THE CURE OF DIPHTHERIA BY BIOCHEMIC TREATMENT: A WORD TO EDUCATED LAYMEN

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Trieste

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Cure of Diphtheria

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BIOCHEMIC TREATMENT:

A WORD TO EDUCATED LAYMEN.

BY

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BY SPECIAL PERMISSION.

Σχεδον εἰρηκα ἃ νομίζω συμφέρειν· ὑμεῖς δ'ἑλοισθε ὅ τι καὶ τῇ πόλει καὶ ἅπασι συνοίσειν ὑμῖν μέλλει.

I think I have said all that I consider expedient; and I trust you will adopt that course which is likely to be of advantage both to the State and to you all.

Demosthenes, Close of the third Olynthiac Oration

NEW YORK:

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1881.

The Cure of Diphtheria.

It is an antiquated practice which dates from the dark ages to remove all morbid disease products which appear on the skin and mucous membranes by external measures, such as burning, cauterising, &c., without investigating the internal functional disturbances which cause these morbid products. Frequent opportunities present themselves to an observant mind of remarking that, after suppressing a mucous flux or a skin disease (eczema) by *external application*, other diseases set in afterwards. Notwithstanding, as a rule, the necessity of desisting from mere local treatment of the so-called skin affections or diseases of the mucous membranes has not yet been generally recognised. The custom of treating by external means all that is morbid and lying within reach of the eye, has led to the submission of Diphtheria to the same treatment. Many doctors are of opinion that fungi are the exciting cause of Diphtheria. If the nature of this

disease consisted *solely* and *entirely* of an accumulation and rapid growth of fungi, it would be quite rational to remove these fungi by appropriate destructive measures. The case, however, is quite different. The Privy Medical Councillor, Goullon of Weimar, in his little work "The diseases during the first years of "life," says "the fungi are not the disease itself, "but only guests out of the air. These find a con- "genial soil in the decomposing organic substance (the "diphtheritic exudation), where they rapidly increase." Goullon's views coincide with mine on this point. The fungi germs which have been admitted with the atmospheric air into the cavity of the mouth do adhere to an exudation which has left the vital course, but not to a mucous membrane in healthy function.

The treatment hitherto generally adopted in Diphtheria seems now no longer to meet with universal approval. This can be inferred from the fact that recently a Committee of Investigation has been appointed to inquire into the treatment of Diphtheria. This Committee is to open an international competition, in which doctors of all countries may take part, and communicate their views and experiences relating to Diphtheria.

As the gentlemen who are members of the above Commission are quite on a different track, and move in quite a different direction from me, it would be taking resultless trouble on my part if I were to lay before that Commission my therapeutical experiences in the sphere of Diphtheria.

The appointing of this Commission has, however, induced me to bring before the public this short treatise on the disease in question, and thus to elucidate and establish my method of treatment by giving my reasons for it.

Having cured speedily thousands of cases of Diphtheria, I am encouraged to publish this treatise, particularly so, as the number of fatal cases in my practice is almost nominal.*

My method of curing Diphtheria is simple. I give Potassium chloride[6] internally in molecular form. Besides this, a few other remedies of the same special preparation may have to be given, according to circumstances.

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* Any one who has treated hundreds of diphtheritic cases, without having to register one death, cannot be said to be insured against every fatal issue. The last of a thousand may be fatal, in consequence of an intricate complication.

The medicines which I give belong to the inorganic salts* of the animal organism.

That the reader may understand the purpose and efficiency of my method of treatment, I must briefly explain the biochemic functions, or natural workings, which these same salts perform in the healthy animal organism. Wherever in the animal organism new cells are to be formed, there must be such organic substances present as albumen, albuminoid substances, fat, sugar, and the following inorganic substances: — Potassium chloride, Ferric phosphate, Sodium chloride, Potassium phosphate, Calcium phosphate, &c. The organic substances serve as a basis to the cells which are to be formed, the inorganic salts determine the form and function of these cells.

Among the inorganic salts, the Potassium chloride, the Ferric phosphate, the Sodium chloride, Potassium phosphate, and the Calcium phosphate, have to be considered in this treatise. The Potassium *chloride* stands in specific relation to the albuminoid (white-of-egg-like) substances. As long as the molecules (minute particles) of the Potassium chloride carry on their proper function in a cell-plexus, of which an albumi-

* Ordinarily known as phosphates of iron, lime, potash, chloride of potash, &c., &c.

noid substance forms the basis, the two remain united. When the molecules of the salt in question are disturbed in the equilibrium of their motion, a certain quantity of the albuminoid substances is set free, and finds its way to the surface if the locality permits of it.

When deposited there, it is termed "plastic exudation." It has been demonstrated by experiments that such an exudation originates in and comes from the tissue or cell-plexus, and is not in or from the blood, as was formerly believed.

The *Ferric phosphate* is contained in the blood corpuscles and in the muscular fibres. The proper tension of the muscular fibres depends on the right quantity of iron molecules, their proper relative proportion, and correct mode of function. When any intense foreign irritation causes a disturbance in the proper balance of the iron molecules contained in the circular muscular fibres of the blood vessels, a pathological distension of the said vessels and consequent stasis or accumulation of blood takes place. Such a condition—Irritation-Hyperæmia—is the anatomico-pathological basis of the first stage of all inflammations.

The *Sodium chloride* serves to regulate the watery

contents of the tissues. When the molecular motion of the *Sodium chloride*, which is contained in the brain cells, suffers a disturbance, a condition of stupor and other so-called brain symptoms occur.

When the *Potassium phosphate* suffers a disturbance of proper balance in the motion of its molecules, a putrid condition is developed.

Potassium chloride stands in the same biological relation to the albuminoid substances (*i.e.* the fibrin) as does the *Calcium phosphate* to the albumen.

After having thus shortly described the characteristics of the above four tissue salts in their biochemic signification, which will suffice for our present purpose, I will turn to Diphtheria itself.

It will be well known to most readers that the diphtheritic exudation makes its appearance on that portion of the mucous membrane which covers the tonsils to right and left of the uvula at the back of the throat, and that the exudation presents patches of a greyish white, or yellowish grey dirty-looking substance. When an intense irritation has attacked *those cells* which are to form the seat of the disease in question, or relatively the *Potassium chloride* molecules which are contained in them, there arises,