

In Memoriam

J. A. PUREFOY COLLES, M.D., F.R.C.S.I.,

AGED 38.

It is with deep sorrow that we have to write of one who has recently been numbered with the dead. The name of J. Purefoy Colles is associated, in the minds of all who knew him, with everything that is upright, noble, and pure. He is now gone to

'That great world of light which lies
Behind all human destinies;'

leaving behind him an enviable memory. We should do wrong to allow this sad event to pass without paying, in all sincerity and solemnity, the tribute due to one whose character was marked by all that could command kindly regard and respect.

Dr. Colles entered the Indian Medical Service on the 27th of January, 1858. He died at Dinapore on the 8th of February, 1873. For about two weeks before his death he had been ailing, but not to a serious degree. He suffered from a low, undeveloped, remittent, febrile condition, which was not so severe as to prevent his attending to his daily duties. Some of his ordinary habits, in which he was peculiar, such as rising at 4 o'clock in the morning, walking (without sufficient precaution) in the heat of the day, and fasting for long periods, told unfavorably upon him when he was not in his usual health. His irrepressible devotion to duty, however, would not permit him to discontinue work. The practice of his profession, study, and the pursuit of science, were to him as an intelligent worship. He loved them for their own sake, not as means for the attainment of place, position, or distinction. As long as he could exert himself, he was hopefully active for good. Some of his friends, observing that he was ill and getting weaker, tried to persuade him to go to sea; but he hoped that a short change to Dinapore (where he happened to have near and dear relatives) would be sufficient to check his fever, and to restore him to health. The fatigues of the journey, however, caused an increase of nervous depression. His fever increased; his strength failed; and, after a brief but sad period of delirious excitement, during which his thoughts still clung to scenes and associations of duty, he passed away, leaving all who knew him to think with melancholy tenderness of his many sterling qualities.

His public services were varied and useful. He served in the field hospital at Lucknow in 1858. At different times he was in medical charge of the 24th Punjab Pioneers; the 3rd Troop, 1st Brigade, Bengal Horse Artillery; a detachment of Her Majesty's 98th Regiment, in the operations Trans-Gogra (in 1859); and of the 20th Punjab Native Infantry in 1863. In 1861 he was in charge of the Umballa Medical Depot, and afterwards officiated as Civil Surgeon of that station. In 1863 he acted as Civil Surgeon of Peshawar. From 28th May 1864 to 5th January 1866, he officiated as Professor of Physiology, General Anatomy, Comparative Anatomy, and Zoology, in the Calcutta Medical College, during the absence on sick leave of Surgeon J. Ewart, M.D.; and at the end of 1865, whilst he was a Professor, he showed his humility and conscientiousness by consenting to act as House Surgeon of the Medical College Hospital, in addition to his other duties, at a time when that institution was densely crowded with poor, famine-stricken creatures from Orissa and the neighbouring districts. In 1866 he was in medical charge of the Lawrence Military Asylum at Sanawur. From 31st December 1866 to 15th January 1868, he officiated a second time as Professor of Physiology and General Anatomy in the Medical College. During some months of 1868 he officiated as Curator of the Indian Museum. Towards the close of 1868 he served with the Hazara Field Force on the Black Mountain. During 1869-70 he was in Europe on furlough, being promoted to the rank of Surgeon on the 27th January 1870. From March 1871 he was, for one year, in medical charge of the 4th Sikh Infantry. On the 30th March 1872, he was appointed to officiate as Professor of Descriptive and Surgical Anatomy, and 2nd Surgeon to the Medical College Hospital, Calcutta, during the absence of Surgeon S. B. Partridge. He held this appointment up to the time of his death. Thus his total service extended over a little more than fifteen years; of which seven years and three months were passed in military employ, two years on furlough, and five years and nine months in civil employ.

For nearly a year he was Editor of the *Indian Medical Gazette*, and his contributions to these pages were frequent and valuable. His reviews of the reports of the Native Armies of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay, lately published, were careful and interesting; and the able article which appears in this number possesses a melancholy interest as his last contribution to medical literature. Some years ago he took an active part in the prosperity of the Bengal Branch of the British Medical Association, of which he was Secretary. He also took great interest in, and added largely to the Pathological Museum of the Medical College. He was a good anatomist, a keen naturalist, a safe and skilful surgeon, a ready public speaker, and an oriental linguist of some attainments.

His life was an example of wonderful practical earnestness. Indifferent to the praise of men, or to any outward applause, his fixed purpose was to do his daily work honestly, heartily, and with an enthusiasm bordering on religious zeal. His nature was innocent and healthful. With strenuous self-denial and untiring devotion he aspired after truth—in science, in nature, in life, and in all philosophy. To him all knowledge was a divine revelation—all truth, God's truth. Gifted with a keen intelligence, and trained to remarkable diligence in scientific study, he led a life void of all selfishness, upright in heart, resolutely self-reliant, truthfully simple, and of spotless integrity. To him truth, honour, duty, rectitude, and self-sacrifice, were more precious than life itself. It is not often that we see so genuine a character. Our kindly feelings, therefore, carry us away as we think of one so scrupulous, so pure-hearted, and so upward-striving—one upon whose grave we can now but lovingly cast a handful of kindly earth.

