

successful inquirer in therapeutics can by any means whatever produce so powerful an impulse on the stream of blood.

During the epidemic of 1832, machines of considerable bulk, and of various degrees of ingenuity, were invented for the restoration of the circulation and of animal heat, none of which, however, acquired any reputation for success; but in the agonising cramps of cholera I recognise the most powerful machinery for the re-establishment of the circulation. The ordinary pressure of the muscles is in vain exerted to squeeze out of even an open vein the tar-like blood in the collapsed state of this disease; but, if any mechanical power can assist in overcoming venous congestion, it is those vice-like cramps. It is part of the history of cholera that among the most severe epidemics recorded in India, where cramps were absent, the disease was most fatal; while in epidemics most strongly marked by this symptom, recoveries were more frequent. If nature's mode of remedying disease were more carefully studied and better understood, a more harmless class of remedies would often be substituted, while less credulity would exist in the imaginary remedies of the homœopathist.

I cannot conclude the subject without remarking, that if in cholera we witness a disease of a rapidly fatal tendency, in no other disease do we observe such rapid recovery by the unassisted efforts of nature. Besides cramps, the other principal efforts consist in the absorption of water into the blood-vessels, the extreme thirst of the patient inducing him to take this fluid plentifully, and in vomiting, which perhaps most of all assists in restoring the circulation.

In cases of severe collapse if the diarrhoea have ceased for a period of three hours, and thirst and vomiting continue, the prognosis may generally be favourable: in mild cases a few hours are sufficient to restore the circulation, but in the more severe this symptom sometimes continues for three days. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN GEO. FRENCH.

St. James's Infirmary,  
Aug. 30, 1842.

## THE POTATO IN SEA-SCURVY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I find that the practice of giving lime-juice to our seamen in the navy is still adopted, as a preventive, to sea-scurvy, on account of its antiseptic properties. I do not recollect ever having seen the common potato recommended as an antiscorbutic (*observing strict regard to cleanliness and ventilation*) in any medical journal; I will, therefore, briefly give you my experience of its efficacy.

On leaving England, in January, 1823, I found on inquiry that the ship was not, as

usual, supplied with lime-juice, but bountifully with potatoes; and great care was taken, as the stock decreased, to keep some for what the sailors aptly termed "scurvy-grass," which consisted of potatoes, peeled and sliced like cucumbers, with the addition of a little vinegar, to make them more palatable. The crew were supplied with a quantity of scurvy-grass every morning, before breakfast, averaging from two to three potatoes each man: this was partaken of eagerly by the old and experienced seamen, and shortly by the others from their recommendation and example.

In order to show how highly raw potatoes were esteemed as an antiscorbutic, I may mention a fact of which I was an eye-witness. On our arrival at Valdivia, on the coast of Chili, one of our men was observed by a female to take a potato from a heap, and very unceremoniously and eagerly eat it. She called his attention to a quantity of apples, and tendered some to him; but although he accepted the apples, he assured her that he had not made a mistake. We remained at sea, on various cruises, during periods of from six to nine months each. On one occasion we were exposed to all the consequences arising from damp and moisture for six months, having been cruising near the equator in the wet season, and I believe that during that period we never passed a day without rain; at the same time, we were living on salt provisions, with a very scanty allowance of "scurvy-grass." We returned to England after an absence of two years and ten months, never having had scurvy among the ship's company,\* and had the satisfaction of seeing every individual that embarked with us return to his native land.

A second voyage, of nearly equal duration, was attended with similar results.

As a substitute for potatoes, pumpkins, plantains, the recent juice of limes, &c. &c. were given; but of all others the raw potato is decidedly the best antiscorbutic. I may add, that in one instance we presented a peck of potatoes to a ship's crew consisting of about forty persons, many of them having incipient scurvy. They were relieved, and enabled to prolong their cruise at sea. "Dulcis sæpe ex Asperis."

If the above facts are (in your estimation) worth recording, I shall feel obliged by their insertion in your valuable Journal, and am, Sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM DALTON, M.R.C.S.

Rodney-terrace, Cheltenham,  
Aug. 25, 1842.

\* Excepting slightly in one instance following severe injury to the feet, produced by a fall from aloft; and on that occasion we had been nine months at sea, on our arrival at New Zealand in 1825.