

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE CHOLERA IN RUSSIA.

THE cholera, then, is neither confined to India, nor to regions within the tropics; nor even to what are called the warm countries of the temperate regions:—nay, avoiding as it were the warmer countries of the south of Europe, Italy, Spain, France,—it has been introduced into countries more northward, and has shown that even in the climate of Russia its activity is not less than within a few degrees of the equator.

The poison of the disease, travelling along the shores of the sea, or of navigable lakes and rivers, or pursuing the track of commerce, or haunting communities of men, (either sailing in the atmosphere, out of the influence of the winds, which sweep with violence across the earth's surface, or carried by the agency of human beings, or in both ways inflicted on its victims, which is the most probable,) seemed at length to be introduced by means of a vessel which came from the port of Baku, or Bakoo, on the west coast of the Caspian Sea, to Astrachan, a Russian port at the mouth of the river Volga, on the northern coast of the Caspian. At Astrachan, how-

ever introduced, it certainly made its appearance on the 20th of July 1830; and it did not appear in any part of the Russian territory between that port and Baku. Eight of the crew of the ship from Baku had died of the cholera on the voyage. No sooner had it appeared at Astrachan than the alarmed people of the place took to flight in great numbers, going up the river; and then all the towns along the course of the Volga were successively attacked with cholera. In a map, showing the progress of the disease up the river, it is seen to have been at Tzaritzen on the 6th of August; at Doubouka and Saratoff, two towns farther on, on the 7th; and so on, from town to town along the river, up to Yarosloff on the 6th of September; thus reaching the very interior of the Russian empire, in about 58° of north latitude, 80 degrees of latitude, or more than 5000 miles, north of the islands of Mauritius and Bourbon. The first persons who died, in all these places, were either sailors, or persons who had come from infected places.

As the disease seemed to be conveyed *up* the Volga by persons infected, so it seemed to be carried *down* the next river, the Don, in the same manner. On the banks of the Don are found the Cossacks, a half-savage race of people.

A Cossack was sent from Katchalinskara (the Russian towns have very hard names) on the Don, to Doubouka on the Volga, to buy provisions: this was in the beginning of

August; and he died of cholera after his return. After that circumstance, the disease appeared first at one town on the Don and then at another, just as it had done in towns on the Volga, only going the other way; till, on the 9th of September, it had got as far down as Jagaurog, where the Don runs into the Caspian Sea.

From Saratoff, on the Volga, a town already mentioned, the disease went with the flying inhabitants to Peusa. A student also left Saratoff with a servant; his servant died on the road to Moscow, and the student himself is supposed to have been the first person who died of the cholera in the city of Moscow itself. The malady had come so rapidly on the town of Saratoff that the people had no time to take any precautions; there was scarcely a family in it which had not to lament a death. All the four surgeons of the place were very soon attacked with it, and three of them died. All who could run away left the place: a clergyman's congregation was reduced from five hundred and fifty to one hundred and fifty. At first, the deaths were only four a day; they gradually increased to five, twelve, twenty, eighty, and at last up to two hundred and sixty in a day, and then in the same gradual manner began every day to be fewer and fewer. And it is very well worthy of being remembered, that a colony of Moravians in the middle of the town, being most strictly guarded by quarantine, escaped the disease altogether.

Many instances of this kind are related as having been known in other places. When the cholera was at Aleppo, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, the French consul invited *all* the resident Christians to his country house. They lived in the garden, round which there was a high wall; and although there were about two hundred of them, none had the cholera. Even in the Mauritius, already spoken of, one gentleman protected his family from taking cholera by shutting them up closely, and cutting off all communication with others. In some cases, when thousands have been dying in a sea-port, the crews of vessels not allowed to go ashore, or to admit persons from the shore, have remained healthy. Many gardens, and many farms were protected in the same way in Russia. Egypt is supposed to have been saved from the cholera for some time by the strict regulations of its government. But in Hungary, where all such regulations were despised, one hundred thousand people were swept away by the cholera.

