

Henry McCormack, M.D., of Belfast, writing in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* for 1843 (volume 60), refutes the opinion that malaria is merely of telluric origin due to an emanation from the elemental soil, and claims that the poisonous impregnation of the atmosphere termed malaria or marsh miasma is in every case of vegetable origin. It does not consist of or reside in any of the gaseous elements which chemical science has hitherto been able to detect. The neighbourhood of a swamp may reek with sulphuretted hydrogen and yet be perfectly healthy; or the air may be free from stench, yet replete with malarious poison. He believed that malaria was a result of vegetable decomposition in a warm climate. If the temperature remains habitually below this level malaria is never generated whatever the exuberance of the vegetation or the quantity of marsh-land.

Everyone admits that the Pontine and other similar marshes are productive of malaria and fever. In the height of the rains, when the marshes are brimful and everything is reeking with moisture, malaria is not so rife; once, however, the marshes begin to dry up and decrease, malaria comes in all its sweltering horrors; but after a time, when the fierce sun has done its utmost, and the moisture is dissipated, malaria and raging fever once more decline.

Miasmata may be transported by the wind on the level ground and can ascend a hillside for a certain distance. Malaria, however, does not appear on a mountain height, a sandy bluff or a plain where marsh and moisture are absent, unless these are to be found at no great distance. The paludal poison seems to obey many of the laws of a fluid—it flows in channels or along the surface and it may be deflected or stopped altogether by objects in its course. It may be arrested by a wall or by a grove of trees, so that on one side there will be immunity, on the other side death!

The regency of Algiers is affected with periodic disease, but quit the malarious coasts and plunge into the desert on one side or seek the ocean on the other and you are alike free from the murderous malaria.

“It is not, perhaps, likely that these remarks will convince those from whom I have the misfortune to differ; but they will, perhaps, help to set the question of the real and only origin of malaria in a clearer light, and thereby assist those who are anxious to arrive at a correct decision in forming their conclusions.”

Though Laveran in 1880 demonstrated the parasite, it was not till 1898 that Sir Ronald Ross finally succeeded in incriminating the mosquito.