

MEMBRANOUS LARYNGITIS,
OR CROUP, AS A RESULT OF A
"DEFINITE EXPOSURE TO COLD."

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A delicate youth who had often suffered from catarrhal tonsillitis, had lately an attack of his old malady. The inflammation, pain, and swelling were less severe than they had been on several former occasions, but there was now the new feature of a distinct, though soft, membranous exudation on the surface of each tonsil. The disease did not extend to the air-passages, and it soon yielded to treatment. The question arose, what was the pathology of the exudation on the tonsil? Was it a result solely of catarrhal inflammation excited by exposure to cold? The house was on high ground near Henley, and no expense had been spared by its wealthy and most intelligent owner to render it not only beautiful and comfortable, but wholesome. There was no reason to suppose that the patient had come in contact with any sufferer from diphtheria. I therefore expressed to the father my conviction that sewer poison was the cause of the peculiar condition of throat. And I heard subsequently that a very offensive smell had repeatedly emanated from one closet at the foot of a staircase, and, later still, that it had been found that, in consequence of some defect in the ventilation of the drains, sewer gas escaped into every closet when the water was rushing down. Here then, I take it, was the explanation of the membranous exudation, which in this case had "followed a definite exposure to cold."

The second case was that of a healthy infant, whose foreskin had to be partially removed in consequence of congenital phimosis. The wound, made by an eminent surgeon, did not heal, and in a few days it was covered by a diphtheritic membrane. The child was the son of a wealthy man, whose spacious house stands on the eastern border of Hyde-park. The two gentlemen in attendance upon the child, feeling sure that the unhealthy condition of the wound was the result of some insanitary surroundings, removed the patient to another house, where I met them in consultation, and

where the wound soon assumed a healthy appearance and healed. With some difficulty I persuaded the father to have his house thoroughly inspected, when grave sanitary defects were discovered and corrected. Now, if this child, instead of undergoing a surgical operation, had been exposed to cold, and had thus got a catarrhal inflammation of the larynx, he would very probably have had a membranous exudation on the inflamed mucous surface, and the case might have been reported as one in which "the formation of false membrane in the air-passages had succeeded upon a definite exposure to cold."

The result of my own investigations has been the conclusion that, in the absence of direct contagion, the occurrence of membranous pharyngitis or laryngitis affords conclusive evidence of infection by sewage-poison conveyed through either air or water. It will scarcely be denied that if this doctrine is true, it is of immense practical importance.—*London Lancet.*

TREATMENT OF DELIRIUM TREMENS.—Surgeon-Major Willis's note on the treatment of this disease with thirty-grain doses of powdered capsicum is interesting and of much practical value. But on what therapeutic principle are we to account for the capsicum having so powerful an effect? I have recently had similar effects with less than five-drop doses of the tincture of capsicum. Can it be that in both cases the capsicum, as an acceptable and innocent substitute for alcohol, merely put the long splint, so to speak, on the patient's stomach and nervous system, thus securing his quiet acquiescence in what was for the time the *rest of total abstinence*? I confess it was with this impression that I administered the drug; but some special features of the case, and a desire to present to the patient a palatable beverage as nearly as possible in the form of his accustomed tippie, suggested the following prescription:—

R Sodæ phosphatis ʒj; syrupi ferri phosphatis, syrupi limonis, āā ʒiss; mucilaginis acaciæ ʒij; tincturæ cardamom. co. ʒj; aquæ ad ʒxxiv. M.

Sig.—*The wine of capsicum.* A wineglassful as required. This was put in a common wine bottle, and was much relished by the patient, who took it at once, and next day passed into a refreshing unbroken sleep of nearly twenty-four hours duration.—D. TOLMY MASSON, M.D., Edinburgh.