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OBSERVATIONS

On that terrible Disease

Vulgarly called

The *Throat-Distemper.*

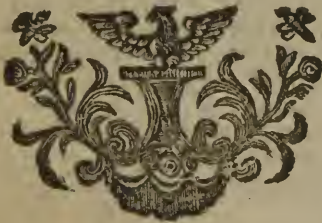
WITH

Advices as to the

Method of Cure.

In a Letter to a Friend.

By J. DICKINSON, A.M.



BOSTON: Printed and Sold by S. KNEELAND
and T. GREEN, in Queenstreet, over against the
Prison. 1740.



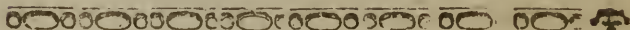
To the READER.

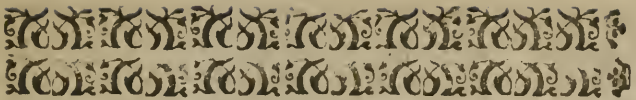
THE Reverend Mr Dickinson, when at Boston nigh 1700 Years since being consulted by several Gentlemen (anxious for themselves and others) about a most malignant Disease, which had raged for a long Time in the Place where he lives, and which had commen'd its fatal Progress in these Parts, was desir'd to draw up his Observations in writing, with a View to printing the same for the publick Benefit. Upon that Occasion he wrote the following Letter: which now that we have a fresh Alarm by a Return of that astonishing Distemper among us, it's thought a proper Season to publish it for a common Good.

Several of our ablest Physicians, upon the perusal of it, have express'd their Satisfaction in the Author's Account of the various Placiments of the Malady and his Method of Cure — His Observations are the Result of a long Series of Practice and Experience, and seem founded in the exactest Judgment His Informations are as full and particular, as any we've seen, and judiciously deliver'd in the easiest Language, to accommodate unlearned Readers. — The surprizing Mortality of this Distemper is enough to attract every one's serious Attention; and in such an extraordinary Case every compassionate Friend to Mankind, will be ready to impart any useful Reflections: Which is a sufficient Apology both for the Author and the Publisher.

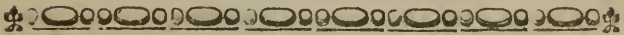
Cambridge, Aug. 5.

1740.





A LETTER, &c.



S I R,

IN Compliance with your Desire, I shall now communicate to you some of those Observations I have made upon that extraordinary Disease, which has made such awful Desolations in the Country, commonly called *the Throat-Distemper*.

This Distemper first began in these Parts, in *Febr. 1734*. The long Continuance and universal Spread of it among us, has given me abundant Opportunity to be acquainted with it in all its Forms.

The first Assault was in a Family about ten Miles from me, which proved fatal to eight of the Children in about a Fortnight. Being called to visit the distressed Family, I found upon my arrival there, one of the Children newly dead, which gave me the Advantage of a *Dissession*, and thereby a better Acquaintance with the Nature of the Disease, than I could otherwise have had: From which (and other like) Observations, I came

pretty early into the Methods of Cure that I have not yet seen Reason to change.

There have few Distempers been ever known, that have put on a greater *variety of Types*, and appear'd with more different Symptoms, than this has done; which makes it necessary to be something particular in describing it, in order to set it in a just View, and to propose the Methods of Cure necessary in its several Appearances. And

I. I take this Disease to be naturally an *Eruptive milliary Fever*: and when it appears as such, it usually begins with a Shivering, a Chill, or with Stretching, or Yawning; which is quickly succeeded with a sore Throat, a Tumefaction of the Tonsils, Uvula and Epiglottis, and sometimes of the Jaws, and even of the whole Throat & Neck. The Fever is often acute, the Pulse quick & high, and the Countenance florid. The Tonsils first, and in a little Time the whole Throat covered with a whitish Crustula, the Tongue furr'd, and the Breath fetid. Upon the 2d, 3d, or 4th Day, if proper Methods are used, the Patient is cover'd with a milliary Eruption, in some exactly resembling the *Measles*, in others more like the *Scarlet Fever* (for which Distemper it has frequently been mistaken) but in others it very much resembles the confluent *Small Pox*. When the Eruption is finished, the Tumefaction every where subsides, the Fever abates, and the Slough in the Throat casts off and falls. The Eruption often disappears about the 6th or 7th Day; tho' it sometimes continues visible much longer. After the Eruption is over, the Cuticle scales and falls off, as in the Conclusion of the *Scarlet Fever*. If after
th₆

the Crise of this Disease Purging be neglected, the Sick may seem to recover Health & Strength for a while ; yet they frequently in a little Time fall again into grievous Disorders ; such as a great prostration of Strength ; loss of Appetite, hectical Appearances, sometimes great Dimness of Sight, and often such a weakness in the Joints as deprives them of the Use of all their Limbs ; and some of them are affected with scorbutick Symptoms of almost every Kind.

