

THE COLUMBIAN

SAUEL WRICHT, Editor and Proprietor.

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Selections.

Sympathetic Surgery.

In the rural districts, when a man has the misfortune to run a nail in his foot, he finds the nail, carefully greases it, wraps it up, and lays it away in a safe and dry place. This is supposed to promote the healing of the wound and prevent lock-jaw. In like manner, an axe or chisel which has inflicted a wound is carefully wiped and protected from rust.

The philosophy of our day is not far-sighted enough to find out the relation between the nail or axe which has given a wound, and the wonderful process by which nature repairs the injury; but our venerated ancestors, for some centuries, had entire faith in this sympathetic surgery; and, though long since rejected by men of science, it still survives among that large class of people who like to do as their fathers did before them.

The vulgar superstitions of to-day were the earnest faith of the most enlightened of our ancestors. As Shakspeare has recorded the universal belief of his time in his description of the cure of scrofula by the touch of a king, in "Macbeth," so has Dryden in his version of the "Tempest," given us the method and operation of sympathetic surgery. Hippolito is wounded, and Ariel says:

"He must be dressed as I have done it. Anoint the wound which pierced him, with this woman's salve, and wrap it close from air, till I have time to visit him again."

The reader may wish, perhaps, to have a receipt for this same potent "woman's salve." Ariel may have had some potent nostrum of his own for anointing swords, but the favorable salve in these cases was made of human fat and blood, well simmered with mummy, and moss from a dead man's skull. Some held that the moss, to have its full efficacy, must grow on the skull of a thief who had been hung on the gallows. Others thought moss from the skull of an honest man who had not been hung, might answer, which would be, in our mild and milk-and-water era, a more convenient doctrine.

There was a long and learned discussion as to whether it was necessary that the ointment, while being compounded, should be stirred with a murderer's knife. So eminent a writer as Van Helmont tells us that Dr. Goledinus was so nice in his prescriptions, that he would use only the moss gathered off the skull of a man of three letters; but that Van Helmont intimates, was being "more nice than wise." At that period, moss from dead men's skulls was kept by all apothecaries, properly assorted and labelled, no doubt to suit all customers. It is to be hoped that the druggists of that day were as scrupulous as our own, in keeping genuine and unadulterated medicines.

The great dramatist has not only made careful mention of this mode of surgical treatment, but in one of his most pathetic scenes, the force of which is very much diminished in our day, gives a vivid description of its efficacy in the following dialogue between Hippolito and Miranda:

Hipp.—O! my wound pains me.
 Mir.—I am come to ease you.
 Hipp.—Alas! I feel the cord or come to me!
 Mir.—My wound—wound—wound—wound!
 Hipp.—Does it still give you pain?
 Mir.—Now methinks there's something just upon
 Mir.—Do you find no ease?
 Hipp.—Yes, yes, upon the sudden all the pain is leaving me. Sweet Heaven! how I am eased!

These whom you are inclined to censure the improver of Shakspeare as a too superstitious gentleman, or as one too much inclined to humor the fantasies of the people for whom his dramas were written, may be pleased to know that this theory and practice had the learned support of not only the illustrious Van Helmont, but such eminent authorities as Descartes, Father Kircher, Gilbertus, Magnus and many others.

One of the most famous teachers and practitioners of sympathetic surgery was Sir Kenelm Digby, a gentleman of the Bedchamber in the court of Charles I. He not only taught and practiced this mode of cure with distinguished success in England, but had the honor of defending it in foreign countries, and especially before the nobles and learned men of Montpellier. Mr. James Howell has carefully reported an interesting case in his own experience. An endeavoring to part two of his friends who were fighting a duel, Mr. Howell was severely wounded in the hand by the sword of one of them. This incident suspended the fight, and one of the combatants bound up the wounded hand with his garter, took the patient home and sent for a surgeon. But the wound became inflamed, and, lock-jaw being approached, Sir Kenelm Digby was sent for.

