

THE LANCET.

Vol. II.]

LONDON, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1.

[1831-32.

REPORT
OF THE
RISE, PROGRESS, AND DECLINE,
OF THE
MALIGNANT CHOLERA
AMONGST THE SOLDIERS OF THE
SIXTY-EIGHTH REGIMENT,
AT CLARE CASTLE, IRELAND.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I take the liberty of transmitting to you a series of reports illustrative of the rise, progress, and decline of the cholera in the 68th regiment.

The reports are voluminous, but the facts which they authenticate are so important, and are detailed with so much intelligence, accuracy, and spirit, that I could not deny myself the gratification of sending you the originals for your perusal, and leaving to you (who can so well perform it) the task of compressing them into such a compass as may enable you to give them publicity through the medium of your valuable journal.

I have the honour, to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

PHILIP CRAMPTON,

Surgeon-General to the Forces in Ireland,
Merrion Square, Dublin,

Aug. 25th, 1832.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE EDITOR.

The reports are 22 in number, commencing on the 9th of June, and ending on the 3rd of July, 1832, extending over about 80 folio pages of paper. They are, with the exception of one report (made by Mr. Reid, the surgeon of the regiment), drawn up by Dr. Richard Williams, the assistant-surgeon of the 68th, on whom the duty devolved in consequence of the illness and subsequent death of Surgeon Reid, Dr. Williams being afterwards promoted to the vacant post. The first report is dated

from the "half-billet station," Ennis. At this place a detachment of the regiment was quartered, and here the disease first appeared. The remainder of the reports were written at Clare Castle, close by, in which the barracks of the regiment are situated, and where the disease appeared in two or three days after its irruption among the civilians and troops at Ennis. The care of the Clare Castle Hospital devolved on Dr. Williams, and the present history relates to the progress of the disease among the troops therein residing. An occasional table of the disease as it prevailed around this spot, accompanies the other documents, but it will be unnecessary to notice them further than to say, that the report from the troops at Ennis on the 12th day, gives 159 cases and 73 deaths, 23 cases still remaining under treatment. The contrast between the results of the practice there and at Clare Castle, will ultimately be seen to be very considerable; but there can be little surprise at the fact when we find it stated in one of the earlier reports, that out of nine physicians in Ennis, Dr. Silver (attached to the regiment) was the only one who would attend a cholera patient. In fact, out of 72 village cases, 70 died. Several of the physicians left the town from fear, and others decidedly refused their attendance either on the military or civilians, for any remuneration whatever. So great was the dread of cholera, too, amongst the people, that the contractors for removing the contents of the dirt or ash-holes at Clare Castle, could not obtain men to go near it.

Premising thus much, we proceed to make an abstract of the reports.

ABSTRACT.

The first case of cholera which appeared in the 68th, occurred on the 8th of June 1832, in a soldier, who was attacked suddenly, and fell on the ground, while on parade. He was instantly removed to a small room in the half-billet station house in Ennis, and placed in bed. He recovered under the following treatment:—An emetic of grs. xl of ipecacuanha with 1 gr. tart. antim. was first administered. In fifteen minutes a second grain of tart. antim. was given, and hot flannels were applied to the stomach and extremities. Full vomiting was induced. The turpentine enema was then thrown up, and cal. ʒj with grs. x conf. opii were mixed and given. Full dejections followed; the heat and pulse were increased, and the patient was convalescent next day.

June 9. Five cases among the men and two among the women occurred this day. These cases were reported by Surgeon Reid, who, while writing down the details, added to his letter, "I have been very unwell

for the last fortnight, and had Dr. Williams to assist me." On the following day Mr. Reid died of cholera, and the superintendance of the future cases thence fell on Dr. Williams. The cholera now appeared among the troops in Clare Castle, where a regimental cholera hospital was established, and from which place Dr. Williams had on the 12th of June to report 15 cases.

Clare Castle is situated upon a small island in the Fergus, an arm of the Shannon, and is surrounded on all sides by mud, the tide running underneath the Castle. A more prejudicial locality could hardly be found. Even water fit to drink is not to be obtained for the soldiers residing in it, without sending half a mile from the Castle. In the present instance the men, "in many instances reckless of consequences, drank the water of the Fergus when the tide was out." It is further to be observed, that the barracks were completely filled with troops, and that the rooms are very small, and incapable of being well ventilated. Even the room appropriated for the hospital would only contain 24 persons, and the windows of it opened on the worst part of the swamp around the Castle; on mentioning which, Dr. Williams observes on the 18th June, "I really observe a tendency to collapse when the tide is out."

