

many doctrines, very importantly erroneous, are daily imposed upon the world for want of attention to this great truth; that it is from general effects only, and those founded upon extensive experience, that any maxim to which each individual may with confidence defer, can possibly be established.

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XXII. *Remarks on the Causes and Cure of some Diseases of Infancy.* By Joseph Clarke, M. D. Licentiate in Physic of the Royal College of Physicians in Dublin, and M. R. I. A. From the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. Vol. VI.

IT is now near seven years since an essay of mine was read before this Academy, on the properties of human milk, the changes it undergoes in digestion, and the diseases supposed to originate from this source in infancy. A variety of facts and observations was then brought forward to render it probable that the causes, commonly alledged by writers to produce

duce most of the diseases of infants, are ill-founded, nay, do not exist; and consequently that the remedies proposed for their cure must often prove ineffectual. Since the above period, my attention has been very much directed to this subject, and it is well known that my opportunities of experience have not been inconsiderable; and yet I every day feel more forcibly the evidence in favour of my former doubts. Once more, therefore, I am tempted to solicit attention to this subject, by submitting the following remarks, however cursory and imperfect, to public consideration: They relate principally to four diseases, viz.

- I. Diarrhœa, accompanied with much griping and green stools.
- II. Obstinate costiveness.
- III. Nine day fits, or convulsions in early infancy.
- IV. Cutaneous eruptions.

As it can be of no use to repeat what preceding writers have said on these subjects, I shall confine myself to such remarks as are not commonly to be met with in print.

In the essay above mentioned\* I endeavoured

\* See Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, for the year 1788, and London Medical Journal, Vol. XI.

to prove that green stools in infancy are not to be considered as sure signs of the existence of a superabundant acid in the stomach and intestines; at that time I was totally ignorant of their nature. An accident first suggested to me new ideas on this subject. A lady of very acute talents took it into her head that the milk of a nurse in her service did not agree with her infant. One night this infant, after suffering a great deal of griping, passed a remarkably green stool, which the mother considered as a decisive proof that nurse's milk turned sour in her child's stomach, and of course must disagree with it. The cloth on which this stool was received happened to be thrown into a corner of the room, where it lay till next morning, when the nurse, to her great surprize, found it had changed the *green* for a *natural yellow* colour. The mistress suspected misrepresentation on the part of the nurse, and I was sent for to decide between them. Not knowing well how to give a satisfactory determination, I begged of the lady to suspend her judgment, and to remark particularly whether in future such changes, as the nurse described, would happen. She made the experiment repeatedly with great care, and uniformly found that

that the green colour changed to a yellow by time, and perhaps by being diffused on the cloth. A very particular attention to this case led me strongly to suspect that green stools in infancy (which medical writers have long imputed to predominant acidity) are often *really* of a *bilious* nature. The inefficacy of absorbent medicines to correct them, joined to some other considerations to be hereafter noticed, served still farther to confirm my suspicions. Impressed strongly with these ideas, I determined to deviate from common practice, by having recourse to the use of calomel, one of the few remedies which experience has found powerfully to influence the biliary secretion in adults. It answered my expectation so well then, and in many similar instances since, that I am persuaded it may be of some utility briefly to state the result of my observations respecting it.

As very green stools are generally preceded by and accompanied with a great deal of griping and distress to the infant, they seem to me to indicate unusual acrimony in the bile, and probably some degree of depraved secretion in the liver. Sometimes this morbid tendency is of short duration, sometimes it continues troublesome

troublesome for weeks. In the former cases, castor oil in moderate quantity will be found a good remedy; it evacuates speedily the contents of the bowels, and at the same time sheaths the inside of the intestinal canal against their acrimony. In the more obstinate cases, where oil only affords temporary relief, calomel is the only remedy I have found produce any permanent good effects. I am inclined to think it operates not merely by evacuating, but by correcting that tendency to depraved secretion, which in bad cases probably exists. To infants under six months old I generally begin with half-grain doses, given at bed time, rubbed into a powder, with a little white sugar. If this quantity do not procure two or three motions in the course of the following day, the dose may be increased to three quarters of a grain, or even a grain. It may be repeated in this manner every night, or every second night, according to the degree of distress and strength of the patient, until the stools assume a natural appearance. This they seldom fail to do in a week or two, and then all griping and uneasiness cease. It will rarely be necessary to give more than from four to eight grains of calomel on such occasions

occasions, and I can with the utmost confidence assert that I have never known it to do any mischief, and very seldom to fail of producing the desired effects. Nor is it any objection to the use of this medicine, that the patient labours under some degree of diarrhœa; the acrimony of the stools not unfrequently excites frequent and ineffectual efforts, which are to be removed only by a removal of the exciting cause. If absorbents possess any power in such cases, they owe it to their combination either with laxatives, essential oils, or distilled waters; and even with these aids I have commonly found them to afford but temporary ease.

