

HOW THE 66th FOUGHT THE CHOLERA.

We reproduce from Dr. Henry's book, "Events of a Military Life," (now out of print and rare) an account of the two outbreaks of cholera at Kingston in 1832 and 1834; the subject may not be without interest at the present time. Dr. Henry was then surgeon in H. M. 66th Regiment.

On the 8th June, 1832, the pestilence made its first appearance in Quebec; it proceeded up the river to Montreal, where it burst out like a volcano on the 11th. Its course was capricious and uncertain; some intermediate villages being ravished, and others passed over altogether. At Prescott two deaths occurred on the 15th, and on the 17th it reached Kingston.

The Director-General of the Army Medical Department, Sir James McGrigor, mindful of the maxim, "*Venienti occurrere morbo*," had providently issued orders to his officers early in the year respecting the proper steps to be taken in preparing, as well as possible, for the approaching mischief, which my friend, Dr. Skey, at the head of the department here, was indefatigable in enforcing, with the addition of such local directions as his perfect acquaintance with these provinces, and long general experience elsewhere, might suggest. I am certain that many lives were saved in the Canadas by the preventative measures then taken through this command; and no doubt similar beneficial results attended like measures in other stations of the British army.

As soon as it was known that malignant cholera had really appeared in Quebec, it was plain enough that it would find its way to the shores of Lake Ontario. Colonel Nicol was our commandant at Kingston, and I well knew what fearless energy might be expected from him in the midst of any epidemic, however deadly. We first had the barracks and hospitals most carefully cleaned and whitewashed; the duties and fatigues of the soldiers were lightened as much as possible, and they were daily inspected with great care by their medical officers; the canteen was placed under vigilant supervision, and preparations were made to isolate the barracks, and to remove the married soldiers resident in the town, with their families, to a camp on the other side of the bay.

On the morning of the 17th of June a fatal case of undoubted cholera having occurred in the town, these measures were carried into effect. A camp was formed on the hill near Fort Henry, and the barrack gates were shut. Although the disease raged in the town for the next fortnight, we had no case in the regiment till the 4th of July, when two grenadiers were attacked with the most frightful spasms. I was sent for on the instant---bled them both largely, and they recovered.

Encouraged by the result of these, and several similar instances amongst the poor people of the town, I began vainly to imagine that this plan of treatment would be generally successful, and wrote confidently to this effect to Dr. Skey; but I was soon to be undeceived. Three men and a woman of the 66th were attacked the same night. I saw them immediately; and the symptoms being the same to all appearance, as the first cases, they were bled, and all died in twelve hours. The spot which their barrack at Point Frederick occupied was a promontory near the dockyard, the air of which was vitiated by the neighbourhood of the rotten ships. The company quartered there was removed to camp on the hill the next morning, and had no more cholera.

The fact is, I believe, that we had two different diseases confounded together under the common name of cholera, to contend with; one of these maladies having very much the character of tetanus, or lockjaw. This genus was marked by early severe and universal spasms, affecting every muscle and causing great torture. This form appears to be easily curable; and the early bleeding in this peculiar and stenic type, wrought marvels when judiciously employed. In the other more dangerous form, when the disease stole on more quietly, the patient stole early into hopeless debility, and here medicine was of little avail.

We heard wonderful accounts of the effects of transfusion of saline fluid into the veins; and Dr. Sampson, the principal practitioner in Kingston, and a man of talent, was determined, as well as myself, to give it a fair trial. We used it in twenty hopeless cases, unfortunately without success in any; though the first effect in every instance was

the apparent restoration of the powers and functions of life: in one remarkable case of a poor emigrant from Yorkshire, life was protracted seven days by pumping. Here the man almost instantaneously recovered voice, strength, color and appetite; and Dr. Sampson and myself, seeing this miraculous change, almost believed we had discovered the elixir of life, in the humble shape of salt and water.

The appearance of Kingston during the epidemic was most melancholy, "While the long funerals blackened all the way." Nothing was seen in the streets but these sorrowful processions. No business was done; for the country people kept aloof from the infected town. The yellow flag was hoisted on the beach, near the market-place, and intercourse with the steamboats put under quarantine regulations. The conduct of the inhabitants was admirable and reflected great credit on this good and spirited little town. The medical men and the clergy of all persuasions, vied with each other in the fearless discharge of their dangerous duties; and the exertions of all classes were judicious, manly and energetic; for the genuine English spirit showed itself, as usual, undaunted in the midst of peril and rising above it.

We had thirty-six cases of cholera of a malignant kind, in the 66th, besides a host of choleroïd complaints; many of which, but for early treatment, would have ended in cholera. Of these we lost seven. No child suffered.

During the prevalence of the disease, it seemed to me that a number of errors in diet were generally entertained, and acted upon in our little community. Because unripe fruit, or excess in its use, does mischief, all fruit was now proscribed by public opinion and vegetables of every description placed under the same ban, so that gardeners saw the finest productions rotting unsaleable. This was folly, for the stomach was more likely to suffer than to benefit from the want of its accustomed pabulum of mixed animal and vegetable substances. It was proper to live temperately, to avoid supper-eating, or eating late in the day, as four-fifths of the attacks came on in the night, to avoid excesses of all kinds, to strive against depressing passions, but above all to place confidence in Providence.

If, amidst so much distress, ludicrous ideas could be entertained, there was enough to excite them on this subject of abstinence from vegetables. Huge Irishmen who had sucked in the national root with their mother's milk, and lived on it all their lives, now shrank from a potato as poison. I heard one respectable gentleman confess, that he was attracted by the tempting appearance of a dish of green peas, and ate one pea, but felt uncomfortable afterwards, and felt sure it had disagreed with him.

The disease ceased entirely in the middle of October.

Of the disease in 1834, Dr. Henry writes as follows:—

Warned by the experience of 1832, no time was lost in isolating the garrison as much as possible. When the first case of malignant cholera took place in the town (in 1834), the barrack gates were shut, as formerly; the married soldiers living in lodgings with their families were encamped near Fort Henry, on the same ground as before. The Royal Artillery, having become sickly, were also sent to camp. These measures proved highly useful; the health of the numerous women and children was preserved, and that of the artillery restored.

A strict hygienic police was established and sedulously maintained in the regiment, with the object of watching and crushing the first germ of the malady. Any deviation from the men's ordinary habits was at once noticed by steady non-commissioned officers appointed for this purpose, and reported to the surgeon. They were directed to observe the men at all their meals carefully, and give notice if they should perceive loss of appetite in any individual. Drills and parades were discontinued and all duties made as light as possible; but the men were marched a short distance in the cool of the evening by the adjutant, after medical inspection. On hot days they were permitted to amuse themselves, and cool the barracks by watering them and the square wherein they stand, with a fire engine, in which they enjoyed themselves much, making jets *d'eau* in the air *ad libitum*. Cleanliness of person, clothing, bedding, and barrack-rooms was strictly enjoined and maintained. The men were allowed to take reasonable rest in the morning, and their sleep at that hour, which is generally the most refreshing after a hot night in the barrack room, was not abridged under a mistaken notion of the advantage of extreme early rising. No fasti-