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ART. XXIX.—ON BLOOD-LETTING IN CHOLERA.

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Of all the diseases that have afflicted the human race, there is perhaps none that has so completely baffled the skill of the Physician, and set at nought all the known laws of Physiology and Pathology, as Cholera. We find among men of the highest professional character and standing, opinions and facts of the most opposite and contradictory natures and characters enunciated; and the most adverse plans of treatment alternately advocated and denounced with a degree of confidence and pertinacity that must give non-medical readers a very doubtful opinion of our therapeutic skill; but the contagious principle of this disease seems to be made up of more contraries than any other. This latter subject I have already touched upon superficially during the prevalence of the late so called epidemic, in the newspapers of this city, over the signatures of "Delta" and "Epsilon," but, being unwilling to provoke a controversy on a purely professional subject in a non-professional journal, I abstained from following up the subject through that channel, and from noticing some articles in reply to mine, not merely from the want of courtesy, truth, and fairness, that pervaded them, but because I preferred giving "facts," on so important and vital a matter, a less ephemeral existence than they could have had through a newspaper devoted to general subjects, which is for the most part laid aside as soon as read, and not again referred to; besides having attained my principal object at the time, viz., the arousing the local board of health, to a sense of the vital importance of its functions. I therefore promised to renew the subject through your columns, and as I shall be expected to do so, I take this opportunity, with your kind permission, of announcing my intention, as I purpose confining myself in my present paper chiefly to the abstract point of BLOOD-LETTING IN THE TREATMENT OF CHOLERA. By Cholera, I mean that disease in its most extended sense, which is described by medical writers by the various names of Cholera Morbus, Cholera Spasmodica, Cholera Asphyxia, Cholera Indica, Cholera Epidemica, Cholera Sporadica, Cholera Orientalis, Cholera Asiatica, Malignant Cholera, Pestilential Cholera, Contagious Cholera, &c.

Blood-letting as a therapeutic means in Cholera, like

every other, has had its advocates and its antagonists, and each has seemed at times to obtain the advantage; but although both parties may occasionally be wrong and both right, I think each has arrived at erroneous conclusions from an indiscriminate adoption or avoidance of the practice. I must confess my own predilection is in its favor. As practice constantly puts theory to the blush, I will state the result of a portion of mine during the prevalence of Cholera in this city in 1832, to which circumstances of a painful nature called the public attention at the time. My practice then was *bleeding, whenever blood could be obtained, even in collapse, and* I am not sure that any better practice could be adopted now in very many cases. However, the circumstances that called for an investigation of the results of blood-letting in my practice, were as follows:—I had been called to attend a most promising and rising member of the Quebec bar, who had been an old friend and school fellow. I had bled him, as was my wont, in similar cases, before the arrival of another physician (since deceased) who was the family attendant of another branch of the connexion, and who most ungenerously and cruelly censured my practice in the presence and hearing of both the patient and his friends. The effects upon the former, whose unbounded confidence I had hitherto possessed, need scarce be told;—he died. The relatives immediately circulated a rumour that my friend and patient "had been killed by bleeding," in which assertion they were backed by the declaration of the Consulting Physician. My position and prospects, as well as my age in the profession at the time, demanded some exculpation, and I was constrained to retain the professional assistance of a member of the bar, now a judge, to carry me over my difficulty. *A Post Mortem* examination took place, which resulted in the usual appearances, and an investigation of the issue of forty consecutive cases of Cholera of similar character in my private practice (as I was connected with the Cholera Hospitals both in 1832 and 1834), including my friend's, was as follows:—Of thirty-two who had been bled, thirty recovered, and two died. Of eight who had not been bled, seven died, and only one recovered.\*

\* The names, residences, and all the details of these cases are on record; and many of the persons are still living and among us.