That infants should be particularly liable to disorder in the biliary secretion can hardly appear surprising, when it is considered that in them the liver bears a much larger proportion to the weight of the body than in adults: This increased size of the liver, like that of the heart, probably diminishes gradually as the body advances towards maturity. The effects of this peculiarity, of structure of infants, are strongly manifested in most cases even after birth: although it be a common practice to keep their bowels discharging freely,  
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and though their stools be evidently loaded with bile, yet during the first week few infants escape some degree of jaundice (commonly called Yellow Gum.) These facts prove a very copious secretion and excretion of bile at an early period, when the uncommon size of the liver is indisputable; it appears to me probable that the same tendency to copious secretion must continue, in some degree, through infancy and childhood until this viscus be reduced to its ordinary size. Medical practitioners have long remarked that well-prepared calomel agrees singularly well with the constitution of children in all those diseases wherein they have thought it prudent to employ it. Do not the peculiarities of structure above noticed afford some explanation of this fact? The power of calomel in correcting green stools, and the uneasiness accompanying them, is a fact which I hope will be admitted by all practitioners who give it a fair trial.

Since the above remarks were written I have met with two or three cases of violent bilious vomitings and cholics in infants, which were effectually relieved by much greater quantities of calomel than what I have stated above. To what extent it may be pushed  
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in very bad cases my experience does not yet enable me to determine.

*Of obstinate Costiveness.*

Every one, acquainted with the constitution of infants, knows that it is natural to them to have three or four stools every twenty-four hours; and that without such discharges they seldom enjoy perfect health. A few instances occur in practice where the intestines of infants never discharge their contents unless irritated by some kind of physic. I have met with a good many such cases, and after trying all the ordinary laxative medicines I could not say that any of them was entitled to a preference. The effects of all were temporary only. An ingenious friend and correspondent in London first suggested to me a trial of calomel in such obstinate cases. On his authority I have repeatedly had recourse to it, and seldom without the best effects. Whether it operates by promoting a flow of bile and other secreted fluids into the intestinal canal, on which the stools of infants, from the nature of their food, must very much depend; or by  
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exciting, in a peculiar manner, the irritability of the nerves bestowed on the intestines, I shall not pretend to decide.

*Of Convulsions in early Infancy.*

In the Transactions of this Academy\* for the year 1789, I have given an account of the nine day fits, as they had been observed in the Lying-in Hospital of this city, and of certain modes of prevention which then appeared to have produced good effects, and which I am happy to add still continue to do so.† Of methods of cure I was on that occasion silent, because no remedy had then been discovered even to retard the progress of that very fatal disease. About two years ago I was called in consultation to a case of nine day fits, which

\* See also Med. Facts and Obs. Vol. III. p. 78.

† This assertion will be best understood by stating the following facts: Previous to the year 1782 the mortality of infants was one in six, or seventeen in the hundred. From 1782 'till 1788, a period of four years, it was one in nineteen, or from five to six in the hundred. During the last four years it has been nearly as one to twenty-six and a half, not altogether four in the hundred. See an abstract of the registry kept at the Lying in Hospital, by Mr. B. Higgins, (inserted in the third volume of this work.)  
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appeared hopeless both to the attending physician and myself. As an experiment I proposed a grain of calomel to be given night and morning, knowing it to be well calculated to remove disease in the bowels, if such existed, and a blister to the fontanelle to relieve any fulness which might oppress the brain. By the use of these remedies, and of tepid bathing, the infant recovered. As blisters and tepid bathing so often fail in curing this disease, I was inclined to attribute much of our success to the calomel, and therefore I introduced the use of it in a similar manner into the Lying-in Hospital; and although I cannot say it actually cured one, yet it certainly afforded more obvious relief than any remedy hitherto tried. Several infants, whom the most experienced nurse-tenders apprehended to be seriously threatened, escaped the disease; and it evidently mitigated the severity of symptoms in some desperate cases. Whether, in a pure atmosphere, and situations otherwise more favourable for the exhibition of powerful remedies, it may be found to produce better effects, I propose as a quere, to be determined by future observation? In the course of last month I was so fortunate in private practice

as to remove convulsions in an infant of three weeks old, by calomel and blistering, as above described, without the use of any other remedy.\*