"It is worthy of consideration, that cholera made its appearance in this castle a short time after an immense quantity of old, filthy, dirty, and execrable stores were removed from the store-rooms for the purpose of survey and sale." Amongst these Dr. Williams particularly noticed "a quantity of mops and handles, which when worn out had been placed in store, impregnated with everything that was dirty, gut dry, and thus became a concentrated focus of the most filthy kind, and which at the moment of writing the report (13th of June), contaminates the atmosphere. The only plan that occurs to me (continues Dr. Williams) to stop this awful pestilence, is to evacuate the Castle *in toto*, and to put the men in houses in the vicinity. The village of Ennis, separated only by a bridge, has not a single case in it. I propose the evacuation of the barrack, therefore, as I would suggest the quitting a house that was on fire. Amongst the old stores, I notice a vast collection of old blankets, rags, and sheets, in a state of decay from remaining so long in store, and from long use previous to their condemnation. The soldiers in the Castle were employed in cutting and tearing these old articles into pieces; and, altogether, I am inclined to attribute the great number of cases proportionate to the number of individuals, to the rest of the rubbish which has been so recently unkennelled. The mass is of three years col-

fection. I have recommended that every species of dirt be instantly thrown into the Tergus, to be carried away by the tide.*

The practice of Dr. Williams is thus described by him in the report of the 12th of June. "It consists, principally, with occasional variation, in giving an emetic of 50 grs. of ipecac. immediately on admission. If circumstances admit I bleed. After the feet are warmed by dry heat, sinapisms of mustard and ol. terebinth are applied to the stomach, spine, and feet. When spasms attack the calves of the legs, sinapisms are applied to them after they have been freely rubbed with strong volatile liniment in which the tinct. lyttae is an ingredient. I next proceed to give calomel in scruple doses every hour at *quatuor vices*. In the interim an enema with ol. teribinth. ξij and sulph. sodæ ξij is thrown up. The extremities are rubbed perseveringly with the vol. liniment, and when spasm and cold are urgent, with ol. terebinth. made hot. As patients are apt to throw their hands out of the bed, I bandage them with flannel, and friction is continued over the bandages. In irritability of stomach, I give soda water with opium, and in collapse, brandy is added to these. In collapse, stimulants of various kinds are employed, capsicum, spts. ammon. aromât., brandy, &c.

June 17. By this time 81 cases had occurred, when an order arrived for the evacuation of the Castle, and the encampment of the regiment on the highest and driest piece of ground in the neighbourhood. Directions were accordingly issued that the troops should remove with every article of dress, &c. in a perfectly clean state, taking none of the bedding hitherto in use, new or clean blankets being issued. The hospital at Clare Castle, however, was still preserved for the admission and treatment of all cases that might occur. The effect of the removal was very salutary on the troops, amongst whom great despondency prevailed. The promptitude and rapidity with which the tents were conveyed, and the whole migration was effected, inspired them all with courage and good spirits.

In his report of the 17th June, Dr. Williams writes,—"I have abandoned the use of the lancet, the collapse being so rapid, and attended with such a total loss of pulse, arising probably from our low situation. A serjeant admitted at nine this morning, collapsed in less than an hour. When the spasms continue, I remove the sinapisms from the spine, and apply blisters. The plan of injecting saline solutions into the

veins, has been tried at Limerick (whither Dr. Williams went some short time previous to study the disease), and has proved a total failure in every case, so that I do not propose to attempt it. I have given the sulphate of quinine in good old sherry to convalescents labouring under debility, particularly to old drunkards, of whom we have a tolerably large share, the result of our residence in Canada. As I only take three teaspoonfuls of sherry per diem myself, and that only during periods of incessant fatigue (the duties of Dr. Williams were excessive, preventing opportunities for sleep for nights together), I am able, with a good conscience, to express my abhorrence to the men of that execrable mixture called "whiskey punch," at this period of danger. * * * The hospital nurse has just complained, and has had her emetic. I almost attribute her attack to a deviation from my directions on the subject of liquor. I allowed her a glass of sherry twice a day, but yesterday, suffering from fatigue, she took a tumbler of my abhorrence, hot whiskey punch. I saw cholera in her eye, and mentioned it.

