

THE GLEANER:

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OLD SERIES] *Nec araneorum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.* [COMPRISED 13 VOLUMES.]

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Communications.

COUNTY KENT.

RICHIBUCTO LITERARY SOCIETY.

Mr. Pierce,
In compliance with a resolution of the Richibucto Literary Society, passed on Thursday last, I forward a synopsis of its proceedings, during the past winter, for insertion (if convenient) in the Gleaner.

The introductory Address of the Society was delivered by Dr. McLaren, in November last, to a highly respectable and attentive audience. The lecturer dwelt upon the importance of knowledge to all classes of society; ridiculed the idea that because all men could not 'drink deep,' therefore they should never taste of the fountain of knowledge; anticipated and answered any objections which might be urged against the successful continuation of a Literary Society in Richibucto; and concluded an interesting address by enumerating the various branches of science which might advantageously be cultivated, explaining their meaning, and showing their practical utility.

The next Lecture was delivered in January by Mr. Joseph C Wheten, upon the Decline of the Roman Empire. Its object was to show the connected chain of causes co-operating to make Rome and her colonies the successful prize of European and Asiatic barbarians.

During February, Mr Thomas Powell delivered a lecture on Hydrostatics, to a numerous and fashionable audience. The principles governing the science were clearly elucidated by familiar illustrations, and their object in relation to the practical purposes of life fully expounded. The effect which a single drop of water might produce when falling on a large volume of water occupying a peculiar position, quite startled many of his hearers; while all acknowledged the correctness of the application of the science, in allusion to the lakes and plains in the rear of the neighbourhood. The Lecture was closed with some beautiful imaginative remarks in unison with the subject, which elicited much admiration, and which seemed to be the innate element of the Lecturer, more even than water.

In March, Mr Robert Hutchison delivered a Lecture on Astronomy, to a crowded and intelligent audience. A brief historical view of the various systems of Astronomy was presented to the hearers, as maintained by Pythagoras, Ptolemy, Aristotle, Tycho Brahe and Copernicus. The laws of our own solar system were explained, and Newton's theory illustrated; the attraction of the moon upon the waters, causing the action of the tides, fully noticed; and the Lecturer's theory of the boundlessness of the material universe, elucidated in glowing metaphorical language, suited to a theme so dignified.

Owing to the want of Philosophical apparatus, the last two lectures were unable to exhibit to their hearers any of those pleasing experiments which their subjects require; and which, when accompanying abstract theories, so happily blend instruction with amusement.

The intervening time between the Lectures, was occupied by the members of the society, in useful and spirited debates on Moral, Scientific and Political subjects.

The Society, during the past winter did not enjoy, (as during preceding winters) the advantage of having lectures delivered by persons unconnected with the Institution; and thus, a large portion of time was necessarily devoted to those mental exercises in which all might participate, and which would afford to all an opportunity for the interchange of sentiment.

JOSEPH C. WHETEN, Secretary.
Richibucto, April 29, 1848.

THE TRACADIE LEPROSY.

Mr. Pierce,
The Report of the late commission to en-

quire into the nature and extent of the 'Tracadie Leprosy'—the difference of opinion amongst the members of the medical profession, as to its precise character,—the very clever paper which this difference has elicited from so many quarters, and above all the proper duty of the Legislature, in dealing with it, naturally invest the subject with more than ordinary interest. An enquiry therefore into the identity of this disease, with the Leprosy spoken of in the Sacred Scriptures: the mode of treatment of the Lepers amongst the Jews, as well as the estimation in which the disease is held by society in general, in modern times, will, I think, to the unprofessional reader, be found interesting, and it may be useful; at the same time I do not flatter myself that such enquiry will promote the settlement of the 'vexed question' of contagious and non-contagious, on the contrary, if I were to offer an opinion, I should say it will tend to plunge that disputed point, into greater doubt and difficulty. In furtherance however of the object in view, I beg to offer the following statements and opinions, collected from various standard works, with a few remarks thereon.

