AN INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

Acute Dysentery

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BY

Nathan Hawkins M.D.

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"Man was created little lower than the Angels, in the likeness of his Creator; eminently qualified and suited to act a noble part in the great drama, upon the grand theatre designed of high heaven for the display of human greatness and felicity. "Our time honored profession as actors upon that grand theatre; as a means through a well directed Providence, is entrusted the paramount duty of staying the ravages of disease, and lessening the fearful train of suffering, pain, misery and mortality, together with the losses and crops which go hand in hand with disease and death. "Show the ability and competency..."
of the Physician or Surgeon, to act in his sphere as such, in many diseases and operations, rest the life and destiny of his patient. The complicated & malignant forms of Dysentery which have during the last few years carried off thousands and thousands of friends and relatives from our midst to that home from whence no traveler returns. What more can we say to him, upon whom all hope is directed, whilst languishing with the pangs of disease and death. In this dissertation we believe purpose giving a statement of facts so far only as our limited experience will bear us out to testify. In Tennessee the disease throughout the surrounding, and in my own vicinity, has presented almost every gradation, from a very slight affection, unattended by febrile symptoms and causing the patient but little pain or uneasiness up to one in severity, malignity and mortality, approaching Asiatic cholera. The premonitory stage is generally attended with soreness and aching of the bones.
adult heavy headache, with general weariness and lassitude, attended by dull and sometimes acute, transient pains in the loins, and diarrhea and sometimes anorexia. In other cases, the disease comes on without such premonitory symptoms. The patient being attacked first with rigors, acute and lancinating pain in the abdomen, head and back with great febrile excitement, and frequent painful and bloody stools and tenderness over the abdomen, upon pressing the abdomen, sometimes nauseated and vomiting a hot and dry skin, pulse full, such are the different degrees of violence of the initial stage, we do not think that it is confined to the mucous membrane of the rectum and colon; but that it is often combined or associated with enteritis, duodenitis, and even gastritis, and that the muscular and peritoneal coats are also involved in the inflammation, and giving in addition to the above named symptoms, sympathities, this seldom occurs.
We believe in severe febrile cases it often becomes complicated and combined with Gastritis, Duodenitis interitis, and forming a combined and associated affection; and presenting the most acute sufferings, attended with the most incessant pains and nervousness over the whole abdominal region, distressing nausea and obstinate and persistent vomiting, with severe torments, and almost incessant action of the bowels, with high febrile excitement. Really there is deranged functional action of every organ in the body, these severe paroxysms are not infrequently attended with cramps of the bowels and extremities. The discharge from the bowels are seldom of a fecal character, most generally they are little else than a gray, white or green, mohled, mucous secretion thickly interspersed with blood, sometimes a dark thick bloody mucous somewhat
Similar in appearance to the serpings of raw flesh: and in many patients blood has been discharged from the bowels in large quantities, even to such an amount as would be almost incredible to those who never witnessed such phenomena. The number of calls to stool, to evacuate the bowels is very different, whilst in mild cases the calls to stool are not very frequent, though generally accompanied with pain. In the more severe and malignant forms, the calls to stool are more frequent and urgent; often almost incessant accompanied with severe tormenting attended with heavy burning tenesmus and weight in the rectum. The tenesmus becomes a very distressing symptom, causing the patient to desire to be at stool continually without lessening his suffering; he sometimes wil...
desire to remain at stool for hours at a time. The discharges are composed of morbid accumulations, and secretions of the bowels and other visceræ. These acid discharges we will neither term acid or alkaline, but morbid. They are constantly forming and accumulating, and thus acid fascions passing over the tender and inflamed visceræ cause constant tenesmus and burning weight. The morbid fecal discharges are attended with a peculiar disagreeable odour, sometimes the bowels act involuntarily in low and emaciated patients, attended by irrepressible bearing down misery, and in some cases produces prolapsus Ani; particularly with children.

In the greater portion of severe cases, they generally complain of great inward heat and great thirst, and not unfrequently the irritation extends to the urinary organs, which cause
the patient severe suffering, and very frequently it is attended with retention of urine, which has to be relieved with the catheter; in such cases the urine is generally high colored. In plethoric patients attended with high febrile excitement and inflammatory symptoms the pulse is generally full and accelerated during the first stage. In others we find a hard quick corded pulse.

