

LEAD POISONING AND ITS TREATMENT.

Bases of lead poisoning are becoming more frequent now than formerly because there are more persons engaged in manufacturing this metal, who are, more or less surrounded and enveloped by a lead-poisoned atmosphere. In a metallic state lead enters into alloys; its salts are used in paints and dyes; it is a constituent of enamels and cements. Lead pipes conduct our drinking water; and the purer the water that flows through it, the more danger there is; while, if the water contain certain salts, they are deposited on the sides of the pipe and protect the water from the metal. Zinc vessels contain lead, and while in some countries the law limits the quantity of lead to ten per cent, even six per cent is fraught with danger to health. Horse hair and silk are dyed black with lead; the laces worn by ladies, as well as their cosmetics and hair dyes, contain lead. No doubt many cases of colic, whose origin seems shrouded in mystery, were caused by lead in the solder of metallic vessels or the glazing of stoves. The foil used in wrapping tea and tobacco causes lead poisoning, and so do the granules of lead that are sometimes left in tin cans and jars. An old soldier has been known to suffer severely from using leaden shot; and the workmen in glass houses where lead salts are used are similarly troubled. Even type-setters are occasionally poisoned by handling type made of an alloy of lead. Many other ways may be mentioned in which lead is introduced into the human system, but these must suffice for the present.

Whatever may be the cause of lead poisoning, it is certain that it is generally observed in summer when the heat favors the colic. Lead may be taken up by the digestive and the respiratory organs and through the skin, principally by the former, even in the case of insoluble salts, which probably dissolve in the gastric juices. Indeed some writers claim that cases produced by lung absorption are caused by salts deposited in the pharynx. The most striking symptom of lead poisoning is the peculiar color of the gums, and this is not due, as has been supposed, to the deposit of little particles of lead which are then acted upon by sulphureted hydrogen. It is rather one symptom of the general phenomenon, for it appears lead is taken inwardly or lead water is used on distant parts of the body.

Lead colic is usually preceded by indigestion. The size of the liver diminishes; and after the use of powerful cathartics, it becomes normal, and then contracts again. The nervous symptoms caused by lead poisoning are of several kinds, such as paralysis of the muscles, sleepiness, convulsions, blindness, and pain in the back bone; while on the other hand, insensibility and deafness may result. The skin on the back of the hands swells up as in gout. Albumen in urine is a most common occurrence, but the most striking symptom is anæmia, or lack of blood. Distention of the veins is frequently observed, and alteration of the bones is not an unfrequent consequence of lead poisoning.

While lead has so many ways of entering the system, there are very few ways for it to pass off. Little or no lead is secreted in the urine, except when it contains albumen, and there is very little lead in the perspiration. It seems that the metal is deposited where it is absorbed. When soluble lead salts are taken, an albuminate of the metal is formed; while insoluble salts, as before stated, settle upon the walls of the organs and are protected from absorption into the system. This explains the fact that lead workmen are sometimes attacked with colic long after they have abandoned their dangerous calling, the accumulated lead being very gradually dissolved and absorbed.

When lead produces indigestion, it is due to the lead's stopping the action of the digestive fluid. When digestion ceases, colic begins, which is the result of the local action of the lead upon the intestines, for it does not occur when absorption takes place in another way. The change of size in the liver is dependent upon changes in the vascular system. Just as far as this whole system comes under the influence of the poison, anæmia takes place, with chills, loss of elasticity in the arteries, and diminished capillary circulation. Pallor of the skin, contraction of the liver, and diminished quantity of urine are all referable to these causes. The asthma with lead poisoning is characterized by pain in the breast bone and difficulty of breathing, which, however, is not because the entrance of the air is obstructed, but because the blood does not come in contact with the air. Paralysis is one of the effects of a disturbance in the blood vessels.

