

**EPIDEMIC CHOLERA; ITS  
MODES OF  
TREATMENT, THEIR  
RESPECTIVE RESULTS**

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Epidemic cholera; its modes of treatment, their respective results by John F. Geary

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## EPIDEMIC CHOLERA :

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MODES OF TREATMENT, THEIR RESPECTIVE RESULTS,  
ETC., ETC.

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### INTRODUCTION.

As the following pages are designed for popular information, it is not my intention to enter on the discussion of the nature, or pathology, of Cholera. To the general reader it would be useless; and all well-informed medical men know that on this point, as on many others, "doctors differ." Their differences, however, as to the nature of any given disease, do not so much concern the public as the practical, and, to them, vital question—How it should be dealt with when it appears?

How it may be relieved, or cured? In a word—"What will they do with it?" No one needs be told that Epidemic Cholera has at different periods appeared in every quarter of the globe; that it has made its way from continent to continent, from city to city; spreading terror and dismay among the people and strewing its passage with death. Nor has the fact that medical men—the honored guardians of health and life—have been almost powerless in their efforts

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to arrest its progress or rescue its victims, proved the least element in increasing the public consternation. We have now, however, the advantage of past experience to guide us for the future; and it is the part of wisdom and humanity to learn and to teach the costly lessons left us by Epidemic Cholera. To feel conscious of our weakness in past efforts may become the foundation for future strength.

In its earlier visitations this plague had only the heavy-armed battalions of the Old, or Allopathic School of Medicine to oppose it. In later invasions it has been met by a comparatively small body of light artillery, a ready and willing auxiliary in every conflict to the larger and older body of veterans. I refer to what is now known throughout the world as the Homœopathic, or New School of Medicine. I regret to be obliged to observe here, that, instead of being hailed with a shout of triumph and a hearty cheer of welcome, they were met with derisive laughter, and with haughty insolence ordered to quit the field! How they merited this reception, and how well the original contending party was able to carry on the war alone, it is the object of these pages to prove.

The relation of these two Schools to each other, their present position before the world, what each has accomplished in the different Cholera Epidemics during which they have labored side by side, are matters of vast importance to the people of this city and to

the inhabitants of this coast. "Dead men tell no tales," it may be said; but it is well the living can; and so the past efforts of each, as attested beyond a doubt, remain with us now, and should be our guide when the new danger threatens, or when the enemy reaches our coast.

Who is not interested in the important questions—

Is the Cholera approaching?

How shall we prevent it?

What can doctors do for us?

What doctors can do most, and best?

What can we do for ourselves in the dead of night, before any doctor can be found?

How, by some ready and simple domestic appliance, shall we ward off, or weaken the first stroke of an enemy whose second blow is death?

The importance of these questions to the community in which I reside and practice my profession, is my apology for attempting to answer them. If any further were necessary, I could find it in the fact that, so far as I am aware, the School of Medicine to which I have the honor to belong has not yet on this coast claimed that public consideration, or found that open fearless advocacy which are its due; and which it is now receiving throughout the world. I seek not to draw invidious contrasts between the failure of one School or the success of another: I shall let each party plead its own cause in its own

words—by its own figures and facts—and let all who are capable of drawing conclusions from legitimate premises judge. Let them decide whether it is, or is not worth the while of any one who has devoted himself to a profession, the object of which is the saving of life and the preservation of health, to stand for a time alone, to bear some social and professional disadvantages in his advocacy of that branch which he has felt and proved to be beneficent and hopeful—an improvement on the prevailing system—and which years of experience have demonstrated to be the safest and best, when administering to the sick, and when skill and experience give force to mild and fitly chosen remedies.



## CHAPTER I.

## ALLOPATHY AND ITS RESULTS.

The combined and collective experience of the prevailing, or dominant School of Medicine—known as the Allopathic School—from the first appearance of cholera (supposed to be about the year 1817,) to the end of 1832, may be very briefly stated. I will invite the reader to be present with me at a meeting of medical gentlemen, representatives from every portion of the world where this plague had appeared, and whilst yet on its journey of destruction. The meeting shall be in London or Paris. The chair is duly taken, and the first speaker introduced. His words are few: "Gentlemen, I recommend *timely and copious bleeding*; I know this treatment to have been proved by marked success!" "The learned gentleman will excuse me, if I differ from him, and think a much higher degree of confidence due to *mustard emetics*, and therefore recommend them to your notice;" are the words of the second. "I," said a third, "have tried both these modes, and have found them useless, and resorted to the use of the *hot air bath*, which never disappoints me." "Gentlemen," said a fourth, "you are all, I trust, aware that I have taken no small pains to avail

"myself of all the light which science has thrown upon  
 "our art, but I must say, with due deference to others,  
 "that I have been forced to a very different conclusion.  
 "I am in favor of *introducing into the system a large*  
 "*quantity of neutral salts, which will liquefy and redden*  
 "*the blood, and so restore the functions of circulation!*"  
 "If," replied the fifth, "the last speaker's patients,  
 "as well as ours, were hogs and herrings, his extra-  
 "ordinary method might answer; but as the matter  
 "stands otherwise, I do not think that *salting* our  
 "patients will *cure* them. I therefore recommend *the*  
 "*mechanical dilution of the blood by the injection of*  
 "*warm water, or salt water, into the veins!*" "All these  
 "remedies," said a sixth, "are departures from ancient  
 "and known usage. *Give good brandy!*" "Why not  
 "try *Cajeput oil?* it has been sold by the barrel, and  
 "never fails," suggested a seventh. "I recommend,"  
 urged the eighth, the "*free use of opium, as the safest*  
 "*soother in the pangs of cholera!*" "Human life and  
 "health are too precious to be risked, gentlemen," sol-  
 "emly declared the last speaker, "by these divers and  
 "strange experiments; but for my own part, I have  
 "trusted, and shall still trust, as do the large body who  
 "think with me, in *calomel alone!* Three cheers, and  
 "the 'congress' breaks up, with the thanks of the  
 "meeting to the Chair, and the eulogium of the Chair  
 "on the vast body of solid science and useful experience  
 "brought out at the meeting!"

But whilst this meeting is but the fancy of the

writer, every medical man knows that I have here given *all* that had been said and done up to that day in the treatment of epidemic cholera. How highly these recommendations were esteemed by the leading men of the old school, will appear from the opinion of Dr. Thomas Watson, of London, who practised during the epidemics of 1831-2, and who is one of the most distinguished men in the profession. "Now," he says, "I would not willingly mislead, or deceive you on this point, by speaking with a confidence which I really have no warrant for, of the success, or propriety of any of these experiments. Never, certainly, was the artillery of medicine more vigorously plied—never her troops, regular and volunteer, more meritoriously active. To many patients, no doubt, this busy interference made all the difference between life and death; but if the balance could be fairly struck, and the exact truth ascertained, I question whether we should find that the aggregate mortality, in this country, was any way disturbed by our craft."—See his *Lectures on the Practice of Medicine*, page 811.

During the epidemics of 1848 and 1849, the experience of the School did not devise any better means, nor were its efforts crowned with any greater success; as the sequel will show.

In the face of this hopeless and complete inability to meet the present dreaded approach of Cholera, on its third periodical march of death, by any new med-