The people of Moscow had heard, without much concern, of the progress of cholera on the frontiers of the great empire of Russia bordering on Persia. But when they found that it spread from Tabris, the seat of the Persian government, to Teflis, the capital of Georgia, and from Georgia to Astrachan, and then up the Volga, they began to think the matter of more consequence. When it first came to Moscow, it particularly affected the poor, the ill-fed, the badly clothed, those living in low

and damp houses or cellars, and those who were intemperate or who led irregular lives. When it had prevailed in the city one month, there were reported to be one thousand and sixty-six persons sick of cholera, and on the day this report was made (the 26th October) two hundred and forty-four were seized with the disease. After that, the daily number attacked became every day less. On the 17th of November, 1830, the public account was this:—

Number affected with cholera from the first appearance of the complaint . . . . .	6531
Recovered . . . . .	1813
Dead . . . . .	3508
Remained sick . . . . .	1210
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	6531

It does not appear from these statements of the cholera of Moscow, that it differed, either in its symptoms or its degree of danger, in the coldest weather of a Russian winter, from its character in the summer season in India. It began with general uneasiness, and with oppression at the stomach; pain in the head was felt, and giddiness; then followed nausea or vomiting, and purging and weakness. It often happened that the poor neglected these symptoms, or had no advice for some hours: in such cases the pulse had nearly failed before the physician saw them. Spasms of the toes, feet, legs and arms, were frequent; the surface was cold, the eyes were sunk, the bulk of the body appeared diminished, the extremities were livid; the tongue was pale, or slightly blue, and had a

covering of mucus; it also felt cold to the touch, giving the sensation felt on "touching the back of a frog\*." The patient either died in a few hours, or lingered for many hours without pulse, yet able to converse. Some were so violently attacked as to be like persons "brought to the ground by a violent blow or a stroke of lightning." The matter vomited was, at first, what had been taken; then mucus and bile; and then watery fluid, like whey, or a thin decoction of barley or rice. Those who recovered did so with the feverish or inflammatory symptoms already described as observed in the cholera in India. Congestion in the blood-vessels of the head and eyes was often observed also in the fatal cases. The appearances after death were as nearly as possible the same. Some alteration in the thickness of the membranes covering the brain, and a fulness of the vessels of the brain, and of the spinal marrow and nerves, were occasionally observed. The lungs and the heart were gorged with blood; and the aorta and other arteries contained dark-coloured blood, the colour of the darkest cherry. The same partial contractions of the stomach and bowels, the same kind of fluid matter in those cavities, and occasionally the same marks of inflammation in them, made the resemblance exact: and the appearance of the liver, the pancreas, the spleen, the kidneys, the bladder, was precisely the same as in the Indian cholera.

The connection of the cholera with diarrhoea,

\* Dr. Keir's Report.

or looseness of the bowels, and with the common bilious cholera, appears from Dr. Keir's report of cases in which an ordinary diarrhœa, arising during the epidemic, often became by neglect a true case of cholera; and of other cases in which persons about the hospitals had nausea, vomiting, and bilious diarrhœa. The importance of this, in relation to the appearance and character of cholera in England, will be referred to again.

The Russian dominions were invaded with cholera from more quarters than one. At Orenburg, on the boundary of Siberia, it was supposed to appear in consequence of the arrival of the *caravans* which come thither every year, consisting of a train of three or four thousand camels employed to bring the produce of China, India, and other countries of the East overland, and accompanied with numerous traders. At Nijni Novogorod, the disease appeared just after the great fair in 1830, at which it is said not fewer than one hundred thousand people engaged in trade and commerce had attended. The fair is held annually, but was in the year 1831, we believe, postponed, in consequence of the cholera still lingering there.

The newspapers have lately stated as a curious fact that no Jews are among the sufferers from cholera. Instead of inquiring into the truth of this, people have tried to account for it, and some have supposed the safety of the Jews to arise from their not eating pork. But Dr. Rehmann of Petersburg, (who has

since fallen himself a victim to cholera,) states that the disease was *particularly dangerous* to the Jews of that country, who live in small rooms, and in extreme filth. In the small town of Redischest, of eight hundred sick, seven hundred died in one week\*.

