, and there is a tendency to dose; but the moment the patient falls asleep, he is awakened by the pain and retching. Now, after every effort at vomiting, a yellow tinge may be perceived about the angles of the mouth, and the neck and breast. The countenance is very much distressed, and a dark dirty shade is perceptible in it. The matter thrown up is dark, and every attempt to gratify the urgent thirst excites vomiting. Delirium sometimes comes on—not always.