I hear of no recovery at the village of Clare, the collapse there is so immediate after the first appearance of purging and vomiting. Of thirteen cases twelve are already dead. We exploded a good deal of gunpowder in the small and confined quadrangle of the castle, where, from being surrounded by high building, no circulation of air can take place. I advised this, as the explosions, if they have no other effect, at least change the atmosphere, and the men and women, moreover, have a great opinion of the plan."

13. All the men slept under canvass last night. The ground was so well selected, that they were all perfectly dry. The whole ground beneath the tents, however, was boarded, as a precautionary measure, and an additional blanket was given out in lieu of sheets. A car and horse are kept at the camp to be in momentary readiness to convey cases to the hospital at the Castle. At the same time, all convalescents from the hospital are ordered to perform a quarantine of ten days at a short distance from the healthy tents, before rejoining them. Tents are appropriated for that purpose.

19. No deaths amongst the men yesterday. The cases at present do not present so malignant an aspect as they have done. "I am just called to Colonel Cross (the colonel of the regiment), whose exertions have predisposed him to an attack. He has taken an emetic, his stomach is tranquil. I have commenced with the calomel, and at present I see nothing unfavourable about

* While the clerk was recording these facts at the dictation of Dr. Williams, he was seized with diarrhoea, and was obliged to be conveyed to the cholera hospital.

him." The cases up to this day are 104; deaths 18; recovered and discharged, 47.

20. The disease on the decline. Only two soldiers admitted from the camp, and only nineteen soldiers now in the hospital. But one death the day previous, and he a great drunkard,—one who, in Canada, drank upon the average, probably, about a quart of ardent spirits a day. "In the tent the cleanliness of the people is strictly attended to, particularly as regards the feet of men, women, and children. I have advised, on the score of diet, that the coffee shall have more milk than usual, and that the milk be boiled for the morning and evening repasts, making, in fact, *café au lait*, which is highly nutritious, the more especially as the cows are milked in the adjoining field. Breakfasts to be partaken of at seven. I have also strongly advocated that excellent dish called 'Irish stew.' Colonel Cross much better. The calomel has touched his mouth. His death would have paralysed us. As it is, I think the effect will be good, by showing the men that their officers are equally exposed to this sad malady with themselves. I look with dread to the admission of detachments of troops into the camp, who have passed through infected places. Sentries are open to bribery like other men, and a single man, woman, or child, straying into our camp from the quarantine ground (which is in the same field) might be fatal to us. No subject hangs so much upon my mind as this."

"In cases of alarm, or depression, I find immense advantage from giving three or four grains of quinine in a glass of sherry."

21. Amongst all the convalescents, men, women, and children, who have remained ten days in quarantine before joining the general camp, not a single instance of relapse has occurred. "One woman (the wife of a serjeant) having violated the quarantine regulations, which confine the convalescents within a certain limit, has been expelled the camp altogether. Without an example of this sort, we should have the wives and children of the soldiers straying in every direction. Two children, whom I met on the road out of the limit, I have punished by putting with their parents into a part of the quarantine limits separate from the rest for four days." Colonel Cross is free from all symptoms of cholera, though labouring apparently under disease of the lungs. "As for the camp, it has changed a scene of the greatest depression, melancholy, and despair, into one of cheerfulness and happiness. A hospital tent has been prepared, with boards and tressels, for the reception of common cases. The occurrence of two days of brilliant weather, has enabled the women to wash every article of the men's linen, a most important

consideration, for which we have every advantage." Total cases to this date, 114.

22.* No case of cholera during the whole of yesterday. Diarrhœa, from damp, came on in three cases, but the dejections were yellow; they occurred in persons who had been convalescents in quarantine; the day was one of continued heavy rain. "In two cases, typhus has succeeded to cholera, with delirium. One of those cases is doing well; of the other I cannot speak favourably. A fresh detachment arriving, more tents have become necessary; but new ground for them must be had, or there will be no room in the present field for exercise or amusement." The adjoining field should be hired, or we shall have to use the lower part of the hill, which gradually terminates in wet ground, from the overflowing of a spring of water. The great object appears to me to be to keep the tents upon the crown of the hill, and not to let them be too crowded. As we descend, the situation for tents proportionately deteriorates." The report of the 25th of June says, "I fear we shall not be able to obtain another field, the Rev. Mr. Young having refused the request of the Major General. In this case we shall be rather crowded." The terror from which this refusal probably arose, was, as before intimated, universal amongst the civilians, as may be further judged from the following report.

