

Opium.—This is prescribed in proportion to the pain, if one grain is not enough to entice sleep, then a grain and a half, or two grains are given; and as soon as the pain is relieved the quantity of the drug is diminished. If the pain remains fixed in one joint, leeching and poultices must likewise be employed.¹²⁷

The diet in rheumatic fever should consist of rice, porridge, gruel, bread, mashed potatoes and the like. Animal food does not agree with the stomach, and is apt to bring on a relapse, even when the pains are gone and when it is seemingly most required.¹²⁸

Pericarditis.—Pericarditis brooks no delay, any exposure therefore of the patient to cold should put as particularly on the alert for it, for lost minutes are more hurtful in this than in any disease I know of. Send for leeches immediately, and apply from half a dozen to a dozen of them to the heart the moment that your suspicions are aroused by any abnormal murmur¹²⁹ or friction, or even pain on pressure of this vital part,¹³⁰ and if the leeches are not to be obtained without delay, cup the cardiac region. It is better to anticipate evil than to be too late.¹³¹ Put the leeches close together on the spot that is most painful on pressure,¹³² this will relieve it somewhat. If it returns next day, let them be repeated, and this may be done again and again as long as the pain lasts.¹³³

Next, apply a linseed poultice and keep one constantly over the cardiac region during the whole time that pericarditis lasts. Nothing is of more importance than this: never let leeches or blisters stand in the way of its application: it is at least of equal importance to either of them in restorative action, and is required at all stages of the disease.¹³⁴

The patient must also be put at once upon large doses of opium, beginning with a grain and a half every four hours, to be afterwards increased. Opium, he says, is particularly called for in cardiac inflammation, from the power it possesses of controlling the action of the heart.¹³⁵ In a case cited, as an example, the pulse was reduced by it from 130 down to 56, and became firmer and stronger.¹³⁶ And although continued regularly for a fortnight, by which time it had been increased to three grains every three hours,¹³⁷ it produced no abnormal sleepiness or constipation,¹³⁸ nor did it prevent the return of the appetite. In another case, although the opium was kept on for a week, and was gradually increased to three grains every three hours, without having any seeming effect upon the pulse, yet the patient soon afterwards became convalescent, when the opium was discontinued.¹³⁹

In speaking of blisters, he says, at the beginning of acute serous inflammation, they unquestionably do much harm by increasing its heat and violence. They cause likewise the exudation of fibrous instead of plain serum, which is a result decidedly to be deprecated in pericarditis.¹⁴⁰ But at a later stage, when pus is our chief dread, a blister proves useful, it should be applied as close as possible to the affected part. It is not when the serum is being exuded that it does the good, but when the skin is in the process of healing.¹⁴¹

So never gives mercury in acute pericarditis, from the bad effect he has occasionally seen it produce.¹⁴²

Pleurisy.—Dr. Chambers' treatment of pleurisy consists in leeching, and the application of hot poultices.¹⁴³

The leeches he directs to be put as near the pain as may be, taking care to keep them above the level of the diaphragm, even though the stitch, from misplaced sensibility, be felt far below it.¹⁴⁴ The poultices are to be put on hot, and be changed until all pain is removed, and the breathing becomes free and easy. Great care must be taken not to allow the skin to be exposed to the cold air whilst renewing the poultices.¹⁴⁵ By these means alone, he informs us, he rarely fails of cutting short all attacks of pure pleurisy.¹⁴⁶

ACUTE LARYNGITIS.—His remarks on acute laryngitis are good, and his directions short and to the point. Warm the surface of the body; saturate with hot steam the air inspired; put on leeches; apply hot fomentations to the throat; and in special favourable cases, bleed.¹⁴⁷ If relief do not quickly follow, or if a relapse occur after temporary benefit, perform tracheotomy, every minute this operation is delayed after this, is an opportunity lost.¹⁴⁸ Food must be sedulously administered, if not by mouth, by the rectum. A few drops of tincture of opium added to each nourishing injection will obviate any tendency to its escaping from the bowels before absorption.¹⁴⁹ After tracheotomy let the air for respiration still be kept moist and warm, and be plentifully supplied to the lungs through a large sized double cannula, the orifice of which should be carefully watched day and night.¹⁵⁰

PNEUMONIA.—There is probably no portion of Dr. Chambers' whole work that will be read with more interest by the profession than the thirty-four pages devoted to pneumonia.

Bleeding.—He believes bloodletting to be the most active agent at our disposal, and directs bleeding from the arm in all cases where the heart is beating strongly against the ribs, whilst the pulse is striking the finger with a weakened force at the wrist; at which time it may be drawn freely and confidently.¹⁵¹ If a glass of hot negus be administered before bleeding, the operation will be rendered safer.¹⁵² When the pneumonia has come on in a person of feeble health, he recommends the blood to be taken from the region of the heart by cupping or leeching; he prefers the cupping, from its being less liable to be followed by oozing.¹⁵³ He cautions against bleeding in that low form of pneumonia, occurring in hard drinking subjects, from exposure to cold, whilst suffering from delirium tremens, and remarks that anything depressing will prove fatal in such cases.¹⁵⁴

Food.—He says that in pneumonia as in typhoid fever, the patient should be fed with beef tea or milk regularly every two hours night and day. And that, although he mentions it as particularly necessary after bleeding, it contributes as much to success whether we elect to bleed or whether we do not.¹⁵⁵

Poultices.—He speaks very strongly of the value of enveloping the chest in a large bath like poultice of linseed from the very commencement of pneumonia; all other treatment is of minor importance in his estimation to this.¹⁵⁶ He says it is surprising how speedily it diminishes the dyspnoea, and renders the hot feverish skin moist and active. To it he attributes more power of saving the lives of patients suffering from pneumonia than to all other means.¹⁵⁷ He directs the poultice to be made of linseed meal, from the property it possesses of retaining moisture longer than any other. If