

CHAPTER VIII.

PROGRESS OF CHOLERA IN POLAND AND PRUSSIA.

WHEN the cholera appeared among the Russians, they were sending overpowering armies into Poland, and to the usual horrors of war was added the cholera, which is supposed thus to have been carried into Poland. It was in April of the year 1831 that, after one of the successes of the Poles over the Russians which afforded a hope that Poland might yet be free, the cholera appeared at Warsaw. In less than a month two thousand five hundred and eighty cases occurred either in the city or in the Polish camp. The Committee of Health established there describe the malady as beginning with giddiness, and with such violent cramps in the limbs, that the person affected falls down quite powerless; and is soon afterwards attacked with vomiting and dreadful pain.

Among the victims in the invading army was its general, Field-Marshal Diebitsch. On the morning of the 9th of June he felt rather poorly, but he seemed to get quite well in the course of the day. He went to bed at ten o'clock, and, although afterwards called up to attend to some business, still seemed quite well. About two in

the morning he felt suddenly ill, and called his attendants; but would not allow them to give any alarm, or even to send for a physician. But about three o'clock, feeling himself getting worse, he consented to have a doctor sent for, who found the General violently affected with cholera. He was bled, leeches were applied, and strong friction of the skin employed. The General desired all his attendants, except the medical men, to leave his apartment, lest they should take the disease. About seven, some perspiration was produced, and he was rather easier. He had until this time suffered but little cramp, but had had frequent fits of shivering and then of burning heat. Between seven and eight o'clock he began to have cramps in his legs, and in his stomach and bowels, with excessive pain, until near ten o'clock, when his groans became less frequent, and his strength was seen to be seriously reduced. He died at a quarter past eleven, about nine hours after his first indisposition.—The melancholy feeling with which one cannot but read the account of such a death happening to a brave man, in the very camp, is only lessened by remembering the cause for which he was in arms.

As soon as the news of the cholera being in Poland reached the Prussian government, great precaution was adopted to keep it away from Prussia. What is called a *sanitary cordon* was established from the Baltic sea to near Cracow, the line on which the Prussian frontier joins that of Poland. Along this line no travellers were permitted to enter Prussia, except at par-

ticular places, where they were subjected to certain regulations of quarantine; being obliged to produce a "bill of health," stating them to be free from all infectious disease, or else to remain ten or twelve days before proceeding on their journey. Such regulations are always very disagreeable to travellers, and are not observed with sufficient strictness, or for a sufficient length of time, to make them really useful. In the pursuit of gain, men become selfish enough to disregard the safety of a whole country, and even their own personal safety; and try every art to escape the quarantine laws themselves, and to convey the articles in which they deal from one country to another, without undergoing proper purification.

The cholera soon showed itself in Austria as well as in Poland; and then the Prussian line of quarantine was extended to that side also. But with all their care they could not keep out the cholera. Very soon after its appearance at Riga, it came to Dantzic; both of these are ports on the Baltic sea, and the latter is in Prussia. People and vessels coming from Dantzic were then as rigorously dealt with as if they had come from Russia; but still without effect. In the month of August, 1831, three months after the cholera was first seen at Dantzic, a case of it was reported to have occurred at Charlottenburg, near Berlin. The King of Prussia has a country residence or palace at Potsdam, where Frederic the Great used to live a great part of the year, and to which the King and Court occasionally resort.

So bad a fever prevailed at Potsdam during the late summer that it had been decided to make Charlottenburg the royal residence, and preparations were in consequence making at the time the first case of cholera appeared. The subject of this case was a boatman, who had come to Charlottenburg the day before in a barge; and as there was no doubt of the nature of the disease, the King and Court set off immediately for Berlin. The cholera, however, travelled as fast as the King and Court; for on the 29th of August, the very day on which the boatman was attacked and died at Charlottenburg, cases of cholera occurred at Berlin also, and also amongst the boatmen employed on the river Spree, which flows through the city, and the inhabitants of the houses on the banks of the same river. For many weeks before, the weather at Berlin had been rainy and hot: it suddenly changed very much for the better on the day when the cholera made its appearance, and the physicians thought that this produced a favourable effect.

Certainly the cholera did not attack so many persons as usual, although the number of deaths was equal to that of one-half of those attacked. On the 8th of September there had occurred 102 cases, and 58 deaths in nine days. Within the same period, the disease had attacked four times the number at Memel, a sea-port on the Baltic. One cause of the small number attacked at Berlin seems to have been the state of the city itself, which is greatly superior to that of many populous places. Few of the streets are narrow, and even the houses at the outskirts of the

town, where the poorer people reside, are not close and crowded. Everybody can read at Berlin; and pains were taken to instruct them how to avoid the cholera by temperance, and by taking care not to expose the body needlessly to cold. Suitable clothing and food were distributed also. Not a single case occurred in the garrison, where the soldiers had additional warm clothing allowed, and a better diet than usual. Whenever a case of cholera occurred in the town, the patient and his family were put under a kind of quarantine, which was continued for five days after either the recovery or death of those attacked. The friends were not allowed to leave the house unless they consented to go to houses prepared for their reception, and guarded with equal care. Cleanliness, and the use of the chlorine for disinfection, of which an account will presently be given, with directions for its use, were much encouraged by committees of health, who had persons in their service devoted to the care of the sick, and prevented from having intercourse with the healthy. Although these excellent regulations were sometimes defeated by the concealment of patients, and the wish to avoid trouble, they were yet so far of service that very few persons suffered from the disease except those who were intemperate in eating or drinking; or had been ill before, particularly of *diarhœa*; or exposed to cold and fatigue. It was several days before the cholera spread from the streets near the river to the other parts of the city, and it never prevailed very much in any part except where the people

were subjected to some of the causes of disease which are incidental to poverty. Dr. Becker, who stated all these circumstances in a Report to Mr. Chad, his Majesty's minister at Berlin, was one of the few persons in good circumstances who died of it: he had no doubt of the contagiousness of the disease, and seems to have been a victim to his humane attentions to the sick*.