From a Review in the 'Christian Treasury' of 'Malcolm's Travels in the Burman Empire,' I take the following—* * * * * it is stated (by Mr. Malcolm) that in Burmah the population is divided into eight classes, the Royal Family, Great Officers, Priests, Rich Men, Labourers, Slaves, Lepers, Executioners. Excluding the last, the division is not in its general features, unlike that which prevailed amongst the Jews under the monarchy, indeed with the exclusion intimated, we should be disposed to make little other alteration in it, for the purpose of illustration, than to introduce another class, consisting of the family chiefs, or heads of families or tribes. These however held public employments very generally under the kings, and might therefore be merged in the class of great officers.' We have selected this fact however, chiefly for the sake of coming through it, to the further statement, that 'none of the classes constitute a hereditary caste except Lepers and the slaves of Pagodas. The Hebrews had other hereditary castes or rather orders, namely, priests, and family chiefs, but they seem to have also had these two of the Burmese, and no more. The *nethinim* or servants of the Jewish Temple, answered very nearly to the slaves of the pagodas, and that their condition was hereditary is very well known. We felt most interested, however, respecting this hereditary caste of Lepers. Was there such a caste among the Hebrews? we know that the Hebrew lepers 'were excluded from towns, and lived apart,' but we know also, that when any one became clean of this disease (when its visible progress ceased?) he was, after due examination and probation, re-admitted to the general society of his fellow citizens. Such a provision does not exist among the Burmese, and it seems incompatible with the idea of an hereditary caste. Still the idea of establishing such a caste, among a people, who do not habitually separate themselves into castes, must, we apprehend, be founded upon the impression, that the children of Lepers were themselves Lepers, it may not have been always so, but it must have been generally so, before such a caste could have been established. Now, a careful consideration of the particulars concerning Leprosy and Lepers, which the scriptures contain, may lead to the conclusion, that there was something of this kind among the Israelites, with little other difference than that with them, there existed a provision for the restoration to society of such as could shew themselves free from the taint of this remarkable malady.'

In connexion with this subject, the words of Elisha to Gehazi forcibly recur to the mind. 'The Leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever.' (2nd Kings, 27th verse) This, as we take it, signifies that Naaman's leprosy was of a hereditary and incurable kind. He had been miraculously cured of it; but now it should be transferred to Gehazi and his descendants, without the hope of cure or relief.'

Now, Gehazi and his descendants, must in the course of time, have formed one hereditary case of Lepers of themselves; but there were probably others in the same case, even in his time, unless we suppose, which we have no reason to do, that the disease was in this instance miraculous, not only in its transfer from Naaman to Gehazi, but in its hereditary character. But if the Leprosy of Gehazi was of such character, and that of Naaman was not, then the Leprosy of Naaman was longer that of Gehazi. But we are told that it was the Leprosy of Naaman, and not another leprosy, which adhered to Gehazi, and to his seed; and if so, it is not passing the argument too far to infer that it was hereditary leprosy, and that consequently, a caste of Lepers, hereditary, existed in Syria and among

the Hebrews, in and before the time of Gehazi.

The rule seems to have been, that when a man, not born in Leprosy, became infected by that disorder, his children previously born, were considered clean, so that they kept themselves separate from him (2nd Chronicles xxvi, 21); but his children afterwards born, or any children born of a Leprous parent were considered as Lepers till they could satisfy the proper authorities, that they were not in that condition.

It is so rarely that we find a satisfactory account of the condition of lepers at the present day, that there is a peculiar interest in the few facts respecting their condition in Burmah which Mr. Malcolm furnishes, as they may help in some degree to complete our idea of the condition of the Hebrew lepers, of which we know little more than has been already stated; namely, that they lived apart, but might, when healed, be restored to society. This is his statement,—Leprosy in several forms is seen at the great cities, where its victims collect in a separate quarter, and live chiefly by begging, the only beggars in the country. The general form is that which attacks the small joints, I saw many who had lost all the fingers and toes, and some both hands and feet, in some cases the nose also disappears. It does not seem much to shorten life, and is not very painful except in its first stages. Those with whom I conversed, declared that they had not felt any pain for years. In many cases it ceases to increase after a time, the stumps of the limbs heal, and the disease is in fact cured. I could not hear of any effectual remedy: it seems in these cases to stop of itself. It can scarcely be considered as contagious, though instances are sometimes given to prove it so; persons suffering under it are by Law, separated entirely from other society; but their families generally retire with them, mingling and cohabiting for life. The majority of the children are sound and healthy; but it is said frequently to re-appear in the second or third generation. Lepers, and those who consort with them, are obliged to wear a conspicuous and peculiar hat, made like a shallow, conical basket. The children, whether leprous or not, are allowed to inter-marry only with their own class.'

The chief interest of the above passage, lies in this, that it enables us to discover the object and motive of the minute regulations respecting leprosy, contained in Lev. 13, and 14. They are all framed upon the Sacred principles, that none but such as were actually subject to a disease, supposed to be contagious, should be placed under the disabilities and exclusion which it involved, and that, for the benefit of society, none who really suffered under the malady should be allowed unrestricted intercourse with their fellow citizens. This discrimination could only proceed upon a clear apprehension of the signs of complete recovery; and these signs are accordingly pointed out in the chapter which we have referred with remarkable precision and distinctness. The want of some such rules as were by the divine beneficence imparted to the Hebrew people, would among them as in Burmah, have had the effect of excluding whole generations of men from the free intercourse of life, on account of a disease which may at one time have effected an ancestor; and of preventing those, who, from the impulse of natural affection, might place themselves in communication with a diseased relative, from ever more returning to the Society of unafflicted men, although they may never, in their own persons have known the leprous taint.