A clergyman at Saratoff gives a very striking picture of his own situation and that of his flock during the time the cholera was in that city. One Sunday, when the disease was spreading fast, he preached, he says, from the text "And he looked on the city and wept"—and his congregation wept with the good man, when they thought of their danger and that of their children. All the desire of this excellent man seems to have been that his life might be spared for the sake of assisting those more helpless than himself. He was called one day at noon to his old sexton, who was suffering from vomiting and frightful spasms; and, chiefly by his care, the old man recovered. Many others died, and all in twelve or twenty-four hours from the time when they were attacked. They had, he says, the usual symptoms, with dreadful cramps. "The hands and feet were cold and blue, cold sweat flowed in streams, and the pressure of death was felt on their chests. The thirst was intolerable, and caused insufferable agony in the mouth and throat." Sometimes, in the houses of the poor, he found the wife lying on straw, and the husband on hay, near her, and both ill of cholera. When one day going to bury four

\* Hawkins on Cholera, Appendix, No. vi.

corpses, he met sixty funerals. Such dreadful effects of the disease, it is to be hoped, will never be known in England. Worse effects, however, *have* been known, when the plague prevailed; and if we are right in attributing the banishment of this disease from London to the paving and draining of the streets, and the cleanliness of the houses, and the greater comfort of all classes since they have become better informed than they were, we are only the more bound to consider whether there are not yet in London, and in all large towns, some remains of the old neglect which yet nurse and heighten our fevers, and *may* prepare the way for so sudden and so deadly a malady as the cholera itself.

It was at the end of May last that the cholera appeared on the shores of the Baltic sea. In the map of Europe, not far from Memel, will be seen Polangen, where cholera made its appearance May 24th. On the 25th it was observed at Riga, farther north. In the same month cholera appeared at Dantzic also, south of Polangen; and in about a month there had been 3,200 people attacked there, of whom 1,480 had died, or nearly half: the disease was then beginning to be milder, although the imprudences of the people in eating and drinking about Whitsuntide had rather increased the number of cases at that time. In May the cholera appeared as far north as Archangel, and in August and September as far south as Berlin and Vienna.

Thus we see the same disease, long con-

sidered to be like certain plants, confined to a certain climate, capable, like them, of being transported to climates utterly different, and flourishing there just as it did before. The cholera has done this in the most striking manner. No greater contrast of climate can exist than that afforded by Hindostan and Russia.

Of Russia, as of India, it must be observed, that the extent of the country is too great to make any general description exactly applicable. It extends from the 38th to the 78th degree of north latitude; that is to say, nearly 3,000 miles from north to south: its territories commence on the limits of China in the south, and only end at the Arctic sea on the north; whilst they stretch eastward from Prussia and Poland to the Pacific ocean. The empire of Russia, therefore, is spread over no small portion of Europe and of Asia: of 345,000 geographical square miles, 85,000 are in our quarter of the globe, and 260,000 in Asia. In the dominions of the Emperor of Russia it is commonly said that "the sun never sets."

The extent of Russian territory being so considerable, it may well be supposed to comprehend every variety of climate, and people of habits exceedingly various. Dry and healthy plains, and vast marshes, and immense forests, and extensive lakes, and numerous rivers, are the characteristic features of different portions of the empire. Among the latter, the Volga, so often mentioned already—its banks having been first visited by cholera,—

divides, in a great part of its course, Europe from Asia.