When this Distemper appears in the Form now described, it is not very dangerous : I have seldom seen any die with it, unless by a sudden Looseness, that calls in the Eruptions ; or by some very irregular Treatment. But there are several other very different Appearances of the Disease, which are attended with more frightful & deadly Consequences.

2. It frequently begins with a slight Indisposition, much resembling an ordinary *Cold*, with a listless Habit, a slow & scarce discernible Fever, some soreness of the Throat and Tumefaction of the Tonsils ; and perhaps a running of the Nose, the Countenance pale, and the Eyes dull and heavy. The Patient is not confin'd, nor any Danger apprehended for some Days, till the Fever gradually increases, the whole Throat, and sometimes the Roof of the Mouth and Nostrils, are covered with a *cankorous Crust*, which corrodes the contiguous Parts, and frequently terminates in a mortal Gangreen, if not by seasonable Applications prevented. The *Stomach* is sometimes, and the *Lungs* often, covered with the same *Crustula*. The former Case is discover-

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ed by a vehement Sickness of the Stomach, a perpetual vomiting ; and sometimes by ejection of black or rusty and fetid Matter, having scales like Bran mixed with it, which is a certain Index of a *fatal Mortification* ---- When the *Lungs* are thus affected, the Patient is first afflicted with a dry hollow Cough, which is quickly succeeded with an extraordinary Hoarseness and total Loss of the Voice, with the most distressing asthmatick Symptoms and difficulty of Breathing, under which the poor miserable Creature struggles, until released by a perfect *Suffocation*, or stoppage of Breath. — This *last* has been the fatal Symptom, under which the most have sunk, that have died in these Parts. And indeed there have comparatively but few recovered, whose *Lungs* have been thus affected. All that I have seen to get over this dreadful Symptom, have fallen into a *Ptyalism* or Salivation, equal to a *petit Flux de Bouche*, and have by their perpetual Cough expectorated incredible Quantities of a tough whitish Slough from their *Lungs*, for a considerable Time together. And on the other Hand, I have seen large Pieces of this Crust, several Inches long and near an Inch broad, torn from the *Lungs* by the vehemence of the Cough, without any Signs of Digestion, or possibility of obtaining it.

Before I dismiss this Head, I must observe, that the *Fever* which introduces the terrible Symptoms now described, does not always make such a slow and gradual Approach : but sometimes makes a fiercer Attack ; and might probably be thrown off by the Eruptions, and this

Train

Train of Terrors prevented, if proper Methods were seasonably used.

3. This Distemper sometimes appears in the Form of an *Erysipelas*. The Face suddenly inflames and swells, the Skin appears of a darkish Red, the Eyes are closed with the Tumefaction, which also sometimes extends through the whole Neck and Chest. Blisters or other small Ulcers here and there break out upon the Tumor, which corrode the adjacent Parts; and quickly bring on a Mortification, if not by some happy Means prevented. Some that are thus affected, are at the same Time exercised with all the terrible *internal* Symptoms above described; and some with *none* of them. If this inflamed Tumor be not quickly discussed, it will (I think) always prove mortal.

4. Another Appearance of this Disease is in external *Ulcers*: which break out frequently behind the Ears; sometimes they cover the whole Head and Forehead; sometimes they appear in the Arm-Pits, Groins, Navil, Buttocks or Seat; and sometimes in any of the extream Parts. These are covered with the same Kind of whitish *Crustula*, above described, which also corrodes the contiguous Parts; and quickly, if not prevented, ends in a *Mortification*. I have ordinarily observed, that if these outward Ulcers are speedily cured, the Throat and internal Parts remain free from the abovementioned terrible Symptoms; otherwise the miserable Patient must pass thro' the whole tragical Scene of Terrors before represented, if an external Gangreen don't terminate his Agony and Life together.

5. Sometimes

5. Sometimes this Disease appears first in *Bubo's* under the Ears, Jaws, or Chin, or in the Arm-Pits, or Groin. These, if quickly ripened, make a considerable Discharge; which brings a salutary End to the Disease; otherwise they quickly end in a fatal Mortification; or else bring on the whole foremention'd Tragedy.

