

stomach.—59. It is to be supposed that epithelial tumours are sometimes found in serous membranes, everywhere, in fact, where epithelium prevails. M. Lebert has found several small tumours at the inner surface of the arachnoid, consisting entirely of epithelial cells; and M. Robin has observed a similar appearance at the inner surface of the veins of a horse.

*Keloid Tumours.*—60. Keloid bears some relationship to canceroid, and especially in its disposition to local reproduction after operation. It is constituted of one or more projecting tumours of the skin, which may arise spontaneously, or become developed in cicatrices; and even when it occurs spontaneously, it is reproduced with astonishing facility, and this in the cicatrices which have succeeded to its extirpation. From this disposition to local as distinguished from constitutional reproduction, it may be considered as a link of the chain connecting the different forms of canceroid. Microscopically examined, there are no other elements than hypertrophied dermis found. The dense white tissue presents no cancer-cell, and it is usually composed of a mixture of fibrous and fibro-plastic elements in every degree of development. The juice pressed out of it is transparent, and exhibits only the cells, nuclei, and fusiform bodies proper to the tissue. When the juice and the amorphous uniting material are abundant, the tumour may take on a gelatiniform or fibro-colloid appearance, that has been mistaken for colloid cancer.

Besides the Essays in this volume that are here analysed, there are other papers which do not seem to us to call for more than an enumeration. These are, a case of Urethroplasty, by M. Ricord; a case of Fibrous Tumour of the Breast, by M. H. Larrey; two cases of Hydatid Cysts within the Cavity of the Abdomen, by M. Goyrand, (one of these being a hydatid cyst of the liver discharged by the bronchial and digestive passages, and the other an enormous acephalocyst of the spleen, which was opened externally); a case of Lachrymal Tumour, by M. Auzias-Turenne; and a case of Resection of the Superior Maxilla, by M. Michon, in which the palatine vault and alveolar margin were preserved, and a large osseous tumour was removed from the maxillary sinus. This case, regarded by the author as unique, in consequence of the large amount of the important structures he was enabled to leave behind, is very interesting, and reported in great detail; but it cannot be rendered intelligible by abridgment.

#### ART. V.

*A History of Epidemic Pestilences from the Earliest Ages, 1495 years before the Birth of our Saviour, to 1848, with Researches into their Nature, Causes, and Prophylaxis.* By EDWARD BASCOMB, M.D.—London, 1851. 8vo, pp. 250.

THE history of Pestilences is almost the history of the world. There exists no people which has not testified by common sufferings to its common origin, and has not proved its brotherhood by sharing the evils which afflict mankind. War, famines, and plagues compose, in many cases, the dreary record of national life. The historian of pestilences should, therefore, know all countries, and should read all languages. To so great a



theme he must bring the energy of a settled purpose, and the labour of a life of thought. Without a great capacity and a firm resolve, he had better not meddle with a subject so impracticable and so vast. It is not every one who has strength enough to scale the Andes, or nerve to measure calmly the vast height of threatening avalanches.

The history of pestilences should not be a barren catalogue of diseases and their dates. The subject loses both interest and utility, if the only point of view is the chronological one. It may make men sadder, merely to learn how often their race has been afflicted, but it can scarcely make them wiser. It gives them no insight into the past, and promises them no guidance for the future.

The great writers on pestilences have considered their subject on various sides. Some, as Noah Webster or Schnurrer, have curiously sought out the great physical phenomena, as earthquakes, volcanoes, comets, famines, floods, &c., which may have been coincident with plagues. The object has been, to see whether from frequent coincidence it could be proved that these pestilences had any connexion with the grand aberrations of nature. Others again, of whom Hecker may be cited as the greatest instance, have endeavoured, by investigation into the habits and customs of a nation, and into the physical circumstances among which it dwelt, to trace the possible influences thence exerted over diseases. Or, rising to the highest point of view, other writers have endeavoured, from a consideration of every circumstance, from noting the vast changes of the physical world, and the apparently minute incidents which diversify man's private life, from the changes of empires and the migration of nations, from the shifting of customs and the versatilities of fashions, to deduce by strict analysis the genesis and spread of pestilences. Mysterious and inscrutable as they seem at first, who can doubt but that the key of the secret really can be found, and that epidemics are but the hieroglyphics which abstruse and hidden, but yet discoverable causes have stamped upon the earth.