A deep and sincere attraction existed between Dr. Colles and his pupils, who truly respected and loved him. Everything that was for their instruction, improvement, and good, he did with a keen anxiety. The students of the Calcutta Medical College have already, as one man, testified their heartfelt grief at his loss; and ere long all connected with that School of Medicine—where he did such useful service—will no doubt take steps to perpetuate his memory by the erection of a suitable monumental tablet in testimony of the great esteem in which he was held.

His chivalrous love of the Natives of Upper India, particularly of Punjabees and frontier men, was a prominent trait of his character. There was not a Pathan, Affreedi, or Caubuli, in Calcutta, who had not heard of the "Doctor sahib" at the Medical College, who spoke *Pashtoo*, and who always delighted to receive them kindly, and to do what he could for them. There was something very touching indeed in his relations to these strong men. The very sight of them recalled to him the far-off North-Western frontier, the associations of which he loved so much; indeed his friends used often to be amused at the extravagant interest he took in these hardy children of Nature. If a friendless Caubuli (fruit-seller) happened to fall sick, he was sure to wander to the College Hospital, where he could at least command a hearty *moulakat* with "Colles Sahib Bahadoor," and where he was sure to meet with that ready and deeply-felt sympathy which such a nature can so thoroughly appreciate. It was sometimes a quaint and interesting sight to see our dear little friend deep in earnest conversation with these giant wanderers. When they were prostrated by sickness, he would sit on their beds, talk to them of their homes, comfort and cheer them, and enter into all their feelings; and on taking leave of these stalwart Ishmaelites he used to *shake hands* with them, as if they were his long-lost brothers! He had an intense admiration for all that was frank, natural, and manly.

There was something so unassuming, so ingenuous, and so estimable, mixed up with the Celtic gentility and heartiness of Purefoy Colles' character, and with his profound enthusiasm, that he never failed to win the affections of those with whom he was associated.

In the midst of all his work and study, however, he certainly enjoyed a yet higher life. "By two things," says the devout Thomas A. Kempis, "is a man lifted up from things earthly—namely, by Simplicity and Purity." We have seldom known any man more simple in heart and intention, or more pure in his affections than the subject of these thoughts. There was a reserve of inward piety and true virtue about his character, which only his best friends could fully know and appreciate. He was one of those anatomists who (to use the noble words of John Goodsir)—"lingering amid the harmonies of law and symmetry, constancy and development, took his part freely in the religious hymn in honour of the

Creator, to which Galen so gladly lent his voice, and in which the best physiologists of succeeding times have ever joined." All the actions of his life were regulated by filial devotion and submission to the Divine. He was continually practising, in the most reserved manner, a magnanimous benevolence and large charity. Careless in dress and curiously indifferent about outward appearance, his mind and heart evinced great culture. He lived for science and for the good of his fellowmen, and in their service he died. His excessive zeal proved injurious to his health, and we fear, it must be confessed, that his indefatigable ardour for work shortened his life. Personal inconvenience and discomfort he would not know. Alas! that the grave should have closed over one so good and so useful. Death has terminated his short and promising career, yet many pleasing associations will for ever remain interwoven with his memory in the hearts of those who knew and loved him. His earnestness, his single-heartedness, and the nobility of his nature, will help to influence for good the character of those who, surviving him, still live that they, too, may do faithful service in the sacred cause of humanity. Whilst we mourn over the friend whose spirit has passed from amongst us, we confidently feel that there is a bright reversion in the sky for such as he—

"For there are some to whom a strength is given,
A will, a self-constraining energy,
A faith that feeds upon no earthly hope,
Which never thinks of victory, combating
Because it ought to combat, . . .
And, conscious that to find in martyrdom
The stamp and signet of most perfect life,
Is all the science that mankind can reach,
Rejoicing fights and still rejoicing falls."*

Review.

On Relapsing or Famine Fever. By R. T. LYONS, Assistant Surgeon, Bengal Army, London: Henry S. King & Co., Cornhill, 1872, p. 384.—(First Notice.)