In anaemic patients whether the disease is of a typhoid character the pulse is very much accelerated irregular weak, and threadlike. In simple cases associated with other disease the tongue is but little coated except far back, my vicinity being a miasmatic District, I have very frequently met with it combined with intermittent or remittent fever and other biliary derangements; then the tongue presents the phenomena peculiar to the associated affection. When associated with gastric and hepatic disease we not infrequently find
ared smooth tongue, or the tip and edges rough and raw whilst the central parts are coated with a yellowish fur. The great violence with which patients are often attacked, produces such a shock upon the whole economy, that the patient sinks powerless in the stern grasp of his pale conqueror, and no human arm can stay its progress. We sometimes meet with cases associated with congestion of the brain; in such cases the symptoms become malignant and complicated; and the patient in these cases will fall into a state of stupor, delirium and insensibility, and though often aroused from such a state by frequent calls to stool, they very soon fall into a like condition again, soon to be aroused in like manner. These symptoms are oftener associated with Bilious Dysentery than any other form, the tongue, skin and conjunctiva all present the yellowish bilious tinge, great feeble symptoms and depression of the epigastric region.
and nausea and vomiting, the emesis is generally of a yellow-greenish bilious appearance. This is a very malignant and dangerous form of the disease. There is also another grade or form of which I will speak (though unacquainted with it) this form of the disease is always associated with depressing sedative agents and causey, which acting upon the vitals of the system, such as an infected atmosphere; poisonous noxious effluvium arising from the filth of persons that are crowded together in great numbers, as in Camps, Ships, besieged fortresses, prisons, Cities, or any foul place where the atmosphere becomes infected with a deleterious effluvium or idiopathic infection; a vitious poisonous emanation arising from the decomposition of filthy matter arising from human bodies, in filthy ill ventilated places, when the disease is produced, from so powerful a sedative poison acting upon the whole vital economy, the
blood undoubtedly must be seriously diseased, and under such unfavorable circumstances we would expect the disease to appear in a very malignant form and no doubt—but besides such circumstances it is often associated with Typhus fever, and if not combined with Typhus fever, we might truly term it grave Typhoid Dysentery. Colonitis attacks indiscriminately persons of all ages, sexes, and Colors, and though it may appear that some are more subject to attacks of it, no doubt but it is owing to being more exposed to the predisposing & exciting causes. We believe that it often occurs sporadically as the result of ordinary causes, but that it often occurs epidemically we have no sort of doubt: for we have witnessed such epidemics during the last few years. The predisposing cause of the disease must no doubt frequently be a peculiar epidemic influence. This combined with various exciting
causes acting on the system increase its susceptibility and thus the disease is generated by the conjoined influence of both the predisposing and exciting causes. Whilst it would have remained quiescent under the power and influence of either cause alone, neither cause being adequate of itself to develop the disease, whilst if both the epidemic and the exciting causes act at the same time conjointly they generate it, but at other times either cause alone is sufficiently powerful to excite it into action. All causes that are calculated to impair the physical energies, lessen the health, or relax the tone and vigor of the various organs, or functions of the body, such as long continued and depressing heat which lessens and enfeebles the digestive powers, and augments the excitability of the mucous membrane of the alimentary
canal, deranges the secretory functions. The sudden arrest of the various glandular secretions; by exposing the body to great exertions, heat, and perspiration during the day, then being exposed to cold, or to the damp night-air unprotected. Indigestible or irritating diet, spirits, and all alike and similar causes.