The author of the work before us has not, we think, done justice either to his subject or himself. It is almost ludicrous to find the record of epidemics from the earliest times, in a small thin volume, with good broad print. The information is as meagre as the volume. Neither as a chronological record, nor as a comparison of physical changes or of national condition with epidemics, nor as a foundation for a searching induction and generalization, can we praise Dr. Bascomb's book. His final chapters are, to our minds, especially distasteful; and with the exception of some general truths, there are few sentences with which we can feel perfectly satisfied. Yet the book bears abundant evidence that its author is a man of no little ability and of much learning, and that, if he had bestowed more time on his subject, he could not but have produced a work which would have been an honour to our national literature.

The book is divided into two parts. The first 183 pages are occupied with an enumeration of the various epidemics, and short notices of the different attendant circumstances. This part is imperfect and sketchy; and although authorities are cited, no reference is made to their works, and we are uncertain whether the quotations are from the originals or from copiers. Almost at random we shall select some passages for comment, which will prove that we have not spoken too harshly of Dr. Bascomb's carelessness.



At page 3, Dr. Bascome cites from Plutarch the occurrence of a pestilence at Rome in the year 790 B.C. He has not given the reference to Plutarch, but the date must be a misprint, or a miscalculation. Rome was not built till the year 752 or 754 B.C., most probably at the latter period; and the first pest mentioned by Plutarch occurred in the year 738 B.C. The next recorded pestilence at Rome, in the days of Tullus Hostilius, is given by Dr. Bascome as in the year 694 B.C., the real date being 645 B.C. At page 6, he speaks of the pest at Athens as occurring 435 B.C. The exact date was in the second year of the Peloponnesian war, either in the year 430 or 431 B.C., and 321 or 322 years after the building of Rome. It happens that in this case the date is of material importance, as otherwise the fact is lost, that the breaking out of the Athenian pest coincided exactly with the period when apparently the same disease was at its height in Rome.

At page 9 and 10, several pestilences of the fourth century B.C. are recorded, but our chronology differs so much from Dr. Bascome's, that we recognise them with some difficulty. He omits, however, all notice of a disease which prevailed at Rome, 420 B.C., and was almost universal, but attended with scarcely any mortality, and which has been conjectured to have been influenza. Nor does he mention the widespread disease, which some commentators have put down also as influenza,—and which, if so, was the first known attack,—which had prevailed five years before (415 B.C.) among the Athenian army in Sicily.

We also read—"Annis 393 and 383 B.C., the armies of Gaul and Rome were afflicted with sore pestilence." (p. 9.) Here is a singular confusion. The Gauls, after taking Rome, and while besieging the Capitol, were attacked in the former year with a most mortal plague, but the plague of 383 B.C. had nothing to do with them. It broke out most suddenly at Rome, without known cause, and lasted for some years. In the same page, the great plague of Rome, when Quintus Curtius leaped into the chasm, is erroneously put down as occurring in the year 366 B.C., whereas it commenced the year before. This is a trifling error, but in the next page is a mistake so grave, that if it existed only by itself, we should from that circumstance doubt Dr. Bascome's accuracy. He writes—"Annis 332, 296, and 291 B.C., Rome was again visited by pestilence, which was particularly fatal to breeding women and breeding cattle. A similar visitation affected Rome anno 272 B.C." (p. 10.) Now so far was the remarkable pestilence of 331 (not 332) B.C. from affecting women, that it attacked men almost entirely; and this peculiarity so terrified them that they accused the women of causing the plague, and 370 matrons were tried for sorcery and put to death. It was fifty-five years after this (276, not 272 B.C.) that the plague occurred which attacked women and beasts, and produced so many abortions that the Romans thought both men and domestic beasts were about to perish. To confound two such remarkable incidents in a common description, is indeed to make an "olla podrida" of history.

We observe also that the diseases which ravaged the armies of Alexander (about 322 B. C.) are altogether passed over, although several very interesting points should have been noticed, such as the tetanus which so afflicted them in Bactria, and the cutaneous disease which broke out on the banks of the Indus, and which, it has been supposed, was small-pox.