6. This Disease appears sometimes in the Form of a *Quinsy*. The Lungs are inflamed, the Throat and especially the Epiglottis exceedingly tumefied. In a few Hours the Sick is brought to the Height of an *Orthopnœa*; and cannot breathe but in an erect Posture, and then with great Difficulty and Noise. This may be distinguished from an *Angina*, by the *Crustula* in the Throat, which determines it to be a Sprout from the same Root with the Symptoms described above. In this Case the Patient sometimes dies in twenty four Hours. I have not seen any one survive the third Day. But thro' the divine Goodness these Symptoms have been more rarely seen among us, and there have been but few in this Manner snatch'd out of the World.

As the Symptoms of this Distemper are very different, so the *Methods of Cure* should be respectively accommodated to them; and I shall therefore consider them distinctly.

When this Distemper makes its Attack with the Symptoms of a *high Fever*, a *florid Countenance* &c. (as in the *first Case* described) the *first Intention*, to be pursued towards a Cure, is to bring out the *Eruptions* as soon as possible; to which End, I order the Patient to be confin'd in
Bed,

Bed, and put into a gentle breathing *Sweat*, till they appear. A *Tea* made with *Virginian Snake-Root* and *English Saffron*, with a few Grains of *Cochineal*; A *Poffet* made with *Carduus Mariae* boil'd in Milk, and turn'd with Wine, the *Lapis contrayerva*, or *Gascoign-Powder*; any or all of these, as Occasions requires, answer to this Purpose, and seldom fail of Success.

One of the most dangerous Circumstances that attend this Disease, is a *Looseness*, that frequently happens upon the first Appearance of the Eruptions; which must be speedily restrain'd, and the Belly kept bound, lest the morbidick Matter, evaporated by the Pores, be recalled into the Blood, and prove suddenly fatal. — To that Purpose, I ordinarily advise to *Venice-Treacle*, or liquid *Laudanum*, which commonly answer all Intentions. But if the Patient should be in a *dozing Habit*, that these cannot be used, or if these should fail of Success, any other *Astringent* may be used that is proper in a *Diarrhœa*.

The *Ulcers* in the Throat should be constantly cleansed, from the Time of their first Appearance. I have found the following Method most successful to this Purpose. Take Roman Vitriol, let it lie as near the Fire as a Man can bear his Hand, till it be thoroughly calcined and turn'd white: Put about eight Grains of this into half a Pint of Water: Lay down the Tongue with a Spatula; and gently wash off as much of the Crust as will easily separate, with a fine Ragg fastned to the End of a Probe, or Stick, and wet in this Liquor made warm. This Operation should be repeated every three or four Hours.

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After

After the Eruptions are quite gone, the Patient should be *purged* two or three Times, to prevent the Consequences above described; and this Rule should be observed in every Form of the Disease.

If after the Crise of this Disease, in any of its Appearances, the Sick should fall into any of the Disorders mentioned under the first Head, such as Loss of Strength, a feverish Habit, Dimness of Sight, Weakness of the Joynts &c. *Repeated Purging*, as far as the Patient's Strength will bear, with *Elixir Proprietatis* given twice a Day in a Glass of generous Wine, will constantly remove these Difficulties.

When this Disease makes a more slow and leisurely approach with a *lingering* Fever, *pale* Countenance &c. as described in the *second* Case; all Attempts to bring out the millitary Eruptions seem in vain. And therefore, tho' the Sick may be very much relieved by the *diaphoretick* Medicines above mentioned, if repeatedly used during the Course of the Illness; yet these are not to be depended upon for a Cure. But a brisk *Purge* should be also directed every third Day, and those Catharticks that are mixt with *Colomel* or *Mercurius dulcis*, are most likely to be serviceable, where the Age and Strength of the Patient will bear it.

If there be an extream *nauseating*, and vehement Sickness of the Stomach, that can't be otherwise quieted, an *Emetick* seems necessary; tho' I have not found Encouragement to use vomiting Physick in any other Case.

The *internal Ulcers* of the Throat should be treated as above directed; but if there be a great
Tume-

Tumefaction of the Glands, I order externally a Plaister of *Diacbylon cum Gummi* and *de Ranis cum Mercurio* mixt; and internally the following Fumigation. Take *Wormwood*, *Penny-royal*, the *Tops of St. John's Wort*, *Camomile-Flowers* and *Elder-Flowers*, of each equal Parts; boil very strong in Water; when boil'd, add as much *Brandy* or *Rum* as of this Decoction; steam the Throat thro' a Tunnel, as hot as can be born, three or four Times a Day.

When the Lungs are seized with this cankerous *Crustula*, which is indicated by the Cough and Hoarseness above described, *Mercurial Catharticks* frequently repeated, seem the best of any Thing to promote Expectoration. I have also found Success in the Use of the Syrup of red *Poppies* and *Sperma Ceti* mixt.