The great man—the man of science, the court physician—came. We are not told that he even looked at the wounded arm, much less that he made any application to it. That would have been a very empirical, unscientific and altogether quackish method. Even Dryden's Miranda knew better than that. Sir Kenelm gravely asks if there was anything which had the blood upon it. They made diligent search and found at last the garter, stiff with the gore clotted and dried upon it. The great surgeon then asked for a basin of water—common water, we are left to suppose—in which he dissolved a handful of powder of vitriol, which was pre-

pared by exposure to the sun for three hundred and sixty five days. In this solution he immersed the bloody garter. The effect was almost instantaneous. The wound lost all its pain. A pleasant kind of freshness, as of a cold wet napkin, passed over the hand, and all the inflammation vanished.

The wound having been so wonderfully relieved, after dinner—but how long after the application we are not accurately informed—the garter was taken out of the basin and hung up to dry before a large fire; but no sooner was this done than the hand began to inflame, and was soon as bad as before. The servant ran for the surgeon, but while he was gone it occurred to some one to put the garter again in the liquid.—This was no sooner done than the hand again recovered, and before the arrival of the surgeon or even of the servant who had gone for him. In five or six days, by keeping the garter in soak, the cure was completed.

This case of Mr. Howell, given by Sir Kenelm, with a most luminous explanation of the rationale of the cure, is what is called the cure by the wet way—a sympathetic surgical hydropathy which may be commended to the people who do not take kindly to their wet sheets, packs and poultices.—The dry way is the one described in the "Tempest," and was, as it continues to be, the popular method.

Lord Gilburne, an English nobleman, appeared to have been an amateur practitioner of this method, and his success was quite equal to that of Ariel. Strauss gives an account of the case of a carpenter, working upon his lordship's estate, who had severely cut himself with an axe. The axe, smeared with blood was sent for, anointed with a potent ointment, wrapped up warmly and hung up in a closet. The wound, we are told, did admirably, and was fast healing up, when, all at once it became exceedingly painful. Word was sent to his lordship, who, we may imagine went immediately to see his poor patient. No he did not. Nothing of the kind. He went immediately, and made a solemn visitation to the axe. What did he behold? The unfortunate instrument of all this mischief had fallen on the floor and partly escaped from its covering. No wonder the poor foot was inflamed and painful! Such a fall must have been a dreadful shock to it. Of course, the axe was properly treated, wrapped up again, and more carefully suspended, and, also of course, the patient recovered rapidly and without any further discomfort.

These facts, and hundreds of a similar character which might be given, seem just as good as those which are brought to support every medical theory, and which attest the cures of every kind of practice and medicine. Every system, in whatever it may be weak, is strong in its facts. In our day allopathy, homeopathy, hydropathy and all contradictory systems, are alike in the one important feature. They all appeal to a multitude of unquestionable and truly remarkable cures. Judged by the testimony of its opponents, every medical system is false, a miserable delusion and quackery; but, tested by facts and cures, every system is true and a boon to humanity.

The usual mode of accounting for such cures as those which were explained as resulting from sympathy, is by attributing them to faith hope or imagination. These are powerful agents over the physical system, though it must be confessed that they do not account for all the facts. What had the imagination to do with the fall of the axe, hung up in his lordship's closet? But it is doubtless true that expectation is a potent element of cure, and it is one every good physician, as well as every mercenary quack, makes full and constant use of. In many instances of sickness, it makes no difference what medicine is given, so that it is not absolutely hurtful, or whether we only pretend to give a remedy. Bread pills properly administered produce a great variety of decided operations. Chalk powders, or a few drops of colored water, act with great efficacy. They are emetic, cathartic and sedative, as the physician may desire. Fear is believed to kill men in a pestilence by becoming a predisposing cause. Hope cures desperate cases. Lord Anson's expedition to the South Sea had met with many misfortunes, and his ships that escaped storm and wreck lost almost their entire crews by scurvy. "Whatever discouraged the seamen or at any time damped their hopes never failed to add new vigor to the distemper, for it usually killed those who were in the last stages of it, and confined those to their hammocks who were before capable of some kind of duty." Captain Cook went into the same seas on voyages of discovery, in which the sailors were constantly excited with the adventures or the hope of them, and scarcely suffered from scurvy at all. "A merry heart," says the wise monarch, "doth good like medicine; but a broken spirit drieth like blood."