24. A case occurred yesterday at Six-Mile-Bridge (a short distance from the camp), in a detachment, two fatal cases having happened among the inhabitants five days before. The remaining men of the detachment were all removed to quarantine ground, leaving one man only to tend on the cholera patient, "to whom the inhabitants refused all supplies of food; tea, &c., having to be made for him at the inn." Even the medical practitioner, "afraid of coming in contact with the disease, positively refused to attend the case." One case of cholera was admitted yesterday in the Castle Hospital from the camp, as also were two cases from the Six-Mile-Bridge quarantine tents. "We have three very severe cases of typhus, one of which I fear will prove fatal." All the cases of consecutive fever have been exceedingly severe, the head being much affected.

25. Yesterday one case from the general camp, and one from the Six-Mile-Bridge ground. The detachment from the latter place is now gone to the general camp. The house at the Six-Mile-Bridge where the sick case was left, "was yesterday sur-

* Dr. Williams, in the report of this date, acknowledges his appointment as surgeon to the regiment; the notification to him of which, was accompanied by an assurance of "entire approbation of his conduct during a most trying period."

rounded by 100 men with straw, probably intending to burn the dwelling; but they were overawed by the police. The medical practitioner, from his great alarm, still refuses to go to any case of cholera."

27. All the cases doing well. "It is worthy of observation, that the servants of officers have particularly suffered.* Servants generally live in offensively dirty apartments. They are allowed to be out of mess, and are in consequence badly and irregularly dieted, and the money which should be appropriated to wholesome nutrition is often expended in administering to their vices. In this way they are more particularly predisposed to disease."

28. But two cases in bed. The whole barrack to be well scoured and white-washed. "The generous diet, particularly the *caffé-au-lait*, at breakfast and supper, has contributed to the well-being of the men, and left less money for ardent spirits."

29. The car for conveying corpses is dismissed from the camp. Only a simple case of disorder brought to the hospital, and that was a case of colica, from eating unripe crab-apples, which abound around the camp. Two or three more such cases occurred within the week. Several beds, which were saturated with the alvine dejections of the patients, have been burned.

July 1. The men never looked better.

3. Not a case left. The disease not yet terminated in Clare itself. About 96 persons went from Clare a few days since to a large house in the neighbourhood, where they attacked a puncheon of whi-key, and have since lived in a most disorderly manner. Cholera in a very malignant form has in consequence appeared amongst them. "The disease having left the troops, I need no longer trouble the Director-General with a daily report."

Total from the Commencement.

	Cases.	Deaths.
Officers	2	1
Soldiers	96	18
Women	17	1
Children	7	2

Total 122 22

RICHARD WILLIAMS,
Surgeon, 60th Regiment.

* "The following statement will show the number of those attacked and the result.

The servant of Surgeon Reid ..	Died.
The orderly of Surgeon Reid ..	Died.
The servant of Major North ..	Recovered.
Ditto Lieut. Fijat ..	Recovered.
Ditto Lieut. Graham ..	Died.
Ditto the Quarter-Master,	Recovered.
The female-servant of ditto ..	Recovered.
The servant of the Adjutant ..	Recovered.
Ditto Lieut. Hill ..	In Hosp.
The first mess waiter ..	Died.
The mess cook ..	Recovered.
The second mess waiter ..	Recovered. ¹²

Sacred | to the mem |
of Mary Ann |
daughter of Quarter Mas |
ter Serg. Currie |
68 Light Infantry |
who died June 2nd 1832 aged 6 months



to the memory of |
Marian wife |
of George Macbeath, Esq |
Quarter Master |
68th Lt Infantry |
who departed this life |
13th June 1832 |
aged 58



Sacred |
to the memory |
of James Read Esq., late Surgeon of his Majesty's |
68th Regt. Lt. Infantry |
who died at Clare |
June 11th 1832 | aged 46 |
On having fallen victim to |
the then prevailing epidemic |
whilst in the zealous performance |
of his professional duties.
This stone was erected by his brother William Read, 68th Light Infantry



Extracts from Old Clarehill Graveyard, Clarecastle as
transcribed by Clare Roots Society