In the treatment of lead patients, the pain must be relieved by the use of chloroform or opiate; opiates are to be avoided, as they produce constipation. The lead salts must be expelled from the digestive canal, and the constipation relieved; both these are best accomplished by drastic purgatives. The incrustated particles of lead, which remain attached to the walls of the intestines, must also be removed; and for this purpose, the use of sulphur is recommended, after purging, so as to convert the lead into the insoluble sulphide of lead, which can then be removed by cathartics. Insoluble lead salts, which still remain in the system, are best removed by administering iodide of potassium, which carries off the lead through the urine. Lead workers whose skin absorbs the poison should protect themselves by the use of salt baths.

In France, Labarraque's solution (hypochlorite of potash) is used for this purpose; and to this should be added an excess of carbonate of soda. These baths are more useful than mere soap baths; and the bather, while in the water, must rub himself thoroughly. Instead of Labarraque's solution the following may be employed: 15 ounces chloride of lime, and 30 ounces crystallized carbonate of soda, dissolved in 10½ quarts of water.

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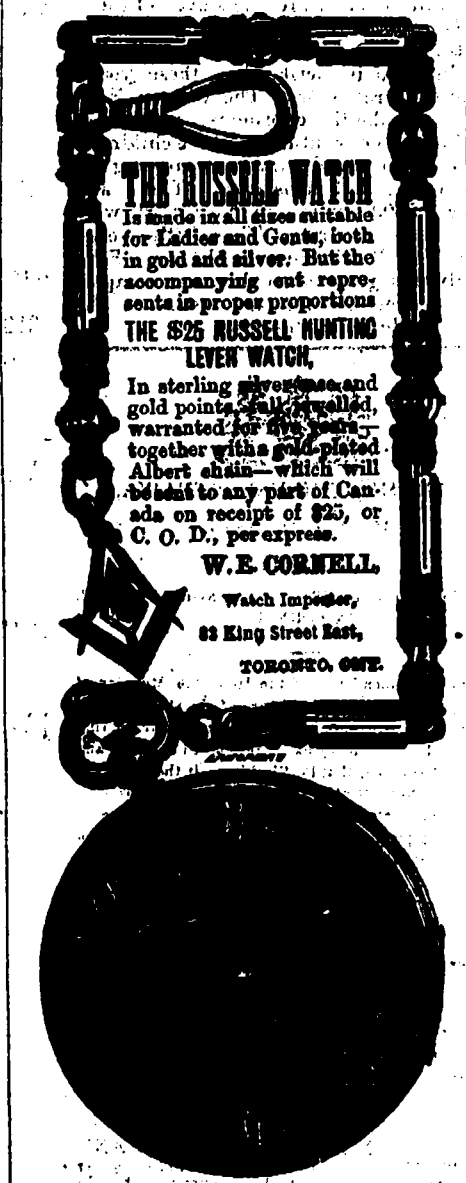
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By command,
J. JOHNSTON,
Asst. Commissioner of Customs



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SEALED TENDERS.

Addressed to the undersigned, will be received at this
office until

Thursday, the 21st day of August,

Instant, at noon, for the construction of a

BREAKWATER AND LIGHTHOUSE AT THE COLLINGWOOD HARBOR.

Plans and specifications can be seen at this office,
Collingwood, on and after THURSDAY, the 14th INST.,
where all necessary information can be obtained.

The signatures of two solvent and responsible persons
willing to become sureties for the due fulfillment of the
contract, must be attached to each tender.

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By order,
WILLIAM MURDOCH,
Engineer in charge.

Department of Public Works, (Ottawa),
Collingwood Harbor, Aug. 3th, 1873.



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day of August instant, at noon, for the Siting, Galvanizing
Iron, Thimble and Lead-work, &c., required for roof
of the Parliament Library, Ottawa.

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and after Monday, the 4th INST., where all necessary
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The signatures of two solvent and responsible persons,
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The Department will not be bound to accept the lowest or any Tender.

By order,
F. BRAUN,
Secretary
Department of Public Works,
Ottawa, 1st August, 1873.