But let us take a description of one of these plagues. Most of them are so briefly referred to, that we might as well have remained altogether in ignorance. But one plague we might have expected that Dr. Bascome would have detailed more perfectly. Has any one ever written on Pestilences, and not paused to quote at length that marvellous description of the Athenian pest, which Thucydides, himself a sufferer, has pictured with the strength and colours of immortal genius? Dr. Bascome dismisses it in a page and a half, and the description of the actual disease occupies only twenty-eight lines, and is said to be drawn, not only from Thucydides, but from Lucretius, who 250 years subsequently gave a poetical description of it, all the main features of which were taken from Thucydides! Dr. Bascome says, that "the pestilence broke out at Athens when the inhabitants of the Athenian territory were crowded together into the city to avoid the ravages of the Lacedemonians." (p. 7.) He does not tell us, what is much more to the point, that the pestilence had ravaged Ethiopia, Lybia, Egypt, many parts of Persia and Italy, and afterwards Lemnos; that it commenced first in the harbours of the Piræus, to which it might have been brought by Egyptian ships; and that, although it was probably aggravated by the crowded state of the city, it did not arise, as has been too frequently stated, after Diodorus Siculus, from the pressure of the siege, as, apart from other evidence, the invaders only remained forty days in the Athenian territory, and then, terrified at the reports of the disease, retreated. The description given of the disease by Dr. Bascome would rend the heart of an historian. We find no mention of the blood-red tongue, of the burning at the chest, and heavy cough; of the great pain in the stomach which often accompanied the bilious vomiting; of the frightful cramp which attended the hiccup; of the reddish hue of the skin without marked heat, of the continual restlessness; and of the remarkable sequelæ—viz., gangrene of the genitals,\* or of the hands and feet, destruction of the eyes, or the impairment of the memory which often lasted for so long a time afterwards. Thucydides also mentions that the disease attacked only once—a very important point, which every author who has quoted the historian has noted. As to the symptoms which he has noted, Dr. Bascome does not touch them forcibly enough; he speaks of "insatiable thirst," but Thucydides, to give a lively idea of the torment of the thirst, says, that the sick lay by the fountains, and, if not watched, plunged in. The violent fever is spoken of; but the description of the way in which the sick threw off all clothing and lay naked on the earth, is a mode of illustration which he might well have adopted. The diarrhœa is mentioned; but it is not stated that it was liable to come on after the seventh and ninth days, and killed many, although Thucydides remarks that it was sometimes critical.

In describing this pestilence also, Dr. Bascome has omitted all the attendant circumstances which, in the pages of Thucydides, give so vivid an impression of the horrors of the time. The dread of the disease, the fear of contagion, the unattended sick, the careless burying of the dead, the crowding of the temples with corpses, wild beasts and birds shunning the dead bodies or dying if they eat of them, the loosening of morality,

\* Amputation of the penis was apparently performed—

"Vivebant ferro privati parte virili."

LUCRETIUS.



since men deemed that Destiny was accomplished, and that they all must die, and therefore passed in sensual joys their few remaining hours,—all these and other points Dr. Bascome deems of no value, although without such description half the reality of the picture must be lost.

Finally, Dr. Bascome very cavalierly remarks that the symptoms were “analogous to those of the bilious remittent and yellow fever of America and the West Indies.” (p. 8.) We do not object to this opinion, which has received the support of Copland; but other hypotheses should at least have been mentioned. Thus the comparison of it with the “*Ignis Sacer*,” which prevailed so extensively from the third to the eleventh centuries, or with the epidemic fever which ravaged Hungary in 1566, and with other diseases of the middle ages, brings out as many points of resemblance as that with yellow fever.

Let us, however, leave the Athenian plague, and take up some other portion of the book. The description of the diseases of the middle ages, and especially those of the fourteenth century, would test the power of any one. Yet, in some measure, the path has been cleared. Hecker’s magnificent work on the “*Black Death*,” would at any rate so far save a writer on the history of pestilences, all trouble but that of condensation. But singularly enough, though Dr. Bascome quotes Hecker, and uses the term “*Black Death*,” in one place (p. 50), the grand features of the disease, its course, and principal symptoms, are so vaguely described, that we venture to say that no one, from perusing the account, would have the remotest conception of the actual extent of our knowledge on the point. So, also, after his description of the pestilential years in the middle of the fourteenth century, he passes on to describe, after Hecker, the dancing mania which immediately succeeded. Although he had got the dates before him, he post-dates the commencement of the great epidemic which was ushered in by the wild orgies of St. John’s Day, by at least twenty-four years. He says it was evidently the “*chorea*” of the present day, to which notion he has been led probably by one of the terms given to the dancing mania (viz., “*St. Vitus’s dance*,” because it was cured by invocations to St. Vitus), and which term, lasting beyond the disease for which it was at first used, was applied by later medical writers to a disease which they fancied somewhat resembled the dancing plague. Another instance of singular oversight and carelessness occurs in this page (p. 56). After stating that the dancing mania began in 1374, he writes, “the disease also prevailed in France, and the sufferers were called ‘*convulsionnaires*.’” The enormous anachronism of nearly 400 years is thus committed, since the sect of the *convulsionnaires* arose from the repeated miracles performed in Paris at the tomb of the Jansenist Paris, who died in 1724,\* and the miraculous powers of whose ashes were not discovered till six or seven years afterwards. The ‘*convulsionnaires*’ have indeed an intimate medical connexion with the dancers of St. John, as in both cases it was a disease engendered by superstition, fraud, imitation, and communicated impulse,† but there is no other connexion between them.

