

Medical Societies.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

MONDAY, JULY 3, 1854.

ON THE USE OF VEGETABLE AND MINERAL ACIDS, IN THE TREATMENT, PROPHYLACTIC AND REMEDIAL, OF EPIDEMIC DISORDERS OF THE BOWELS.

BY J. H. TUCKER, ESQ.

THE author commenced by alluding to the remarkable, but well-established fact, that in 1849 the cider districts of Herefordshire, Somersetshire, and part of Devonshire, were, to a great extent, exempt from the epidemic ravages of cholera, while the disease was raging around. Upon further inquiry it was ascertained that this exemption was confined a good deal to those individuals who drank cider as a common beverage, and that those who partook of malt liquor occasionally suffered. He also remarked that, in some parts of France and in Normandy, more particularly where cider is the common beverage, cholera is seldom known to exist; and further, that Switzerland was reported to have been free from its visitation.

Having adduced these and other facts in proof of the prophylactic power of cider, the author expressed his opinion that other vegetable acids would be found of service, such as lemon-juice, orange-juice, and sour wines made from grapes, or even from gooseberries. And as it would be found impossible to supply the whole of London with a sufficient quantity of pure cyder, Mr. Tucker suggested that *vinegar* might be found a useful substitute in case of another outbreak of cholera, provided that it could be obtained in a state of purity. In confirmation of his view of the sanative and medicinal virtues of vinegar, the author quoted Hippocrates, who (*de natura muliebri*) "employed white vinegar medicinally"—Plutarch and Livy, who refer to the use of vinegar by Hannibal, in his passage over the Alps, when he is said to have "softened the rocks with fire and vinegar," an operation which the author facetiously regarded as rather metaphorical than chemical, as the vinegar, swallowed by the troops, probably sustained their strength, and thus in effect softened the asperities of their rough way. The author also quoted from Roman history the story that "Scipio Africanus is said to have gained a great battle with a few skins of vinegar," the troops refusing to march until the general had obtained a supply. Caesar was also reported to mention in his Commentaries the supply of vinegar to the troops; and Mr. Tucker remarked that the drink of the Romans in all their campaigns was vinegar and water, and, sustained by that beverage, they conquered the world. Modern authors, (Sir John Pringle, Sir Gilbert Blane, and others) were also quoted in proof of the antiseptic and medicinal qualities of vinegar. The author then proceeded to show that acid drinks were not only preventive, but remedial in epidemic disorders of the bowels. Cases were related, in which not only persons were exempt from attacks of cholera raging around them, who drank large draughts of cider, but a case of severe cholera was also related, which yielded to the diluted juice of sour apples. The efficacy of the *Mineral Acids*, especially the sulphuric, in diarrhoea, and especially in choleraic diarrhoea, was also advocated by reference to numerous facts and authorities. He also referred to some established facts connected with the spread of epidemic dysentery in the army, showing the efficacy of vegetable acids in that disease.

In conclusion, Mr. Tucker suggested a necessary caution relative to the use of the wretched and unwholesome substitute for vinegar commonly sold in the London shops.

The discussion which followed the reading of the paper, elicited many facts in confirmation of the author's views; and, as to the efficacy of sulphuric acid largely diluted with water, in choleraic diarrhoea, there was not a dissentient voice.

NORTH LONDON MEDICAL SOCIETY.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 1854.—DR. HARE, VICE-PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

Dr. RAWLINS was elected a Fellow.

Mr. BURFORD NORMAN related a

CASE OF SPURIOUS CATARACT, IN A WOMAN.

A false membrane, the result of old inflammation, was attached to the iris, which caused much disfigurement. This he removed by depressing the membrane with a needle.

Dr. GREENHALGH related a

CASE OF DYSMENORRHOEA IN A YOUNG WOMAN,

who had suffered much ever since menstruation commenced. On examination the uterus was found to be enlarged. The treatment was commenced by the application of leeches to the os uteri, and afterwards by the introduction of a sound, the consequent irritation being treated with warm baths and alternative doses of mercury. Her recovery was rapid, and Dr. Greenhalgh has subsequently seen her with a fine healthy child. He thought that in many of these cases, dilatation of the womb was very advantageous.

Dr. PRETTY related a

CASE OF SUDDEN DEATH FROM THYMIC ASTHMA, IN A CHILD FIVE MONTHS OLD.

The thymus gland weighed twelve drachms.

Dr. HARE and Mr. ADAMS spoke to the frequency of laryngismus stridulus during the last six or eight months.

Reviews and Notices of Books.

Remarks on the Hill Diarrhoea and Dysentery, with Brief Notices of some of the Himalayan Sanataria. By ALEXANDER GRANT, Esq., Surgeon to the Governor-General of India, and Secretary to the Medical Board, Calcutta. Bishop's College Press. 1853.

WE greet with especial satisfaction the appearance of every report from our brethren in tropical regions bearing on the most important branch of medicine—that of the prevention of disease. In the preface to the sixth edition of the work "*On the Influence of Tropical Climates on European Constitutions*," Mr. J. R. Martin exhorts his brethren "seriously to examine the influence of general tropical climate, of locality, and of season, on European health. Such objects are in reality of more value than volumes of cases or details of routine practice; their careful investigation will confer permanent benefits on the public service, and, sooner or later, derive honour to themselves, difficult, if not impossible, to be obtained in any other way." This was truly said, and we are glad to perceive that Mr. Grant is one of those who has justly derived both honour and profit from his careful devotion to the important question of sanitary information.

Hitherto we have heard nothing but unqualified praises of the hill ranges of tropical climates, and for the information that we shall not find in them an unmixed good we are indebted to Mr. Grant. Mr. Grant does not by any means propose to depreciate or to throw discredit on the hill climates; far otherwise is his intention, and, if we mistake not, the inquiry he has so worthily begun in the East must extend to all our intertropical possessions: such is the value of discussion in matters of science. Investigations of this nature possess extreme interest and value, for they point directly to the selection of the most approved localities in the mountains, to the proper structural arrangements there for barracks and hospitals, &c. &c.

We lately observed that all the medical and surgical skill exercised in a thousand battles—such as that of Waterloo, for instance—could not bring to the British soldier a tithe of the beneficence which would result to him from the simple act of being removed from the plains to the mountains of our intertropical possessions. We believe this to be strictly true, and that it must be by sanitary measures of precaution and of prevention, rather than by means of cure, great as these last confessedly are, that our soldiers and seamen may be maintained in health and vigour. It is stated on authority that the noble Highland regiment, the 92nd, "lost more officers and men in four months from the *climate* of Jamaica than by the hand of the enemy in an active warfare of twenty-two years, in the progress of which it was engaged twenty-six times." So lamentable a sacrifice will no longer be witnessed in Jamaica, for permanent arrangements have been made for our soldiers in its mountains by order of the late Lord Metcalfe.

Mr. Grant proposes to describe "an inveterate form of