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THE TREATMENT OF TYPHOID
FEVER.*

BY J. E. GRAHAM, M.D., L.R.C.P.,

Professor of Clinical Medicine in the University of Toronto.

Gentlemen:

It would seem fitting that the very excellent address upon the etiology of typhoid fever, to which we have listened, should be followed by some remarks upon the treatment of that disease. It was the wish of the University authorities that this part should have been undertaken by one who had spent as much time and energy in ascertaining the best methods of treatment as Prof. Vaughan has spent in the investigation of the origin of this disease. Owing to domestic affliction, the gentleman whom we had hoped to secure to address you upon this subject was prevented from coming, and, at a very late date, it was thought best that I should try to fill the vacancy.

One consideration more than any other caused me to take up this subject rather than let it go by default. During the past three months, while having under my care a very large number of cases of typhoid fever in the Toronto General Hospital, I have become convinced that I at least, and probably many other practitioners as well, have been inclined too much to rely upon a purely expectant plan of treatment, and that we have not employed all the means at our disposal to counteract the effects of this poison upon

the human system. When it is stated that in the nine years previous to 1880 there were 27,000 deaths from typhoid in England alone; that in Ontario we have had in the nine years beginning with 1880 4,450 deaths, an average of about 500 each year, and that the mortality from the expectant plan of treatment has been in the neighborhood of 20 per cent. of all cases, you will agree with me that the subject is well worthy of our careful study, and that its importance is a sufficient apology for a lecture upon such a well-worn theme.

The theory of typhoid fever which in the present state of our knowledge seems to be the most probable is that the virus, in the form of bacteria, when swallowed, "is taken up by the lymph follicles of the ileum, and carried to the mesenteric glands, where it may remain for a time in a state of latency. It may then pass into the general circulation and be deposited in the lymphatic organs, including the spleen." After the introduction into the system, the bacteria favor the production of ptomaines, which in time act as poisons on the various tissues. The virus produces rapid hyperplasia, together with other local changes. One of its most constant effects is that upon the heat centre, producing in the majority of cases a high degree of fever.

The increased temperature, again, together with the toxic condition of the blood, is the cause of the most serious lesions found in typhoid cases; the softening of the heart muscle; the fibrous degeneration of muscular tissue; the

*A lecture delivered at the Post-Graduate course of the University of Toronto, December 19, 1890.