If, leaving the first part of Dr. Bascome’s book, we pass to the second,

\* We quote the date from memory, but we are right within a year or two.

† We have used this term in the same sense as that of “*suggestive idea*,” which has been lately employed.



on the nature, causes, and prophylaxis of epidemics, we find ourselves equally at issue with him. Here, however, we are dealing with matters of opinion, and Dr. Bascome may think his dictum as good as ours. But we cannot believe that many English practitioners hold opinions so vague and unsatisfactory. The "nature and causes of epidemic pestilences" is the title of the opening chapter of this part; but after an attentive consideration of it, we are quite unable to say what Dr. Bascome's meaning may be. But, so far as we can make out, he considers that the usual distinctions between various epidemic diseases, such as yellow fever, cholera, &c., are erroneous, and that all these presumed separate affections should be classed under the one head of "pestilence."

"We now hear," writes Dr. Bascome, "pestilence called plague in Egypt, yellow fever in America and elsewhere, bilious remittent and intermittent, and also yellow fever in the West Indies, and typhus or nervous fever in Great Britain; we read also of the same epidemics, which the ancients called pimples, pustules, apostumes, and gangrenous sores, now being called distinct and confluent small-pox, carbuncles, &c." (p. 188.)

But Dr. Bascome would not only call them by their old names, (if old they are, for we never heard before of an epidemic of pimples,) but evidently thinks that the distinctions implied by the several names are worse than useless. He speaks "of the wisdom and superiority of the arrangements of our predecessors, when compared with the confusion and more than uselessness of many of the nosological distinctions and classifications made since the days of Hippocrates." (p. 186.) And then just afterwards we have an instance of the "superior arrangements" he alludes to, since he tells us (though where he got the information from he does not say) that the ancients "classed all pestilential epidemic distempers under one general head or term—viz., pestilence, plague, or fever; under the head of consumption they noted all chronic diseases; and boils, scabs, pustules, blotches, carbuncles, &c., were included under that of skin diseases." (p. 187.)

If the distinguishing and essential point about a disease is simply the fact that it affects many persons at once, then we believe that Dr. Bascome is right in putting yellow fever, ague, typhus, cholera, and bubo-plague, &c., under one head; but if the characters of a disease are to be drawn, and if differences in causes are to be inferred, from the several constant effects produced on the human frame, then we need not say that Dr. Bascome's heterogenous classification appears the most singular jumble of causes and effects which can be conceived. This notion is not, however, a new one. It has been argued by several speculative writers, that the several forms of disease (which are generally considered as so many entities with specific peculiarities of origin, progress, and manifestation) are merely various forms of the same vague general disease, which presents itself now in one, and now in another shape. This opinion has never made progress, and probably never will, for it is contradicted by the first steps of inquiry, and can only be maintained by the most flagrant disregard of elementary facts.

In the next chapter, on the "causes of epidemic pestilences," epidemic diseases are attributed to atmospheric vicissitudes, such variations of temperature and of electrical conditions acting upon bodies predisposed to disease from defective sanitary conditions, such as want of light, impure



air, a scanty diet, and the "irregular and artificial life of man in a state of civilization." Dr. Bascombe puts aside at once any notion of a specific material cause, even in the case of marsh diseases. To the obvious objections that epidemic diseases, as we see them, do not glide into each other, but are always distinct and easily distinguishable, and have been proved to have been so in some cases for many centuries, Dr. Bascombe must, we presume, believe that he has already sufficiently replied by anticipation, when he made the assumption of the unity of "pestilence." To the next argument, which at once arises, that a specific material cause must be assumed for many epidemic diseases, because they are obviously transmitted from diseased persons to those near them, Dr. Bascombe replies by making a series of assumptions, which are either expressed openly, or which naturally flow from the premises, and which we may express as follows.

