

Arsenic as a Remedy for the Tsetse Bite, 22 March 1858

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1 ARSENIC AS A REMEDY FOR THE TSETSE BITE.

LETTER FROM DAVID LIVINGSTONE, LL.D.

SIR, – My time was so fully occupied, previous to my de-, in preparation for this expedition, that I could not a moment's leisure to tell your correspondent Mr. James that the very same idea with respect to the employment arsenic in the disease which follows the bite of the *tsetse* to my own mind about the year 1847 or 1848. A belonging to MR. Gordon Cumming was brought to Kolo-, after prolonged exposure to the bite of the insect; and, it was unable to proceed on the journey southward, its left it to die. I gave it two grains of arsenic in a little daily for about a week, when an eruption resembling -pox appeared. This induced me to discontinue the ; and, when the eruption disappeared, the animal's became so smooth and glossy that I amagined I had the complaint; for, after the bite is inflicted, the coat as if the animal were cold.

The mare, though apparently cured, continued lean. This I rather glad of, as it is well known between the latitudes

20° and 27° S. that, when a horse becomes fat, he is almost sure be cut off by a species of pneumonia commonly called the

"horse-sickness". About two months after this apparent cure, coat began to stare again; but this time it had a remarkable and harshness. I tried the arsenic again; but the became like a skeleton, and refused to touch the barley. I tried to coax her, she turned her mild eye so im-, and so evidently meaning, "My dear fellow, I would die of the disease than of the doctor," that I could not her. I got her lifted every morning to feed, and saw her last perish through sheer exhaustion; and this was nearly

six months after the bite was inflicted.

In my last trip from the Cape up to Linyanti, I was obliged make some exertion, with but one companion, to get through part of the country which was flooded by the river Chobe. men allowed the cattle to stray one night during my ab-, and ten died in consequence. Two had been bitten so as not to die like the others. This was contrary to our experience; but when I returned from Loanda, two afterwards, these two had remained like skeletons, feeding in rich pasturage.

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While thanking Mr. Braid for his hints, I may state that, my hopes are not very sanguine, I still mean to try the , if opportunity offers. Our instructions require us to the whole subject carefully. The result will be com-to the Royal Society.

Your notice of Dr. Flint's reports, in the Periscope of Feb-13th, has suggested to my mind that I ought to draw the of my medical brethren to the central parts of the Colony, and the interior generally as far as Kolobeng, as a most desirable climate for those threatened with complaints. On the coast, we do find consumption the Hottentots; but even there the climate is not in-to that of Madeira. Witness the medical reports of the . The troops, who are placed generally in the least localities, enjoy better health than at any other except Corfu. The central and western districts; the stations Ebenezer, Scheit Fontein, Kurnman, Kolo-, etc., which are quite removed from the moisture of the , present just the opposite characteristics of climate to

which are believed to favour the development of scrofu-or tuberculous matter; and consumption is quite un-. Then, as to exercise in the open air, in the way of , botanising, geologising, riding, walking, or even sleep-, there is no country like it. I have always felt the differ-sensibly as soon as I came near the sea. Nowhere else either man or horse go through so much work with so wear and tear of constitution. I have seen East Indian spending fourteen to sixteen hours in the saddle, after day, who could not have ridden half that time in without being knocked up; and the only refreshment horses got was a roll in the sand and the dry grass of the . All the Indian invalids who came inland were bene-, and, more than that, became enamoured of the climate. is a mistake to detain patients in the vicinity of the sea who affected with phthisis. But the expense of going inland is serious consideration. This would not weigh with patients the better or higher ranks. A waggon complete, made in Roggefelt, which would stand the drought, would cost

£75; then £40 or £50 for oxen; a good tent, cooking utensils, a stock of provisions, would require at least £100 more. then you are independent. A good driver and leader cost not more than £5 or £6 a month; and, if you the less frequented paths, you will find the Dutch all very hospitable and friendly, and, by arrangements them, you will be allowed to go where fancy may dictate. I had any relative affected with lung-disease, I would unhe-prescribe this course, as much more likely to arrest disease than Madeira; and I am certain that, even though result might be unfavourable, nowhere else would they enjoyed so much pleasure. They would be under Eng-law, and get religious sympathy in death and burial.

I am, etc.,

DAVID LIVINGSTONE.

Screw Steamer *Pearl*, at Sea off Senegal, Africa,

March 22nd, 1858.