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ON THE

EFFICACY OF YEAST

IN THE CURE OF THOSE DISEASES KNOWN
BY THE NAME OF PUTRID.



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*In the cure of those Diseases known by the
name of Putrid.**

A REMEDY, which contains much fixed air, has been lately started by the Rev. Mr. Cartwright, which merits the highest attention. Seventeen years ago, says this gentleman, I went to reside at Braampton, a very populous village near Chesterfield. I had not been there many months before a putrid fever broke out among us: finding by far the greater number of my new parishioners much too poor to afford themselves medical assistance, I undertook,

* The contents of this article cannot be too generally known. How many valuable lives are yearly lost by putrid sore throats, fevers, &c. which might be saved to the community, and to their relatives, if the cure here recommended were generally known and resorted to! with proper medical aid, however, where it can be had.

Arthur Young.

by the help of such books on the subject of medicine as were in my possession, to prescribe for them. I early attended a boy about fourteen years of age who was attacked by this fever; he had not been ill many days before the symptoms were unequivocally putrid. I then administered bark, wine, and such other remedies as my book directed. My exertions, however, were of no avail; his disorder grew every day more untractable and malignant, so that I was in hourly expectation of his dissolution. Being under the absolute necessity of taking a journey,—before I set off I went to see him, as I thought, for the last time, and I prepared his parents for the event of his death, which I considered as inevitable, and reconciled them in the best manner I could to a loss which I knew they would feel severely. While I was in conversation on this distressing subject with his mother, I observed in a corner of the room a small tub of wort working; the sight brought to my recollection an experiment I had somewhere met with, of a piece of putrid meat being made sweet by being suspended over a tub of wort in the act of fermentation. The idea instantly flashed into my mind that the yeast might correct the putrid nature of this disease, and I instantly gave him two large

spoonfulls. I then told the mother, if she found her son better, to repeat this dose every three hours. I then set out on my journey: upon my return, after a few days, I anxiously inquired about the boy, and was informed he was recovered. I could not repress my curiosity: though I was greatly fatigued with my journey, and night was come on, I went directly to where he lived, which was three miles off, in a wild part of the moors; the boy himself opened the door, looked surprizingly well, and told me he felt better from the instant he took the yeast.

After I left Brampton I lived in Leicestershire: my parishioners being few and opulent, I dropped my medical character entirely, and would not even prescribe for any of my own family. One of my domesticks falling ill, accordingly the apothecary was sent for; his complaint was a violent fever, which in its progress became putrid: having great reliance, and deservedly, on the apothecary's penetration and judgment, the man was left solely to his management.

His disorder, however, kept daily gaining ground, till at length the apothecary considered him in very great danger: at last, finding every effort to be of service to him baffled, he told me he considered it as

a lost case, and that, in his opinion, the man could not survive four-and-twenty hours. On the apothecary thus giving him up, I determined to try the effects of yeast. I gave him two large table spoon-fulls; in fifteen minutes from taking the yeast, his pulse, though still feeble, began to get composed and full. He in thirty-two minutes from his taking the yeast was able to get up from his bed and walk in his room. At the expiration of the second hour I gave him a bason of sago, with a good deal of lemon, wine, and ginger in it; he ate it with an appetite: in another hour I repeated the yeast; an hour afterwards I gave the bark as before; at the next hour he had food; next he had another dose of yeast, and then went to bed; it was nine o'clock. I went to see him the next morning at six o'clock; he told me he had had a good night, and was recovered. I, however, repeated the medicine, and he was able to go about his business as usual.

About a year after this, as I was riding past a detached farm house, at the outskirts of the village, I observed a farmer's daughter standing at the door, apparently in great affliction; on inquiring into the cause of her distress, she told me her father was dying. I dismounted, and went into the house to see him.

