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London Pump Water

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Source: *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 80 (Jul. 12, 1862), pp. 52-53

Published by: BMJ

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25198949>

Accessed: 20-08-2021 05:49 UTC

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sharp tube can be immediately projected and withdrawn. The power of doing this with one hand only is a great convenience, not only in performing ovariotomy, but in tapping collections of fluid through the vagina or rectum.

Instruments of various sizes, made by Messrs. Weiss, were placed on the table of the Society.

**TWO CASES OF EXTENSIVE ARTERIAL OBSTRUCTION FROM SEPARATED CARDIAC VEGETATIONS, FOLLOWED BY GANGRENE AND DEATH.**

BY S. J. GOODFELLOW, M.D. LOND.

It was the object of the author simply to bring these two cases before the Society, and not to enter into the general subject of arterial obstruction. The cases spoke for themselves. The extent to which the plugging took place, the number of vessels involved, the morbid changes in and around the coats of the vessels at the seat of obstruction, and the consequences which ensued, appeared to the author to give a peculiar interest to them. In both cases vegetations of considerable size had formed on the mitral valve and surrounding surface of the endocardium. Some of these had become detached, and caused obstruction to the circulation in several of the large arterial trunks; coagula formed around them and complete occlusion followed. The symptoms were well marked,—namely, pain, intense and agonising, at the seat of obstruction, and coldness and numbness at the distal extremities of the affected limbs, speedily followed by dry gangrene. In the first case the evidences of occlusion were observed about a month before the fatal event, and about seven days prior to the appearance of gangrene. In the second case the interval between the evidence of obstruction and the appearance of dry gangrene was shorter; the pathological changes in and around the walls of the arteries at the seat of obstruction were less extensive.

The first case was that of a woman, aged 30, who had had an attack of acute rheumatism twelve years prior to her admission to the hospital. The heart was damaged during that attack. She, however, was enabled to follow her usual occupation, with occasional interruptions, up to a short period before the appearance of the symptoms denoting obstruction.

The second case was that of a girl, aged 17. She had had an attack of acute rheumatism about three years before, complicated with pneumonia, but not with heart affection. Another attack of rheumatism occurred about eighteen months afterwards, which was complicated with endocarditis. From the time of this attack to the period of her seizure with her last fatal illness, she suffered considerably from dyspnoea and frequent and severe pain in the præcordial region.

**ON THE SUBCUTANEOUS TREATMENT OF BOILS AND CARBUNCLES.** BY J. G. FRENCH, ESQ.

THE author was desirous of calling attention to the fact, that subcutaneous division of the induration of the cellular membrane arrests the progress of boil and carbuncle at once. It was necessary to make crucial and, when the disease is extensive, even three incisions across the centre, extending completely to the outer boundary of the disease,—free divisions of the centre alone not being sufficient to prevent it from spreading. This plan of treatment was very convenient to the patient whose time was valuable; and this sudden interruption to the progress of the malady was not followed by its outbreak elsewhere. Three cases were given in illustration, and several surgeons, to whom the author had suggested this method, had tried it, and fully confirmed the author's experience.

Mr. PARTIDGE said that he had lately had an opportunity of putting in practice the plan recommended by Mr. French, in a case of carbuncle of the neck. The relief was immediate and recovery rapid.

## Correspondence.

### LONDON PUMP WATER.

LETTER FROM WILLIAM BLOWER, ESQ.

SIR,—Dr. Lankester condemns and proscribes the use of pump-water "in apprehension of such a fearful catastrophe as that which occurred in Broad Street, St. James's." Mr. Beale approves of drinking pump-water, because he has drunk it for forty years, and has not only not experienced any inconvenience from taking it, but has even derived both comfort and advantage from its use; and he further states that this experience is confirmed by that of numerous other persons. Thus, Dr. Lankester has grounded his condemnation and proscription on apprehension; and Mr. Beale his approval on long continued observation and experiment. Which of these two modes of forming a judgment is most philosophical, it surely can require no conjuror to decide.

