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DISEASES IN THE WIND.

Read before the Canadian Institute, Toronto, March 22nd, 1862, by Daniel Ogden, M.D., Lecturer on Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the Toronto School of Medicine. (Continued.)

According to the observations of Virchow, Lilian, Kolliker, Retzius, West, and Carpenter, we find, after labor, the uterine tissue passing rapidly into fatty degeneration, in order to secure its reduction and elimination; this fat passes off copiously in the different secretions and discharges, particularly in the urine and lochia, its abundant presence in the blood serving still further to embarrass those organs as the kidneys and lungs, through which the aforesaid nitrogenous materials must be eliminated, and whose capacity is already taxed to the utmost.

The same condition of system is said to exist in persons after severe injuries, or important surgical operations, and the same liability to erysipelas and surgical fever, from the influence of some of the zymotic poisons, that in the puerperal female exist in regard to puerperal fever.

The observations of Prof. Simpson have led him to conclude that surgical fever and erysipelas are not only as much communicable from patient to patient, by the hand of the surgeon, as puerperal fever is by the hand of the accoucheur, but that a reciprocal relation exists between these three diseases, each being able to generate the other; so that they may all be regarded as manifestations of the same materies morbi; their differences being dependent upon peculiarities in the condition of the different subjects.

The same thing holds true in other cases, difference in the condition of persons or peculiarities in the nature of the predisposing cause, determining the character of the disease resulting at different times from the same atmospheric poison.

It matters not how the blood becomes contaminated with decomposing organic matter, whether in the way I have just pointed out, or by the ingestion of putrid or spoiled food, or the drinking of contaminated water, or the inhalation of foul air; the result is the same on the application of certain zymotic poisons; the resulting disease being more or less severe or malignant in proportion to the degree of blood contamination.

Several striking examples of this might be adduced, and may be found at length in the "Report of the General Board of Health, London," in reference to the appearance of cholera in England prior to 1853.

At a time when cholera had almost, but not quite disappeared from the country, a cargo of oysters arrived in such a damaged state that they were condemned by the authorities, and given away; several children of a certain school at Bridgewater ate of them freely, and all who did so, were seized with cholera, or choleraic diarrhœa.

Now, although the cholera poison must have been present before, yet it was either inoperative, or produced simple diarrhœa, until the blood of these children became contaminated by the decomposed oysters.

A similar instance occurred at Manchester, where the predisposition was given by the use of water from a certain well, into which a foul sewer had sprung a leak. In a certain street, in thirty houses using water from this well, nineteen cases of diarrhœa, twenty-six cases of cholera, with twenty-five deaths occurred; while in sixty other houses in the same neighborhood, using other water, only eleven cases of diarrhœa, no cholera, and no death, took place. Again, in a certain terrace in the most aristocratic suburb of one of the large provincial towns, an epidemic of typhoid fever broke out. It was soon observed that only certain houses, and in some cases only the servants of certain houses, were first attacked: and it was found that the water was obtained from two sources, a well which was common, and a spring which had to be paid for, and which was consequently only used in the parlor, while the water from the well was used in the kitchen.

Those houses, and those servants, using water from the well were first attacked by the fever, while the proprietors, using water from the spring, escaped, either altogether, or until they caught the disease from their neighbors or servants; and it was found, on examination, that a sewer was leaking into the well, while the spring was pure.

Instances are also numerous in which this power was communicated to the *exciting* cause by the habitual respiration of air rendered foul by the emanations from night-soil, bad sewerage, or overcrowding of individuals in badly ventilated houses.

If we look back to our own experiences in cholera visitations, we will find that the *foci* of the disease have always been those parts of the town where fevers, and other epidemics, have always prevailed to the greatest extent, and where we have the very conditions present for the complete saturation of the air and the blood with miasmatic exhalations.

Again, sirs, I believe this condition of system may be produced by the inhalation of an atmosphere perfectly free from all organic matter whatever, but so constituted as to produce a too rapid disintegration of the tissues or the blood; but of this I hope to speak again presently.

Hence we see the necessity of attending, not only to the exciting causes of disease, which when contained in the air, or carried by the wind, are generally so subtle as to elude our grasp; but also of fixing our attention more especially on those *predisposing* causes which are often easily recognized and completely under our control.

(To be continued.)