The sweet influence of faith and hope was scarcely ever shown more remarkably than in some imaginative medical practices of the Prince of Orange, in the siege of Breda, in 1625. That city, long besieged, had suffered all the miseries that constant fatigue, anxiety and bad provisions could bring upon its inhabitants. The scurvy broke out and carried off great numbers. This, and the seeming hopelessness of the defence, disposed the garrison to a surrender; but the Prince of Orange, not willing to lose the place, but unable to relieve it, contrived to send letters to the soldiers, promising them speedy assistance, and sending pretended

medicines against the scurvy, said to be of great price and still greater efficacy. Three small vials were given to each physician, and it was said that three or four drops was sufficient to give a healing efficacy to a gallon of water. Not even were the commanders let into the secret. The soldiers and people flocked around the physicians in crowds. Cheerfulness was upon every countenance. Many of the sick were speedily and perfectly recovered. Such as had not moved their limbs for a month before were seen to walk, with their limbs straight, sound and whole, boasting of their cure by the Prince's remedy.

When we have such facts as these, how are we to discuss or examine the pretensions of any medical system? And the experience of almost every person can furnish facts of a similar character. For example, the hands are covered with warts. You try acids, caustic and the actual cautery, but with no benefit. The old ones grow out again, and new ones are coming. They are uncomfortable and hideous, and you are in despair. Some day a stranger offers, for a sixpence, to send them all away. He counts them, and writes the number on a slip of paper, which he puts in his pocket; and you see him no more. In a fortnight all the warts, new and old big and little, have disappeared, and never again return. The man did nothing to the warts—perhaps he anointed the paper; or was it the expectation of the cure? You had faith enough to give the sixpence, which you were assured was a mere formality. As to expecting a cure, you probably quite forgot it, until, one day, the annoying excrescences were gone.

A friend of the present writer, an artist and a man of business, had an attack of fever and ague, which, for several months baffled the ordinary means of cure. Some one told him of an old German, who had cured many cases, and, at last, out of annoyance and curiosity, he went to see him. It is hard to say whether he had faith or hope in the old German; but he knocked at his cabin-door.

"Goom in," grunted Mein Herr. Our friend entered. "Ah! you got der shills and fever," said he, without moving from his chimney-corner. "Well, you can go—you won't have dem any more."

He went as he was bid and did not have another fit of ague. There could scarcely be a cheaper or less troublesome cure; but it is not very easily accounted for.

Miss Ashmole wrote in his Diary, April 11, 1657:
 "Took, early in the morning, a good dose of elixir, and hung three spiders about my neck, and drove my ague away. Deo Gratias!"

Now, what drove away the ague? The chips of a galleon, sewed in a bag and worn around the neck, are good for ague; and the shoes in which a man has been hanged, as well as the rope, have great efficacy.

Sir Robert Boyle gives a favorite receipt for ague—Beat together salt, hops, and blue currants, and tie them upon the wrist. A learned author reports fifty cases cured by writing the words "Jehon fifty," and cutting a letter from the paper every day—The disease gradually diminishes and disappears with the last letter.

Should this fail to cure, you can buy a new-laid egg at a cross-road in the beard of the night; or break a piece of salted bread and give it to a dog; or, if you prefer a classic cure, place under your pillow the fourth book of the "Iliad."