Astrachan, where the cholera first presented itself, is seated on an island at the mouth of the river Volga, and is a port of great trade, with a population of about 20,000 people, and doubtless abounding, as all sea-ports do, with crowded, ill-ventilated, and dirty houses, and a negligent class of poor inhabitants. The banks of the Don, the river *down* the course of which the cholera travelled, after travelling *up* the course of the Volga, are fertile in plants, and in many places covered with extensive low woods; and marshy places seem to be very common. The water-melon is much cultivated, and covers many acres of ground. There are also large uncultivated plains, called *stéppes* in Russia, resembling the *prairies* of America, capable of tillage, but untilled: these are bleak and desolate in winter, but covered with herbage and flowers in summer, like a vast and wild meadow; the grass is never mown or meddled with, but is allowed to grow and to decay—thus creating a kind of soil which if acted upon by equal heat, or liable to inundation, would in several respects resemble that of the banks of the rivers in India. One of these plains, above the Sea of Azof, into which the Don runs, is above 400 miles in length. On the eastern and western sides of the Don, near its mouth, there are marshes of great extent, which are liable to an annual inundation; numerous aquatic plants, and all the flies and insects

abounding in marshy and drying ground exist there in great numbers; and all this part of the country is very unhealthy.

The *Don Cossacks* who were seen in the south of Europe not many years ago, inhabit the banks of this river. They are a wild military race, unskilled in many of the arts of peace; but, when not engaged in war, living chiefly by fishing, their wealth being their horses and their cattle.

The city of Moscow, associated in the mind of every reader with the fatal retreat which the French army was compelled to make from it in the commencement of the winter of 1812, was greatly improved by the conflagration which made that retreat necessary. Before that period it was one of the most singular cities in Europe; of immense size, with long and broad streets, some paved, some formed of the trunks of trees, and some boarded like a floor. There were many palaces, and close to them the most miserable cottages; and whilst some parts of the town were like a splendid capital, others were like a village, and others like a desert. The Prince de Ligne said of it, that it looked "exactly as if three or four hundred great old *chateaus* had come to live together, each bringing along with it its own little attendant village of thatched cottages." Dr. Clarke gives a striking description of it. "Numerous spires," says he, "glittering with gold, amidst burnished domes and painted palaces, appear in the midst of an open plain, for several versts before you reach the Peters-



burg gate. Having passed, you look about and wonder what has become of the city, or where you are; and are ready to ask once more, How far is it to Moscow? They will tell you, This is Moscow. And you behold nothing but a wide and scattered suburb,—huts, gardens, pig-sties, brick walls, churches, dung-hills, palaces, timber-yards, warehouses, and a refuse, as it were, of materials sufficient to stock an empire with miserable towns and miserable villages.” “ Having heard accounts of the immense population of Moscow, you wander through deserted streets. Passing suddenly towards the quarter where the shops are situated, you might walk upon the heads of thousands. The daily throng there is so immense, that, unable to force a passage through it, or assign any motive that might convene such a multitude, you ask the cause, and are told that it is always the same.”

This is a description of the city before the invasion of the French. A large portion of Moscow was then utterly destroyed by fire, by the Russians themselves, in order that the city might neither afford food or shelter to their invaders in the rigour of winter; and some of the public buildings were blown into the air by the French before they abandoned the smoking and ruined city. New buildings have since been raised, and great improvements effected, although the extent of the population, amounting to about 300,000, the poverty of the lower classes, and the nature of their wooden habitations, together with their usual

dresses, are such as to prepare them for the severest visitations of any epidemic disorders that become introduced among them; and the plague, which has often prevailed there, has devastated it more lately than any city in the same latitude.

The dress of the poorer classes of the inhabitants of Moscow is very nearly that of the peasantry in general, and consists of sheepskins, the wool being worn next the body. The warmth of such a dress may be very comfortable; but it is not likely to be kept very clean. A more particular account, however, both of the dress of the Russians, and of the Russian climate, will be given when speaking of St. Petersburg, the capital of the empire.

It is worthy of observation, that those who have visited Calcutta after becoming acquainted with Moscow, have described themselves as continually forgetting at first that they were not still among the Russians, such is the resemblance of some parts of Calcutta to Moscow; where the same kind of palaces, the same description of miserable huts, and many similar customs, derived perhaps both by the Russians and the Hindoos from countries lying between both countries, very strikingly attract a stranger's notice. That, making allowance for great difference of climate, many similar causes of disease are to be found in both cities, is equally true; and is a truth not without interest to those who study the causes of disease with a view to limiting the dominion of sickness and misery.