

Goitre is found only in certain valleys; nor, when it does occur, does it exist throughout the valley. It appears in one spot; higher up it is unknown, and in another situation, a mile or two distant, perhaps, it is again prevalent. A curious example of this is afforded by the valley leading up to the Great St. Bernard. Goitre is unknown above Liddes; abounds at Vercheres, 800 feet lower down, and almost universal at Orsieres; had the disease depended upon the glacier water, it would, of course, be more prevalent near to them and in the upper part of the valley.

A careful attention to the circumstances accompanying its appearance will show that it is connected with the condition of the atmosphere, and is found in low, warm, and moist situations, at the bottom of valleys, where a stagnation of water occurs, and where the summer exhalations and autumnal fogs arising from it are not carried off by a free circulation of air. That it is, in fact, one of the many injurious effects produced by malaria. It prevails in places where the valley is confined, and shut in, as it were — where a free draft is checked by its sides being clothed with wood, or by a sudden bend occurring in its direction — where, at the same time, the bottom is subject to the overflowings of a river, or to extensive artificial irrigation. The conjecture which derives the disease from breathing an atmosphere of this kind, not liable to be purified by fresh currents of air to carry off the vapours, is, perhaps, not undeserving of consideration, and further investigation on the part of the learned.

Goitre is much more common in females than in males, and usually occurs about the age of puberty. It becomes hereditary in a family, but children born and educated on spots distant from home and in elevated situations are often exempt from it. At Sion, in the Vallais, which may be regarded as the head quarters of goitre, children and even adults are often removed to the mountains from the low ground on the first symptoms of the malady, and the symptoms disappear where this is resorted to in time. Iodine has been applied with success as a remedy in some cases; but, as it is a dangerous remedy, the administration of it must be resorted to with the greatest caution.