### *Cutaneous Eruptions.*

It is a singular fact that infants on the breast are very subject to cutaneous eruptions of the herpetic kind, which in adults are commonly supposed to originate from acrimony in the fluids. It is not easy to conceive how acrimony is so frequently generated in the blood of infants, nourished by the mildest of all fluids. It is a vulgar supposition that these diseases are often occasioned by improprieties in the diet and conduct of hireling nurses; but they often happen to infants suckled by the mother, where no suspicion of impropriety can be entertained: nay, the same tendency

\* Since this paper was first read to the Academy, which is near two years ago, I think I have been still more successful in the treatment of the foregoing complaints, by adding to each dose of calomel a grain or two of scammony or jalap, so as to render it more certainly and briskly purgative. *June 1795.*

is observed in infants fed on spoon meat. I have been frequently tempted to think that nature intended such eruptions to carry off surperfluous or redundant fluids from the constitution of infants; hence, perhaps, it is that they are most frequently to be met with among large infants, of a full habit. Viewing the subject in this light, one would be naturally inclined to encourage the discharge from such eruptions; with me soap and water is a favourite application; by washing off filth, which obstructs the pores, it allows a free exit both to perspiration and to the discharge from the ulcerated parts; it alleviates the itching, which is not only very troublesome, but absolutely injurious to the infant's health, by interrupting its sleep. All ointments and greasy applications, having a contrary tendency to soap and water, seem to me objectionable. By discharging freely, the cutaneous complaints under consideration often run their course with safety in a few weeks, and the patient is restored to health without the use of any internal medicine. When, however, the general health seems to be impaired, and the violence of symptoms renders medicine necessary, I have not found any remedy to be put in competition

tion with calomel, given in the same manner as for correcting griping and green stools.

Although not immediately connected with my present subject, it may not be altogether useless to remark, that along with an herpetic eruption on infants there is sometimes a mixture of itch which creates a very troublesome disease, and one very liable to be misunderstood. It is principally by appearances on the nurse that the existence of itch on the infant can be discovered. Herpes on the infant we know generally brings out some eruption on the nurse, but on accurate examination this will be found very different in its progress and effects from itch. The mode of curing itch in adults, when discovered, is now well ascertained; but there is great reason to doubt whether the same treatment be safely applicable to infants, and especially when itch is combined with herpes. Coughs of a very dangerous tendency have been observed to arise after the application of sulphur ointment to infants. Fortunately there is no absolute necessity for its use. Common stick brimstone, bruised and boiled for some time in water, gives a sulphureous impregnation, which used as a tepid bath every night at bed time seldom

fails to cure the itch in infants in a few weeks, without any risk of obstructing the pores of the skin, or of repressing too much the herpetic eruption. In all such cases it is prudent to make the nurse rub the eruption on her with sulphur ointment, while at the same time she takes flour of sulphur and magnesia internally, so as to keep the bowels moderately open. The infant should also sleep in the same bed with the nurse during this operation.

I have thus sketched, in a hasty manner; the outline of what accident and some reflection have suggested to me on a few subjects, in my opinion not perfectly understood. To those who know me, hurry of business (in an irregular and fatiguing profession) will apologize for many defects. The points in doubt regard a numerous class of the innocent and helpless in the community, who, when sick, are too frequently entrusted to the care of prejudiced old women, or of men not much better qualified to practice physic. I, therefore entreat gentlemen to enter dispassionately into the investigation of the doubts here submitted to their consideration. The alleviation  
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of pain, and the prolongation of human life, at a period of its greatest frailty, are objects surely not beneath the notice of any man; and as I pretend not to infallibility, the reader may be assured I feel as much interested on this occasion to have *error detected* as to have *truth confirmed*.

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XXIII. *History of a Case in which very uncommon Worms were discharged from the Stomach; with Observations thereon.* ✓  
 By Samuel Crumpe, M. D. M. R. I. A.  
 From the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*. Vol. VI.

THE lady whose case I am about to relate had been for many years subject to inflammatory affections of the lungs, which generally terminated in a copious and long continued expectoration. I was called to her assistance for the first time on the 3d of November 1788; she was then about twenty-six years of age and had been about two years married. She appeared to me to labour under