

Letter 56
Allahabad
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However fatal this climate may be to Europeans, I believe the natives are free from diseases as the people in any part of the world. They do not live to a great age, but while they live are afflicted with but few disorders; they are weak and enervated, but free from the pain of chronical disorders. Their relaxed frames could not long support them under violent pains, their deaths are generally rather sudden, and mostly occasioned by fevers.

The disorders they are liable to are so few, that much study in physic, and great variety of medicines, seems unnecessary. The art of physic, if it can be called an art in India, consists chiefly in the knowledge of simples, such as hot and cold herbs, hot and cold seeds, &c.

The extreme temperance which, both from the tenets of their religion, and the smallness of their income, the generality of the people are obliged to observe, saves them from many disorders. The greatest proof of the purity of their blood is the ease with which their wounds are cured, for numberless instances have been seen of *Seapoys, and others of the natives flowing the camp, who have been cured of wounds which to an European would be mortal, or at least extremely dangerous, and that with

little more than binding the wound together, to the astonishment for the English surgeons.

Some of the superior casts of Hindoos, who cannot submit to be touched by an European, are cured by their own people that follow the camp, who dress their wounds with the extract of herbs: in short, they are almost self-cured.

Many wounds, which in an European would make an amputation necessary, can in them be cured without; which is very fortunate, for surgery is still less understood than medicine. They are so far from studying anatomy, that the Hindoos even conceive horror at the idea of it. They very rarely let blood of their patients, and never but in the greatest extremity.

*All the Hindoos.