The use of such remarks is, that cities and towns not yet attacked by cholera may learn from them how to lessen the number of its victims.

Enough has been said to show the ravages of the cholera; and it is only to be added that in July of the year 1831, when the disease was destroying so many people in Russia, it appeared in Arabia once more, after eight years' absence, and destroyed 20,000 out of 50,000 pilgrims who were on their way to Mecca. The heat of the weather was very great. Abdin Bey, a commander of the troops of the Viceroy of Egypt, had marched at the head of the pilgrims to Mount Arafat, and returned to his palace in the afternoon. He went to bed in perfect health; but at midnight both he and his wife were attacked with cholera, and soon after noon on the following day both were dead.

Even Egypt, which was kept free from the cholera in the years 1820, 1821, 1822, and 1823, has at length been attacked by that

* It was at first stated that Dr. Becker died of *cholera*; but such does not seem to have been the case.

malady. The disease appeared at Cairo in August, and all the attempts to keep it out of Alexandria were fruitless. Between the 21st of August and the 1st of September the deaths at Cairo were about *six hundred daily*. In fourteen days, out of its population of 300,000, the number of the dead was 7,735. The population of Alexandria is between fifty and sixty thousand; and there, in the same period, the deaths were more than one hundred daily. Five days after it appeared at Cairo it spread all over Lower Egypt, and to the ships of war off Alexandria. It is only in a report from Malta, dated October 19th, that we read of the cholera in Egypt being certainly decreasing.

There is every probability that this immense destruction of life at Grand Cairo arose from the peculiar state of that city. The banks of the Nile—(a river which will be found in the map flowing out of the northern part of Africa into the Mediterranean Sea; and which no Englishman can forget as the scene of one of Nelson's victories,)—are thickly inhabited; the villages are numerous; there are rich fields of corn and of rice; gardens and melon-plantations, and beautiful groves. But these appearances of comfort and enjoyment are counterbalanced by the general state of the country. "To strangers," says Dr. Edward Clarke, "particularly to inhabitants of northern countries, where wholesome air and cleanliness are among the necessaries of life, Egypt is the most detestable region upon earth. Upon the retiring of the Nile," (after its yearly rising and inun-

dation,) "the country is one vast swamp." At such a time, he says, the plague regularly begins, and does not cease until the waters return again. Then fevers and dysentery commonly appear. When the French army was in Egypt, the deaths by the plague were sometimes one hundred in a day. In the spring certain winds prevail which cover the sands of the desert with all kinds of vermin. All the plagues of Pharaoh come upon the people. And although there are fewer vermin, and fewer cases of plague and fever, when the waters rise again, different disorders then appear; a prickly heat of the skin, and often boils and ulcerations; and also a most severe form of inflammation of the eyes. Cairo itself is one of the dirtiest places in the world: every part of it is covered with dust, which is so small and fine as to penetrate into every room of every house. The streets are not paved: and a canal runs through the city, which is often filled with muddy water. The houses are infested with flies to such a degree that food cannot be taken without persons being employed to flap them away with feathers: and as liquor cannot be poured into a glass without being instantly covered with flies, the way is to keep the mouth of a bottle stopped until it reaches the mouth, and after drinking, to clap the palm of the hand upon it before passing it on to the next person at table. No care can keep the clothes or person free from the most disgusting kinds of vermin. The experience of the whole world

shows that where countries or cities are so neglected, diseases of an epidemic kind prevail with the greatest fatality.

The cholera is still prevailing at St. Petersburg, at Cronstadt, at Berlin, and at Hamburg; but the state of our own country now more nearly concerns us.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPASMODIC CHOLERA IN ENGLAND.

WHILST we have been engaged in contemplating the progress of cholera, its destruction of human life, its advance from the burning regions in which it arose to the frosts and snows of Russia; and whilst these pages have been preparing for the working-man, in order that he may know the dangers which threaten him, and threaten all; the disease of which we have been speaking and writing has reached the shores of England, and is gradually, though with less violence, spreading from the place in which it first appeared to other towns; whilst the occurrence of cases of *diarrhœa*, and of *violent English cholera*, even in the centre of England, proves the strong *predisposition* existing to its attacks.

In such circumstances, inquiries which at any other time would only interest the medical public, become of vital concern to us all. We are told that our English cholera is merely a disorder dependent on an increased flow of bile; and that the true cholera of the East differs from the bilious cholera, inasmuch as instead of being attended with a great flow of bile, no bile is discharged, and the discharges are watery or resembling rice-water; it is said also that it differs