It is sometimes contended that it is a contagious affection, the medical opinion is now almost unanimously decided against such opinion. It is certainly true that persons who are greatly dealt with, and waiting upon those who have it, will be more likely to take it than if they had not been amongst it; Petreus paribus. This we do not believe is owing to any contagiousness, but merely because they are exposed to a more powerful and concentrated predisposing influence; and also being exposed to incessant fatigue both night and day and the
Lack of refreshing rest and sleep the health becomes enfeebled, and the energies of the system relax; all this conjointly are likely to produce the disease under consideration independently of contagion. We believe that the economy of the system is such that no organ can be implicated in disease without exercising a powerful influence in bringing disease upon others; if one part becomes organically or functionally in fault other organs which are dependent for their normal action, upon a like action or function in the first, so disease in one organ gives to a second a contaminated direction to act upon; which must have a deleterious effect on their functions, and thus one organ or set of organs after another becomes more and more diseased, by acting upon, and in turn being acted upon, by a morbid stimulus.
and so will disease be received and transmitted ad infinitum until every organ in train be infected by links inseparably and sympathetically throughout the whole organisation of the wonderful mechanism of the human system; so a normal and healthy function of each part or set of organs is dependent on a like organisation and action of every other part in the body. It is very rational to conclude that in protracted cases of this disease, there are great changes effected in the blood, but as to the peculiar nature of such change we have yet to learn. Thus are kept in active play by a morbid vasque supplying nutritive material to be insufficient in repairing the enucleated system congenial to the laws of the economy of our nature.

Treatments
To treat acute dysenteric or flux successfully, we must consider well the nature of the Pathology of the disease, and the remedial agents suited to the disease, we should have a clear idea of the affection we have to treat, and vary our prescriptions accordingly, so as to suit the various associated complications, and different stages, grades of violence, age, sex, anemic or plithoric condition of system: unless there is a correct diagnosis suited to each individual case, stage, sex, and the peculiarities of the patient. The combined affections carefully noted whatever they may be, with every prominent feature noted; and treatment suited accordingly we need not expect to be successful in practice. The present circumstances will not admit of my giving more than a synoptical sketch of the plan of treatment adopted.
During the first stage, in plethoric patients with high fever and inflammatory symptoms with full and accelerated pulse, I use the lanceet. It is a powerful sedative and antiphlogistic remedy, it lessens the quantity of fibrin in the blood, and reduces the inflammatory symptoms, and lessens the tendency to congestion of the brain and also of the abdominal pericard. Cathartics should act very mildly upon the bowels. Harsh drastic purgatives would probably aggravate the complaint. Where the Hepatic functions are involved, the Blue pill or Calomel and Creta, will be indicated, during the last year in all other cases I have generally seen Calomel aggravate the disease; its antiphlogistic remedial virtues, seem to be more limited in inflammatory disease of the mucous membranes than in those of the serous. Oil of Ricini acts
very kindly as a cathartic, and should be followed by large doses of doveri and Elixir paregoric. Opiates hold the first and highest rank amongst the remedial agents for this disease. Their action seems particularly suited to the complaint. They relax and relieve the spasmofadic contractions, diminish the morbid sensibility of the irritable bowels, facilitate the action of other remedial agents. They also act as a diaphoretic, quiet and calm the nervous system, determine the circulation to the surface. Opium, Ferrum, and Crota, mixed in large doses, and given sufficiently often to keep the patient nauseated freely, given in this way we get a happy influence from so powerful a drug. The drinks should be Senna Arabic, Slippery Elm Waters, the effervescing draught and cold water. The diet should not be indigestible or salty stimulants.
diets, they should be such as are easily digestible and nourishing to the patient. Local remedies large soft-anodyne poultices to cover the whole surface of the abdomen. The frequent-bathing of the same parts with spirits turpentine, and in obstinate cases we generally derive advantage from large blisters drawn over the same region so as to produce counter irritation. Small blisters merely aggravate the patient's disease. frequent enemias of mucilage S command acetate of lead, and in cases where the stomach will tolerate the acetate of lead & opium it is a very good mixture. The various vegetable astringents are frequently employed with opiates, and with apparent advantage. In patients attended with low typhoid symptoms in addition to the remedies proper to relieve the bowels, it is necessary to keep up the strength by tonics and stimulants. In such cases Spirits Turpentine and Balsam
Cephaiae in small doses generally act favorably. The spirit of turpentine with Laudanum & Caster oil in large doses given in the primary stage frequently quiet all the symptoms. The prescription should be varied to suit each case and its complicated diversities. The apartement for the patient should be neat & clean and kept freely ventilated with pure air, great precaution should be used to prevent relapse during convalescence.