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PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE EPIDEMIC INFLUENZA,
AS IT APPEARED IN CHELTENHAM, ENG., IN THE BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT YEAR.
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"Difficile est communia bene dicere."—HORACE.

THE observation of the poet, which I have placed at the head of this paper, applies well to the disease of which I am here about to attempt a description. The epidemic influenza which has so recently extended itself throughout the greater part of Europe, having presented, on its first appearance, the symptoms merely of an ordinary cold, it is, perhaps, the more difficult to convey, in terms sufficiently definite, the essential and characteristic distinction, or difference, between an ordinary cold or catarrh, with its accompanying fever, and the late formidable, and too frequently fatal, epidemic.

To this similarity of symptoms, at the beginning of the attack, may, in a great degree, be attributed whatever mortality was occasioned by the influenza. Elderly persons, who, for years, had been accustomed in the winter season to catarrhal affections, disregarded its first attack, and merely had recourse to their accustomed remedies. The remedies used were frequently stimulant, and the public press too generally lent the sanction of pretended authority, and the contagious stimulus of publicity, to the recommendation of dangerous specifics. A teaspoonful of sweet spirits of nitre, and the same quantity of paregoric elixir, was one of these dangerous specifics, ostentatiously paraded in the public papers as an infallible remedy for the cure of the prevailing epidemic; and the physician, when at length consulted, at, perhaps, an advanced stage of the disease, frequently found that such a dose had been taken night after night, until, at length, the inflammation of the lining membrane of the air cells of the lungs, which at first had been, probably, merely catarrhal, increased by this strong stimulant and opiate, had terminated in chronic bronchitis, threatening immediate suffocation, from the effusion of phlegm and mucus, and often of a muco-purulent fluid into the bronchial ramifications.

Another symptom which, in elderly persons, frequently masked the real disease, was lumbago; shooting pains about the back and loins generally accompanied the first accession of the epidemic, and persons who had long been accustomed to such pains, could not be induced to believe that they were different from those of ordinary lumbago. The

only fatal case which happened in my own practice, occurred in this way. A lady, nearly eighty years of age, who had narrowly escaped from the epidemic influenza of 1833, was attacked with pains and stitches about the lumbar region during the prevalence of the late epidemic. Happening to call upon her, I found her ill in bed, with what I foresaw would be a dangerous attack of the influenza, and having brought her, with great difficulty, through the epidemic of 1833, I apprised her of the necessity of having immediate recourse to remedies. This advice she refused to comply with, asserting her conviction that it was not the influenza, but lumbago, with which she was attacked, and stating that she had already applied a belladonna plaster to her back, which, in such attacks, she had always found an infallible remedy. I heard no more of her for the following six or seven days, when I was summoned to attend her; but it was now too late. The lungs were engorged with a muco-purulent matter, which impeded the circulation and respiration, and which she had not the power to expectorate. The distressing râle increased, the sensorium became affected, and she died on the fourth day after I had been called into attendance, and, probably, the eleventh or twelfth from the first attack of the epidemic.

A circumstance of some practical importance attended this case, with which the patient made me acquainted a day or two before its fatal termination. During her attack of influenza, in the epidemic of 1833, the expectoration was most profuse, and became of a muco-purulent nature towards the termination of the disease; after the accompanying fever had entirely ceased, the same sort of discharge took place from the mucous membrane of the intestines. Finding her greatly weakened by, and in danger of sinking under, these discharges, I ordered her port-wine negus. This remedy acted most beneficially, almost instantaneously checking the expectoration and intestinal discharges. Recollecting this circumstance, the patient told me that she had of herself tried the same remedy, almost at the beginning of her late and fatal attack, but that, instead of deriving any benefit from it, her fever had been greatly increased, and her breathing rendered still more difficult. This circumstance shows the impropriety of having recourse to stimulating remedies in the early stages of the influenza, and the injurious effects that may probably have resulted to the public by the prescriptions recommended through the public press; for a small quantity of warm port-wine negus is by no means so powerful or so dangerous a stimulant as paregoric elixir and nitrous ether in the early stages of bronchial inflammation.