THE times medical would appear to be "out of joint!" Vieing in this respect with other matters—political, religious, secular, we cannot now jog along with that *otium cum dignitate*, distinguishing the stately progress of the gold-headed cane even so lately as the earlier days of the Georges. Doubtless, as many old pamphlets sufficiently prove, our pompous predecessors had their little disputes, and libelled each other to their hearts' content on every suitable, and on many unsuitable, occasions. But although one gentleman may have thought proper to publish such a pamphlet as "strictures on the present practice of physic," consisting chiefly in abuse of his neighbours; and although another physician might indite an essay on "the gravel," or "the gout," or "the collic," or "the phthisic," and this in not very parliamentary language, still their lucubrations referred chiefly to matters of detail in treatment. They had a simple faith in a fundamental doctrine, humoral or otherwise, according to their lights and era. They habitually called upon the "apothecary" for the use of the lancet, and they habitually ordered a combination of drugs which must have seriously disagreed with the stomachs of the unlucky patients. But they did not trouble themselves to question the teachings of the schools as regards the nature of disease. Even Sydenham and Radcliffe, who some two hundred years ago (as viewed by the light of modern science) owed their great success to not being so ready as their fellows with the lancet and physic—even these two medical giants of the past, were fonder of charging their professional colleagues with violent methods of treating disease than of honest research into the nature of a malady. It is doubtless true, that one at least of the worthies named did perhaps maliciously, and certainly uselessly, theorize on the nature of certain diseases. But, as a rule, the feeling of the profession was to accept the teachings of the schools, as fixed and immutable as the law of the Medes and Persians. The idea, if we recollect rightly, first hinted by Bacon, and apparently entertained by very many members of the profession of the present day, that a man should pass half his life in unlearning what he learnt in the first half, would have been utterly scouted by our professional forefathers!

* *The Combat of Life*, by R. M. Milnes.

Now, without going so far as to admit that the latter halves of our sublunary existence should be spent in this very unsatisfactory manner, we are nevertheless prepared to confess that many things acquired with some trouble may yet be unlearned with advantage. We will even go so far as to agree with Descartes, that no man has a claim to the title of philosopher who has not at least once in his life doubted all he had been previously taught. And in this we imagine many of our medical brethren will agree. For, however narrow-minded and opposed to conviction we, as a profession, have been popularly presumed, and however narrow-minded the profession may really have been in former days, we assert that if there be a fault it now lies in the opposite direction. And, perhaps, justly so too. For, during recent years, we have seen changes and discoveries in matters medical, which in their way must be at least as surprising to a former generation; as, for instance, the electric telegraph to Byron, who placed gas and galvanism in the same category as the ravings of Joanna Southcote; or ocean steamers to Dionysius Lardner, who, in his "History of Steam," ridiculed the idea of thus crossing the Atlantic. We therefore question most new theories diffidently, if critically.

It is not long since we reviewed Dr. Oldham's work entitled, "What is Malaria?" in which we were honestly asked to disbelieve in the existence of any such agent. And now we are similarly requested by Dr. Lyons to join issue with him, in the declaration that there is no such thing as malarious fever. Of course our author, denying malarious fever, also absolutely rejects the malaria origin of fever which he believes is "unworthy of permanence."

And he thus supports his views. "As in the case of other false doctrines in medicine, the faith in malaria has not directly achieved any benevolent result, nor indirectly secured to mankind much appreciable good. The malaria theory of the origin of fever has not in India, so far as I am aware, contributed to the diminution of this disease in its various forms. The theory is in the present day very influential in Lower Bengal, and in connection with this fact stands forth the fearful and terrible prevalence of fever in that portion of India. In the Punjab the malarial theory has in general received but a formal or wavering support, and in connection with the epidemics at one time very common which occurred in the prisons, it was absolutely rejected. To the abandonment of the malarious etiology of the epidemics of fever in the jails of the Punjab is to be attributed the practical extermination of relapsing fever in those jails. The diminution of disease and mortality in the jails of Lower Bengal was not due to elaborate measures designed to disperse or prevent the generation of malaria, but to the adoption of the homely plans sketched by Hutchinson for the better provision of the necessaries of life to the prisoners." Instead, then, of malarious fever as the root or type, Dr. Lyons, as may be readily inferred from the above, regards relapsing fever as the root or type, adopting the doctrine of the identity of intermittent, remittent, and continued fevers, either of which forms relapsing fever may assume. The intermittent and remittent relapsing fever of India—meaning let it be understood what has hitherto been recognized as malarious fevers—is the same disease according to our author as the continued relapsing fever of great Britain. "The cause, the general symptoms, the complications, the sequelæ, are identical; the natural history of the disease is the same in all." Briefly stated, Dr. Lyons' creed is this—1. Excepting typhus and typhoid as *maladies sui generis*, there is but one fever in India, and that fever is RELAPSING. 2. Relapsing fever may assume an intermittent, remittent, or continued form. 3. Relapsing fever is caused by famine, or at least by insufficient nourishment, or by food deficient in the necessary elementary alimentary material. 4. Relapsing fever having originated may become contagious.

We will now endeavour to show how far the author's views are supported by the evidence he brings forward; noticing by the way occasional signs of omission and commission, and summing up with that justice and liberality which we would desire, were the positions reversed.

The first section of the book gives the definition of Relapsing Fever as "a contagious fever generated by starvation, chiefly met with among the poor classes, and occurring as an epidemic during seasons of scarcity and famine." It may be intermittent, remittent, or continued, or partly intermittent and partly remittent, or continued. Its invasion is abrupt; there is often jaundice; in one variety a scarlet eruption; occasionally