Is the apprehension that such serious evil may arise from drinking pump-water, a sufficient reason for its condemnation and proscription, when you have such positive testimony to its harmlessness? Assuming that Dr. Lankester will be elected one of the coroners for Middlesex in the approaching contest, and I sincerely hope that he may, what would be thought of him if he were to address a jury at an inquest in the following terms? Gentlemen, the evidence which has just been submitted to you, does not, in the slightest degree, implicate the person in custody on suspicion of having committed the offence which is the subject of our present inquiry; but, nevertheless, I strongly recommend you to return a verdict of wilful murder against him. Many years ago, a man bearing the same name, and having the same coloured hair, and the same shaped nose, and altogether strongly resembling him, was supposed to have perpetrated an atrocious murder; and I have an apprehension that he will commit a similar crime if he is allowed to be at large. I, therefore, strenuously advise you to return such a verdict as may secure his confinement in prison, and thus prevent him from doing the fearful mischief which I apprehend he will attempt. Surely no jury could be found that would condemn a man on apprehension alone; and neither ought the use of pump-water to be prohibited on such fallacious grounds.

But was the "fearful catastrophe in Broad Street, St. James," occasioned by drinking the water from the condemned well. That the pump stood near the centre of the "outbreak," and that the number of cases was greatest in its vicinity and diminished as the distance from it increased, appears from Dr. Snow's account; but cholera in its epidemic form generally occurred in circumscribed spots, and the accident of a well being situated near the middle of one of these infected places, by no means proves that it was the means of propagating the disease. Other and more precise evidence must be produced before such a conclusion could be admitted. The cases, too, were the most numerous at the commencement of the "catastrophe," as was the rule everywhere else. As soon as Dr. Snow heard of the outbreak, he visited the locality, and, influenced by his preconceived opinions, he pounced upon the pump, and "suspecting that the water was contaminated," he examined it, but "found so little impurity of an organic nature, that he hesitated to come to a conclusion"; and Dr. Lankester, who also analysed the water, states the only organic impurity he found in it was a minute fungus. Dr. Snow further says, that "the water passed with almost everybody as being perfectly pure; and it did, in fact, contain a less quantity of impurity than the water of some of the other pumps

in the parish, which had no share in the propagation of cholera."

Neither does it appear that all the persons who were attacked had drunk of the water, nor that all the persons who had drunk of it were attacked, as ought to have been the case if Dr. Lankester's apprehension was well founded. Dr. Snow gives no proof of the contamination of the water; but, on the contrary, his testimony is in favour of its purity; and the fact that the disease rose rapidly to its acme and then declined, whilst the water supply remained the same, shows that it could not have been this pump which occasioned the outbreak. Dr. Lankester may, perhaps, allege that the removal of the pump-handle was the cause of the stoppage of the disease; but Dr. Snow himself states that "the attacks had so far diminished before the use of the water was stopped, that it is impossible to decide whether the well still contained cholera-poison in an active state, or whether, from some cause, the water had become free from it."

Dr. Baly, in the College of Physicians' Report, gives it as his opinion that cholera is not propagated by drinking water, as surmised by Dr. Snow. Thus, it appears that Dr. Lankester's "apprehension" is as baseless as many other of the dreams of philosophy.

I do not see the object of boiling pump-water before it is drunk, unless it is wished to render it distasteful; and thus to deter people from drinking it. It certainly would dissipate the free carbonic acid; but this gas makes the water pleasant to drink, and agreeable to the stomach; and it would also precipitate the carbonate of lime; but this substance is certainly not injurious, and could not cause diarrhœa. If living organisms were present in the water, boiling would destroy them; but as the wells are generally covered over, so as to exclude air and light, no animal found in this country could live in them; and the only organised bodies which could exist under such circumstances are cryptogamic vegetables. If any of these should occur, although boiling would destroy their vitality, it could not neutralise any deleterious properties which they might possess. The nitrates, the presence of which is so pertinaciously condemned, would still remain, and all their power for mischief would be undiminished. If by chance any dead organic matter should find an entrance into the well, boiling would tend to dissolve the soluble parts, and communicate its taste to the water, an occurrence which certainly would not improve its drinking qualities.