It cannot, of course, be denied that some diseases, such as small-pox, being incontestably propagated by contagion, must have a material and specific cause, capable of transference; but Dr. Bascombe separates all such contagious diseases from epidemics, although why this title should be denied to them we cannot understand. He then denies that the remaining diseases which compose his class of epidemics, or rather make less his conglomerate of "pestilence," such as cholera, yellow fever, influenza, continued fever, intermittents and remittents, are ever contagious. The argument on which he rests a conclusion so contradicted by facts, and especially by recent accurate investigations, is of a description which, without offence, we must take leave to call flimsy. Seven pages dismiss the question, and several of these have really no bearing on the point. As a specimen of this argument, we may quote one page out of the seven, which contains what Dr. Bascombe evidently thinks the strength of his position.

"But that which I would urge in support of the NON-CONTAGIOUSNESS of epidemic pestilences, irrespective of every other authority, is the remarkable fact, that in our most ancient medical treatise, the thirteenth chapter of Leviticus, no mention whatever is made of epidemic diseases being reckoned contagious, although at the time when the Levitical code was being propounded there was no lack of experience in epidemic diseases; for in the days of Moses the times in Egypt were calamitous indeed—pestilence and famine ran riot through the land. Had epidemic diseases, then so common and lethal in Egypt, been considered contagious, the presumption is, that they would have been enumerated as such among those which were specified in character—viz., leprosy, scabies, lues,\* &c.; and when we observe such minuteness displayed in the Mosaic ordinances to the very freeing of houses from damp previously to occupation, we cannot suppose that precautionary directions, as regards such universal and lethal maladies as epidemics, would have been omitted. With this remarkable fact before us, derived from sacred authority, I feel at a loss to conjecture the ground on which the idea of contagion is *at all entertained*, more especially as we have the occurrence of pestilential diseases not only foretold, but their very nature and mode of production positively conveyed to us from the same Divine source.

"The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning. (Deut. chap. xxviii.) And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt. (Exod. chap. ix.) But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he

\* What is meant by lues? Where is scabies mentioned?



destroyed them and smote them with emerods (violent dysentery), even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. (1 Sam. chap. v.) I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, &c. (Levit. chap. xxvi.) I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast, they shall die of a great pestilence. (Jeremiah, chap. xxi.) The sun and the moon standing still in their habitations, the mountains trembling, the waters overflowing causing famine and pestilence. (Habakkuk, chap. iii.) Behold, I will send a blast upon him. (2 Kings, chap. xix.) The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust. (Deut. ch. xxviii.) Thy heaven shall be brass and the earth iron. (Ibid.) And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, &c. (Zechariah, chap. xiv.)"—(pp. 213—14.)

Œdipus himself could not understand how these extracts are intended to bear on the position they are quoted to support. To us the whole thing is unintelligible, and we can only consider it as an entire misapplication of scripture truths and lessons.

Dr. Bascome does not consider it necessary to enter into the question at greater length, and we may very safely follow his example.

The last chapter in the book, the "prophylaxis" of pestilence, consists merely of the well-known sanitary rules as to the influence of light, air, water, &c.

We have now finished a review which it has given us no pleasure to write, for we would much rather, at any time, set about discovering excellencies than defects, and new truths than ancient errors. But on a subject so vast and important as that of epidemic diseases, if facts are inaccurately stated, and inferences illogically drawn, we have no choice except to abdicate our critical chair, or to express our dissent. We recommend Dr. Bascome, in all friendliness, to go again over the subject; to collect his facts with more care; to collate the accounts which we possess; to observe how these have been considered by the laborious and thoughtful writers who have written on epidemics; and when he has got his materials well before him, then, and not till then, to form his conclusions. He has either grudged the immense labour necessary for this, or he is not endowed with the accuracy and care requisite for such an inquiry. But unless he is prepared to investigate epidemics with a perseverance that knows no lassitude, and an acuteness that knows no failure, he should leave the subject altogether alone. He is evidently a man of talent; and we would hope that when we next meet with him, he may have remedied the defects of which we now complain, and may give us something in which we may be able to agree as frankly as in the present instance we have been compelled to differ.