I found him in the last stage of a putrid fever; his tongue was black, his pulse was scarcely perceptible, and he lay stretched out, like a corpse, in a state of drowsy insensibility. I immediately procured some yeast, which I diluted with water, and poured it down his throat. I then left him, with little hopes of recovery. I returned to him in about two hours, and found him sensible, and able to converse. I then gave him a dose of bark; he afterwards took, at a proper interval, some refreshment; I staid with him till he repeated the yeast, and then left him, with directions how to proceed. I called upon him the next morning at nine o'clock, and found him apparently well, walking in his garden: he was an old man, upwards of seventy.

I have since administered the yeast to above fifty persons labouring under putrid fevers; and, what is singular, continues this benevolent clergyman, "I have not lost one patient."

Dr. Thornton, whose opportunities have been great in putrid fevers, having the superintendance of a dispensary* which includes the poor of nine parishes, and is situated in the vicinity of St. Giles's, has made frequent trials of yeast, and speaks highly in its praise.

One day, says the Rev. Mr. Townsend, by acci-

* The General Dispensary.

dent, as Dr. Thornton went past a shop in Tottenham-Court-Road, he heard the screams of a mother who was agonized on seeing her child, as she thought, expire. These screams renewed the struggles of the child, and the nurse who attended threatened to take away at this moment the child, that it might die in quiet. Dr. Thornton got down immediately some tartar emetick, which quickly acted as a vomit; and after the operation was over he gave rhubarb, which cleared the intestines; he then ordered the child, every two hours, yeast and water, with wine and bark, and in three days the dying child was up and well.

The infection had spread to two others in the same house: in this child, and in another, the putrid fever was attended with swelled glands, which suppurated, and threatened gangrene: in a robust servant girl it took the form of a dreadful putrid sore throat; she had an emetick, and afterwards some rhubarb, then yeast and water every two hours. The first effect of this newly discovered remedy was that of rendering the pulse fuller, and fifteen beats less in a minute, and her black tongue soon assumed a clean and red appearance: without bark or wine she was speedily recovered.

† Mr. Burford's.

In Dr. Beddoes' Considerations there are the following cures; Mr. Caldwell, engraver, (as Dr. Thornton reports,) requested him to go into Greenstreet, Leicesterfields, to attend Mr. Hadril, who, he said, it was supposed would not outlive the day. I found him labouring under a dreadful putrid sore throat; the tongue was black and thick coated, and the pulse quick and fluttering: evacuations being first premised, yeast and bark in porter were exhibited every two hours. His sister who nursed him, was soon after attacked by the same fever, but the throat was not affected. She was not, like her brother, confined to her bed, but her weakness was so great that she could not walk across the room, nor even stand up half a minute without support. In both these cases the relief from the yeast was very striking, and they were soon cured: the wife was also infected, who received a similar benefit from the yeast.

The most extraordinary cases, however, are the following:—In Husband-street, a small confined situation near Berwick-street, a fever broke out, which, in the short space of a fortnight, in three houses only, swept away six persons. Dr. Thornton's assistance was at this time called in to Mrs. Wollot, No. 1, in that street, who lay delirious and

comatose, with her two children, all in the same bed. She refused medicine and food, and was obliged to be drenched, in order to get either down: an emetick and cathartick being premised, they were all put upon the same plan; that is, were to take, every three hours, two-thirds of a glass of fresh porter, with two table spoonfuls of yeast and the juice of half a lemon; and the food, at intervals, was the white of eggs, which Dr. Thornton judged of all things were least subject to putrefy,* beat up with sugar and water; and, as it was the commencement of summer, strawberries were also ordered: and without any further medicine from the apothecary than the emetick and purge, although the woman was at first obliged to be drenched, yet she and her whole family recovered, and this very rapidly.

Among the poor in St. Giles's nothing is administered by Dr. Thornton, after cleaning the primæ viæ, than two table spoonfuls of yeast in some porter every two hours; and out of above forty cases, not one has died under this treatment.

[43 *Young's Annals of Agriculture*—163.

* We know that eggs are kept for a great length of time, and the white, even under the heat of a hen's body does not putrefy, and it serves as milk to the embryo in the egg.

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