Neither do I see the necessity for the condemnation of all water derived from surface wells in towns, situated, as many parts of London are, with a thin crust of gravel over a bed of clay. The gravel on the streets in towns is mostly pressed down so hard by the passage of heavy vehicles, and the constant traffic over it, that very little water can percolate through it. The greater part which falls upon it is carried away by gutters and drains; and the very little which passes through it is stopped at the surface of the clay. Clay is nearly impervious to water, and it is used to render the sides of wells waterproof, and thus to exclude all fluids from the surrounding soil from entering them. If the surface water from the streets percolated through the ground into the wells, it would carry with it some of the coal-gas with which the subsoil in the London streets is charged, and the spring-water would become contaminated with its disgusting smell and taste. This, however, is not the case, as no charge of a pollution of this nature has been brought against the pumps. That wells may be spoiled by coal-gas, Bedford can supply abundant evidence.

Looking at the geological formation upon which London is built, it appears to be quite possible to prevent the soakage of water from the surface and subsoil into the wells, by digging them deep and making their sides waterproof. A supply of water might then be ob-

tained for drinking, which would contain those substances which are essential for health and comfort, and be free from everything deleterious. This plan has been tried at Bedford, with perfect success, in a part of the town where the water in all the other wells is polluted by the refuse from the gas-works; and its application to the wells of London might easily be effected.

The opinion which you, Mr. Editor, have advanced in a note appended to Dr. Lankester's letter, "that Mr. Beale has for a long time drunk with impunity a daily pint of pump-water is no proof that the water is fitted for general use," is most extraordinary. Mr. Beale, and the other persons whom he mentions as enjoying with himself pump-water, and preferring it to that supplied by the public companies, are certainly human beings, and are affected by the same agencies as their fellows. You have given no reason why that which is beneficial to them should be injurious to others; and, until you can prove that they have some peculiarity of formation by which that which is meat to them becomes poison to every one else, your opinion cannot be admitted to be correct.

"One generation blows bubbles and the next breaks them." The generation which is now beginning to pass away has blown gigantic and costly sanitarian bubbles, which that which is arising will break; and the sooner it effects this purpose, the better will it be for the interests of humanity.

I am, etc.,

WM. BLOWER.

Bedford, July 1st, 1862.

#### THE FELLOWSHIP DINNER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

SIR,—I wish through the JOURNAL to appeal to the originators of the Fellows of the College of Surgeons' dinner, whether it was not agreed, when the dinner was founded, that no politics, medical or other, and no controversial speeches should be permitted. The meeting was intended simply as a social *réunion* of country Fellows visiting London to exercise their franchise. This excellent arrangement was adhered to certainly for many years; but I much regret that of late it has been departed from. Mr. South, I believe, was the first person who set what I must call a very bad example, when he not only found fault with the Council of his own College, but threw stones at his brother Councilors. His mistake was brought to a climax on Thursday last, when the President of the London College made a most laboured attack on the General Medical Council, and on the Scotch Medical Corporations, ending with what, as I think, was a most lame and impotent defence of his own College. But what was most painful was to listen to Mr. Lawrence, that once great mind, so brilliant and so powerful, condescending to turn into ridicule all the constituted authorities, all councils, and all arrangements of medical education. I think he will, upon calm reflection, feel that much of the laughter his sallies elicited was directed at him as much as at his wit. He was utterly unmindful of the fact that, for the last forty years, few men have benefited so much as he by the system of teaching by lectures, which he now derides. It would be well if the members of Council, general and particular, would bear in mind the great Napoleon's advice to nations about washing their dirty linen at home. A large quantity was washed on Thursday; but the laundry is not a good place for digesting a dinner (otherwise a very good one).

Now, sir, if these unseemly exhibitions are allowed, I feel certain that many Fellows will cease to attend the dinner; more especially when they feel the unfairness of attacking parties not present to answer for themselves.

I am, etc.,

AN OLD FELLOW.