

In 1875, I met with seven cases of diphtheria in the family of the master of a railway station in another Kentish parish, and two others nine in all. I could ascertain no previous contagion, but found the existence of the customary polluted shallow well, close to the public latrine, the whole premises being isolated, standing on a lofty chalky embankment. Two casual visitors to the station (not to the dwelling-house) who drank some water in the waiting-room also contracted the disease. There was no more of it before or afterwards in this parish while I knew it.

Was not this an example of water infection? Taking my Metropolitan experience as a Medical Officer of Health, now of one year's standing, I find that in every house which I have inspected after the occurrence of diphtheria, the water cistern or butt has given me a much larger quantity of organic ammonia than it should have done. The water-butt was invariably associated with defective drainage, allowing a free escape of sewer air into the court. The cistern never failed to receive and store whatever gases, harmless or lethal, chanced to pass through the house-pipe and sewer.

I would suggest to you that in the country epidemics I have mentioned, at their commencement, no direct personal contagion could be made out, although it was anxiously sought for; that ærial infection seemed everywhere contra-indicated, owing to the open and breezy situation of nearly all the implicated dwellings; that in all the drinking water was organically impure, and received surface filth of every description, and that in the town cases there was also clear evidence of water pollution by sewer gas or fetid emanations, if not by actual deposit of dirt. And I venture to submit that I have therefore supplied some of that 'evidence' which is by Dr. Parkes and others deemed 'still wanting' to prove the 'production of diphtheria by contaminated water.' If I am in error I share (as I find since I commenced this paper) my heresy as to one form of the causation of diphtheria with such men as Drs. George Johnson, Wynter, Blyth, George Wilson, and Morell Mackenzie.

But the fact that I have just succeeded in infecting two kittens with this disease, by feeding one with milk mixed with water in which I had kept diphtheritic false membrane and sputum, and the other with milk adulterated with water taken from the cistern of a house where a fatal case of diphtheria had recently occurred, causes me *permissu superiorum*, to maintain the opinion which I have always entertained, that diphtheria may be, and often is, spread amongst the