

**PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS  
ON EPIDEMIC CHOLERA,  
AND ITS IDENTITY WITH  
EPIDEMIC INFLUENZA**

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Practical observations on epidemic cholera, and its identity with epidemic influenza by John Charles Atkinson

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**JOHN CHARLES ATKINSON**

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PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS  
ON  
EPIDEMIC CHOLERA,  
AND  
ITS IDENTITY WITH  
EPIDEMIC INFLUENZA.

WITH BRIEF SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS TREATMENT IN  
EVERY STAGE OF THE DISEASE.

BY  
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MEMBER OF  
THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.

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1848.

## PREFACE.

THE reappearance of that frightful disease, the Cholera, in Russia, where it has recently raged with such great mortality, and its anticipated rapid progress to the southward, is calculated to spread alarm in every quarter, and naturally to call forth the exertions of all medical men in preparing for another visitation in this metropolis. It is of great consequence, therefore, that the public should be, at the earliest period, reminded of its symptoms and progress, and the means required to be adopted at the commencement; and for this purpose, I have arranged the following summary of practical observations on the subject for their information.

Romney Terrace, Westminster.



## PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

OR

## EPIDEMIC CHOLERA.

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THE origin and causes of epidemic diseases generally, have hitherto baffled every attempt at discovery, although the deepest research and the most ingenious speculations have been, at all periods of their prevalence, applied to ascertain them, and to arrest their progress; hence it is often strange, contradictory, and ridiculous, to hear from patients their very *exact* opinions regarding the attacks of Influenza, which, from its universal prevalence, caused so many persons, in the latter part of last year and the beginning of this, to abandon for a time all thoughts of business, in fact to suspend ordinary duties,



and confine themselves to the drawing-room and bed-room.

One sagacious gentleman would say, after recapitulating his grievances, or symptoms, that he was convinced he took cold on going on the top of an Omnibus to his suburban villa, which, by the by, he had regularly done for the last *ten years* unscathed—he says, it was a raw cold day—and hence he is *quite sure*, although not ignorant of domestic medicine, fancying there is a difference between this affection and other catarrhs, as I may term them, that the Epidemic Influenza succeeded his *cold*.

Another would say, that he could not account for it, only that he went and sat rather near the door, as he had a large party that evening, and the key being out, the draft of cold air from the keyhole came piercing in, and he in like manner was *quite sure* that the symptoms of that abominable complaint had its origin in the *puff of wind*.

Another says, with dogged resolution and

fixedness of purpose, who has been studying of late rather warmly the Sanatory Question, and has become a partizan of the measure, that the drains, the stinks in fact, he is positively certain, were the cause of his sufferings—and if he had lived where there were no such conveniences and abominations, he never would have caught it. A lady, who had heard and read of atmospheric influences, prided herself, as she was an invalid, and obliged to seclude herself in her drawing-room all day, with a finely regulated temperature of about 65 to 68 degrees of Fahrenheit, that she was *quite sure* she would not catch it,—that she would be excluded from its operation. But she finds, however, that she precedes all her household, who are exposed to the elements, in first surrendering to the catarrhal developments attendant on Epidemic Influenza.

One will say that the *passages* of the house are so damp and cool, that they are necessarily the exciting causes, and thinks if he could but sleep in the same room where the fire had

been all day, no Influenza could possibly attack him. Another, who has been accustomed to take a bath almost daily, and who has done so for many years, believes that at the unhappy time, at which he last bathed, the water was too cool, or that the air was charged with moisture to a larger extent than usual, or the wind was easterly. Again, I was told, in sober earnestness, that it was because he put his hands in cold water; or, that he employed a Pediluvium, or foot bath, for a cold in his head, and *he knew* that the Influenza had its origin in the foolish affair of the bath.

Thus different men urged different ideas respecting the origin of an Epidemic, which prevailed almost universally over the Continent of Europe—no neighbourhood—no locality—no care—no quarantine—nothing prevented its invasion, and wherever it found suitable bias of constitution it discharged its malignant venom. Thus, if in one familiar Epidemic we know little about its causes,