The first manifestation of an attack of the epidemic influenza was seen in its effects on the pulmonary apparatus, and the cavities about the face and fauces which are ordinarily affected by catarrhal discharges. A fever of a very peculiar nature generally accompanied this attack. The peculiarity of the fever consisted in a nervous restlessness and watchfulness, which accompanied its first accession, together with an anxiety and apprehension which in general appeared to exceed the importance or apparent danger of the attack. The discharge from the mucous membrane of the nose, and cavities about the face and fauces,

was different from the thin catarrhal discharges which ordinarily accompany a common cold; it was thick, yellow, and, in some instances, white, as if the albuminous part of the blood was secreted from the mucous surfaces, lining the cavities about the face; and the same kind of secretion, extending into the bronchial ramifications of the lungs, gave to the expectoration, which, in most instances, was profuse, the appearance of a muco-purulent discharge, particularly in the mornings, when thickened and condensed by having remained for some time in the bronchial ramifications.

With regard to the description of persons most liable to the influenza, it appeared to attack all indiscriminately; the very young and the very old, and such as were otherwise infirm, as might be expected, suffered the most severely. It was among such only, in Cheltenham at least, that any fatal cases occurred. The disease generally attacked all the members of a family, either simultaneously or in rapid succession. This circumstance led many to the opinion, that the influenza was propagated by personal contagion. But the rapidity with which it attacked not only the population of towns, but the whole community, is scarcely reconcilable with that opinion. Various statistical circumstances, in towns and districts of country, may hasten or retard the development of a disease arising from atmospheric causes, so that some appearance of succession may be observed in its progress in different localities, and various degrees of susceptibility to the impressions of the disease may exist in different individuals, which may occasion a succession in its attacks even in the same locality. The general characteristics, however, of an epidemic, that is, of a disease which seizes at once, or nearly so, upon whole communities, seemed rather to belong to the influenza, than those of a disease arising from personal contagion, and afterwards spreading by the slow and successive progress of contagious propagation.

With respect to the treatment of the influenza, it varied, of course, according to the circumstances attending each individual case; such as the habit of body and previous state of health of the party attacked; the periods at which the physician was first called in, and the functional or organic derangements with which the affection of the chest might have been complicated. In most cases the affection of the chest was complicated, either at its commencement or during its progress, with derangement of the biliary system; and some cases were accompanied by actual jaundice, attended with excruciating pain in the region of the gall bladder, leading to the suspicion of the presence of gall stones. In such complications, small doses of calomel and James's powder, with warm baths or fomentations to the region of the liver, together with mild aperients, were found to be most successful remedies.

The fever which accompanied the influenza seldom required general bloodletting; but the difficulty of breathing often required local depletion, by the application of leeches to the chest. I was called, much about the same time, to two ladies who were attacked by the epidemic; they were both of full habits of body, and both in the prime of life. In both cases there was great difficulty of breathing, and high fever. In one of these cases I immediately directed the application of a dozen

leeches to the chest, besides giving, internally, James's powder and the extract of hyosciamus, with nitrous and mucilaginous drinks. As the other lady happened to be then very near the period of her accouchement, I hesitated about ordering the leeches, and at first confined the treatment to general remedies. On visiting both patients next morning, I found so great an improvement in the case in which the leeches had been applied, and found that the other patient had passed so restless a night, that I immediately directed the leeches to be applied, which, in this case, also, produced immediate relief; and in both were followed by a speedy and perfect recovery.