When this Distemper appears in the Form of an *Erysipelas*, I have used the following Fomentation with good Success. Take *Wormwood*, *Mint*, *Elder-Flowers*, *Camomile-Flowers*, the *Tops of St. John's Wort*, *Fennel-Seeds* pounded, and the lesser *Centaury*, equal Parts: Infuse in good *Brandy* or *Jamaica Rum*, in a *Stone-Jugg* well stop'd, and kept hot by the Fire: wet a *Flannel Cloth* with this; and after moderately squeezing out the Liquor, apply three or four double to the Tumor, as hot as can be born, every Hour. — In this Case I repeat Purging, as above directed.

As for the external *Ulcers* above described (under the 4th Head) they may be always safely and speedily cured, by applying once or twice a Day a good thick Pledget of fine Tow dipt in the above described *vitriolick Water*. I have never

ver known this fail in a single Instance, when seasonably used. But then it must be observed, that some of these Ulcers will require this Water much sharper with the Vitriol, than others will bear. It should be so sharp as to bring off the Slough, dry up the flow of corrosive Humours, and promote a Digestion : but it must not be made a painful Caustick. In this the Practitioner's Discretion will guide him.

I need not say any more respecting the *Bubo's*, mentioned under the *fifth* Head ; but that they must by all possible Means be ripen'd as quick as they can ; and launced as soon as they are digested and found to contain any *Pus*.

I have not yet found any effectual Remedy in the 6th and last Case described.

Upon the Disease in *general*, I have made the following *Remarks* ; which perhaps may be of some Use.

I have observ'd, that the *more acute* the Fever is on the first Seizure, the *less dangerous* ; because there's more Hope of bringing out the Eruptions.

I have observ'd, that there's more Danger of receiving Injury from a *cold Air* in this, than in any eruptive Fever I have seen. The *Eruptions* are *easily struck in* ; and therefore there ought to be all possible Care, that the Sick be not at all exposed to the Air, till the Eruptions are quite over and gone.

I have also observ'd, that there's much greater Danger from this Disease in *cold Weather*, than in *hot*. In cold Weather it most commonly appears in the Form described under the *second* Head ;
while

while on the contrary, a hot Season very much forwards the Eruptions.

I have frequently observ'd, that *once* having this Disease is no Security against a *second Attack*. I have known the same Person to have it *four Times* in one Year; the last of which prov'd mortal. I have known Numbers, that have pass'd thro' it in the *eruptive* Form in the *Summer* Season, that have died with it the succeeding *Fall* or *Winter*: tho' I have never seen any upon whom the *Eruptions* could be *brought out* more than *once*.

I have ordinarily observ'd, that those who die with this Disease, have many *Purple-Spots* about them; which shews the Height of Malignity and Pestilential Quality in this terrible Distemper.

Thus, SIR, I have endeavour'd in the most plain and familiar Manner to answer your Demands. I have not attempted a *Philosophical* Inquiry into the Nature of this Disease, nor a *Rationale* upon the Methods of Cure. I have meant no more than briefly to communicate to you some of my *Experiences* in this Distemper, which I presume is all you expect from me. If this proves of any Service, I shall have Cause of Thankfulness: If not, you'll kindly accept my willingness to serve you, and to contribute what I can towards the Relief of the afflicted and miserable.

I am, SIR,

Your most humble Servant,

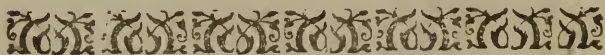
Elizabeth Town, N. Jersey
Febr. 20. 1738 9.

Jonathan Dickinson.

P O S T S C R I P T.

SINCE I wrote this Letter, I am inform'd by a Gentleman of the Profession, who has had very great Improvement in this Distemper, That he has found out a *Method of Cure*, which seldom fails of Success in all the Forms of this Disease herein described, (the *first*, *fourth*, and *fifth* only excepted, which should be treated as above directed) and that is a *Decoction of the Root of the Dart Weed*, or (as it is here called) the *Squaw-Root*. He orders about an Ounce of this Root to be boiled in a Quart of Water, to which he adds when strain'd, a *Fill* of Rum and two Ounces of Loaf-Sugar; and boils again to the Consumption of one quarter Part. This he gives his Patients frequently to drink, and with this orders them frequently to gargle their Throats; allowing no internal Medicine but this only, during the whole Course of the Disease, excepting a *Purge* or two in the Conclusion. I have seen a surprizing Effect of this Method in one Instance; and shall make what further Observations I can: And if this answers my present Hopes, I shall endeavour to give you further Information.

The *Dart-Weed* grows with a strait Stalk six or eight Foot high, is jointed every eight or ten Inches apart; and bears a large white Tassel on the Top, when in the Flower. The Root is black and bitterish.



F I N I S.