A circumstance has just come under our notice, which seems to afford a further corroboration of our impression that there was a permanent or hereditary condition of leprosy among the Hebrews, although among them this was not, as with the Burmese, the rule, but the exception.

The Law of Lev. 13 and 14 is very minute in its directions, respecting the course to be taken by a person when he first comes under the taint of leprosy; how he is to conduct himself while in a leprous condition, and how he is to proceed when he supposes himself cured. Many of these obligations are very onerous, and the afflicted persons might be tempted to neglect or postpone them, were not some heavy penalty thereby incurred. But the book of the law does not annex any penalty to disobedience, and we must resort to the Talmud and other Jewish writings, to know what was the actual penalty in such cases. From this source we learn, that the penalty for an infringement of any of the rules laid down in the law was quite severe enough to ensure general attention, and to protect society from the dangers which transgression might involve. It was no less than that 'his leprosy should cleave to him forever!' We are not sure whether it was supposed that the leprosy became permanent and

hereditary by a special judgment from God, as in the case of Gehazi; or that the leprosy of such a person was to be held as never to be cured, and that he never was to be examined by the priest, with a view to his re-admission into society. Taken either way, it shows or implies that Gehazi and his descendants were not alone in their permanent leprosy; but there was a permanent body of lepers, possibly including some persons, who, as among the Burmese, were free from disease, not as a necessary effect of their having been lepers, but a penal infliction for disobedience of the law.

The condition of the Hebrew leper is described in the following words:—'His clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry Tarnee, Tarnee (unclean, unclean) all the days the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean, he shall dwell alone, without the camp shall his habitation be,' (Lev. XIII, 45, 46). The reader will do well to compare this, with the short description of the Burmese leper, which we have quoted from Malcolm. Most of the points coincide in substance, and differ only in some small details. In almost every country where leprosy prevails, the leper is obliged to wear some kind of distinction dress, so that people may know and avoid them. Among the Burmese his head is covered with a conical cap; among the Hebrews his head was bare, his garment was rent, (in front it is understood) in token of his afflicted condition; and, in the presence of a clean person he stood covering his mouth with his hand, or the skirt of his robe. In addition to which distinction of dress, the leper in some countries obliged to notify his presence or approach by some loud and peculiar sound; but the Hebrew leper when he saw a stranger approaching, or when he found himself near any place of resort, was obliged to keep up his melancholy cry of 'Tarnee, Tarnee.'

Under a notice of the above work in another periodical, there is this note:—'We have been reminded of a passage in the Narrative of the Scottish Mission of Enquiry to the Jews,' which shows that what is described above as the prevalent form of leprosy, among the Burmese is also common in Palestine. That it cannot be recognised in the description given in Leviticus, is doubtless because we have there the first signs and symptoms of the disease, whereas these facts describe the condition to which the leper, under this form of the malady, is eventually reduced. The incident occurred at Sheen or Sychar: 'Under a spreading nabok-tree, near the gate, we came upon five or six miserable objects, half-naked, dirty, and wasted by disease. Immediately on seeing us they sprang up, and stretched out their arms, crying most imploringly for a gift. We observed that some had lost their hands and held up the withered stumps, and that others were deformed in the face, but it did not occur to us at the time that they were lepers. We were afterwards told that they were so—lepers on the outside of the city gate, like the ten men in the days of Jesus who lifted up their voices and cried 'Jesus, master have mercy on us.'

At the same place, one hundred and forty years before, Maudrel saw ten lepers, but from the description he gives (in a letter at the end of some editions of his journey) it does not appear that any of them exhibited this loss of hands, &c. which so strikingly demonstrates the presence of the Burmese form of leprosy. In Palestine, Maudrel states that the leprosy seen by him 'not only defiles the whole surface of the body with a foul scurf, but also deforms the joints of the body, particularly of the wrists and ankles, making them swell with a gouty serofulous substance very loathsome to look upon.' This would seem to be merely a modification of, or perhaps a stage in that kind of leprosy under which the hands and feet are sometimes lost.

From the foregoing, may we not reasonably draw the following conclusions.—That two distinct species of leprosy prevailed among the Hebrews; the one curable, and perhaps contagious; the other that of Gehazi, his caste and posterity incurable, and non-contagious. That the severe laws of restraint and exclusion which follow the wretched leper to the present day, were framed by the Jews to apply to the first description, and that so loathsome and degraded have the lepers been since held, that little or no endeavours have been made to ascertain, whether with safety to society these severities may be relaxed. The description of the Burman leprosy, as given by Mr. Malcolm, seems to agree with that of the disease in Tracadie, and science has yet discovered no remedy for it. Indeed the same disease has been found among a savage people, shut out altogether from all intercourse with civilized nations and contagion from abroad. I find the following in Mungo Park's Travels in the interior of Africa' and it will be recollected he was himself a distinguished member of the Medical faculty.