In the case of an infant, also, about six months old, to which I was called in consultation, the application of a few leeches was attended with the greatest benefit; indeed there was every reason to believe that the life of the little patient was saved by that remedy. When I was first called in to see the child, it was black in the face and gasping for breath, the power of respiration, and also of deglutition, being almost entirely suspended: and such was the state of prostration to which it was reduced that I had some difficulty in persuading the medical attendant to try the effect of leeches, lest the child should expire during their application. By stating, however, my opinion strongly that nothing else but taking away blood from the engorged vessels about the throat, by the application of leeches, afforded the slightest chance of recovery, it was agreed to, and two leeches were applied immediately, one on each side of the trachea; the laborious heavings and efforts which accompanied the respiration, occasioned the leeches to bleed profusely; the little patient was quickly relieved; it subsequently recovered, and is now a healthy child.

The fever and bronchial inflammation, or irritation accompanying the influenza, having been reduced by leeches, mild aperients, James's powder, and nitrous and mucilaginous drinks, some diffusible stimuli became useful, and, perhaps, necessary; for in cases in which the patient had been kept long on the antiphlogistic plan of treatment, the disease sometimes put on a typhoid character. At this stage of the influenza the following mixture was found highly beneficial: R. Almond and camphor mixture, of each three ounces; tincture of hyosciamus, and spirit of nitrous ether, of each one drachm; Battley's sedative opium, twenty drops; syrup of balsam of Tol., half a drachm. Two large spoonfuls three or four times a day.

The above mixture generally afforded sufficient stimulation to obviate the typhus tendency, and, at the same time, relieved the distressing cough which, at this stage of the disease, often harassed the patient. Light broths might now be allowed, and where care was taken to prevent a relapse, the patients in general rapidly recovered.

In conclusion, the influenza of 1837 could not, abstractedly, be considered a very formidable disease, and patients, generally speaking, recovered from the severer symptoms in a very short time; relapses, however, were frequent, and when we consider how extensively the epidemic prevailed throughout the country, there is reason to fear that,

as one of its many and complicated consequences, it has entailed upon the community an increased disposition to pulmonary diseases.

VERMINOUS IRRITATION AS SIMULATING OTHER DISEASES.

BY WN. MARKLEY LEE, M.D., OF INDIANTOWN, S. C.

INTESTINAL worms are often improperly supposed to excite fever in the human subject; for every experienced physician can recall instances in which worms have been discharged, and in which the friends of the patient have in consequence ascribed the febrile symptoms to verminous irritation, whereas their discharge was rather a consequence, than a cause of fever.

I have often been astonished, however, that so few instances have been recorded in medical periodicals, of worms as causing the symptoms of other diseases. They may, and I am convinced frequently do, irritate certain nerves, and produce symptoms which are never attributed to their influence. To demonstrate this position, I will describe certain cases which have occurred in my own practice, to all appearances totally disconnected with worms, but which were promptly cured by anthelmintics.

Sciatica.—Soon after I commenced the practice of my profession in Charleston, I was requested to attend a lad about nine years of age, laboring under sciatica. Blistering and the remedies usually employed, were tried in vain for several days. At one of my visits, when at a loss what next to prescribe, his mother informed me that he ground his teeth frequently in his sleep; this led me to suspect verminous irritation; I therefore sent him anthelmintic medicine, composed of calomel and spigelia, and at my next visit I was truly gratified to see him walking about the house, free from all pain except the irritation of the blister. I was informed, that immediately after he had discharged a number of lumbrici, the rheumatic symptoms vanished. He was from that time restored to perfect health.

Phthisis Pulmonalis.—I was soon after requested to visit a young married woman, whose case was marked by symptoms of the above disease—cough so incessant as to prevent sleep, and was exhausting her strength; remedies usually exhibited in such cases, here failed to afford relief, until one day she mentioned some symptoms which led me to suspect verminous irritation. After the exhibition of the anthelmintic already mentioned, in the space of forty hours she discharged an equal number of lumbrici, and the symptoms of pulmonary disease were relieved promptly and permanently.

Paraplegia.—I was called during the last summer to a young girl about eleven years of age, sick with bilious remittent fever; she had been bled and purged without material benefit; the febrile excitement was moderate, but in addition to considerable pain and soreness about the præcordia, there was a remarkable loss of power over the lower extremities, amounting even to inability to turn in bed without assistance.