

DIPHThERIA: ITS CAUSE, NATURE, AND TREATMENT

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Diphtheria: Its Cause, Nature, and Treatment by Rollin R. Gregg

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ROLLIN R. GREGG

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BY

ROLLIN R. GREGG, M. D.

*Spherical Bacteria, or Micrococci of Diphtheria, shown
to be only "Molecular Granules" of Fibrin.*

*Rod-like Bacteria, Bacterium termo, shown to be Molec-
ular Granules of Fibrin united into Fibrils, or
"fine, thread-like Prolongations."*

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INTRODUCTION.

In 1862, while engaged in an extended series of investigations of other pathological and ætiological questions, I fell upon evidences, satisfactory to my own mind, that the cause and nature of diphtheria differed most essentially, in many respects, from the teachings of the profession then, or, indeed, at any time since; and which, if true, demanded a radical change of treatment from what prevailed in either school then, or since, to better correspond with what appeared to be the truer nature of the disease.

During the three succeeding years, however, or from 1862 to 1865, and until I had secured all the evidence then to be obtained to sustain the new pathological and ætiological views, I did not feel justified in changing the method of treatment I had been taught and previously followed quite successfully in this malady. That method excluded local treatment of any and all kinds, and was in other respects what would generally be considered strictly Homœopathic; but, aside from avoiding topical applications, it was not the practice taught by Hahnemann, which so many, even of our own school, affect to despise, or, at least, to condemn.

Under that treatment, and during those three years, I lost several important cases, notwithstanding a previous much better success, until it came to be a great dread to me to be called to patients suffering from diphtheria. Watching those I lost, however, carefully, through all phases of their disease, until they died, and seeing how long nearly all of them held out, and how much they suffered before yielding life, it seemed to me that if the practice of medicine was what it ought to be, or, at least, that if those patients had been *rightly* treated, all but one of them could have been cured, and that all similar cases should be saved.

This conviction becoming thoroughly fastened upon my mind, I read Hahnemann, Bonninghausen, and other of the like reliable writers of our school more intently, and reflected more earnestly and deeply upon their teachings than ever before, until I felt justified in at least trying the method of treating cases of the disease that might subsequently come under my care, in accordance with its truer pathology, and upon the strictest Hahnemannian principles of Homœopathy. Experience, too, in the successful treatment, under those principles, of other of the gravest forms of disease that had in the meantime been gained, fortified me still more in my resolution, until, in 1865, I put the matter to the severest test in numbers of serious cases of diphtheria, and, from the time of making that new departure to the present moment, I have not lost a case of the disease, however severe (with one possible exception, explained at the close of this volume under the head of "Corrections"), out of several hun-

dred treated; and I have had no unpleasant *sequelæ* arise or follow in a single case.

This, I am well aware, will be looked upon as a very extravagant claim. That is unavoidable. But let none dismiss it as a vain or idle boast, for it is simply and only the truth; and being that, I feel not only fully justified in stating it, but that it is my duty to lay all the essential facts in my possession, bearing upon the cause and nature, as well as upon the treatment of diphtheria, before the profession. No harm, certainly, can come of their being fully and carefully considered, and that is all I ask.

Let all, however, bear in mind that this is not put forth as an exhaustive work upon any branch of the subject; on the contrary, it is only designed to be merely suggestive on most points, until it shall be demonstrated that a more complete work is demanded, though it is hoped that all essential facts are sufficiently elaborated to establish, or, at least, to show, reasonable grounds for the claims made. If, however, more proof should be demanded upon any fundamental question herein raised, all are assured that it is much more ample upon all points than my limited time and the narrow limits of these pages will allow of being presented.

The literary defects of the work, it is feared, will be found far too numerous for either the pleasure of the reader or the future comfort of the author; but physicians generally will, no doubt, be better pleased with *facts* that will acquaint them more fully with the true nature of diphtheria, and especially that will enable them to attain better success in its treatment, than