The powers of colors over diseases, once supposed to exist, may be considered as a branch of sympathetic medicine. White substances were considered refrigerant, and red heating. Red flowers were given for diseases of the blood, and yellow ones for the bile. In small-pox, red coverings, bed-curtains, &c., were used to bring out the eruption. The patient was only to look at red substances, and his drink was colored red. The physician of Edward II treated the king's son successfully by this rule; and as lately as 1763, the Emperor Francis I, when sick of the small-pox, was, by the order of his physician, rolled up in scarlet cloth, but he died notwithstanding. Plague, nine times died, was used for glandular swellings. To this day the tradition remains that certain colors are good for certain disorders. Thousands of people believe that red flannel is better than white for rheumatism. A red string worn around the neck is a common preventive of nose-bleed.

We smile at these facts and fancies; we plunge ourselves upon our superior wisdom; but it may be doubted whether medicine can yet take its place among the certain sciences, or whether any one in modern times has written a wiser sentence than that of Plato, where he says: "The office of physician extends equally to the purification of the mind and body; to neglect the one is to expose the other to evident peril. It is not only the body that by its sound constitution, strengthens the soul, but the well-regulated soul, by its authoritative power, maintains the body in perfect health."

May in England.

May brings with her the beauty and fragrance of hawthorn blossoms and the song of the nightingale. Our old poets delighted in describing her as a beautiful maiden, clothed in sunshine, and scattering flowers on the earth, while she danced to the music of buds and brooks. She has given such greenness to the oaks, and the grass is now tall

A Battle Between Ants.

"Walden," by the late Henry D. Thoreau, contains, in the chapter called "Bruto Neighbors" the following account of an ant fight.

"One day, when I went to my wood pile, I observed two ants, the one red, and the other much larger, nearly a half an inch long, and black, heroically contending with each other. Having once got hold, they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a duel, but a battle—a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two reds to one black. The legions of these myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my wood yard, and the ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and black.

"On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each others embraces in a little sunny valley amid the chips, now at noonday, prepared to fight till the sun went down or life went out. The smaller red had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary's front, and through all the tumbling on that field, never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of the black one's feelers near the root, having already caused the one to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than bull dogs. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. In the meanwhile there came along a single red ant on the hillside of this valley, evidently full of excitement, who either had dispatched his foe, or had not yet taken part in the battle—probably the latter for he had lost none of his limbs. He saw the unequal combat from afar—for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the reds—he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an inch of the combatants; then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior and commenced his operation near the root of his right fore leg—leaving the foe to select among his own members, and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented, which put all other locks and cements to shame.

"I took up the chip on which the three I have particularly described were struggling, carried it to my house and placed it under a tumbler on my windowsill to see the issue. Holding a microscope to the first mentioned red ant, I saw that, though he was assiduously gnawing at the near fore leg, having severed his remaining feeder, his own breast was all torn away, exposing what vitals he had there to the jaws of the black warrior, whose breastplate was apparently too thick for him to pierce, and the dark caruncles of the sufferers eyes shone with ferocity such as war only could excite. They struggled half an hour longer under the tumbler, and when I looked again the black soldier had severed the heads of his foes from their bodies, and the still living heads were hanging on either side of him like ghastly trophies at his saddle bow, apparently as firmly fastened as ever, and he was endeavoring with feeble struggles, being without feelers, and with only the remnant of a leg, and I know not how many other wounds, to divest himself of them, which at length, after a half an hour more, he accomplished. I raised the glass, and he went over the windowsill in that crippled state. Whether he finally survived that combat, and spent the remainder of his days in some Hotel des Invalides, I do not know, but I thought that his industry would not be worth much thereafter. I never learned which party came off victorious, nor the cause of the war; but I felt for the rest of that day as if I had had my feelings excited and harrowed by witnessing the struggle, the ferocity and carnage of a human battle before my door."

Persian Stories of Husbands.

A married man presented himself trembling and sorrowful at the gates of paradise. He had heard so often of his faults and shortcomings; while upon earth, that he believed in them devotedly, and had no hope of being admitted to the habitations of the blessed. One wife he had been repeatedly informed, was a blessing far beyond her merits while in the flesh; how, then could he hope for the smiles of seventy hours. But the prophet, when he presented himself at the gates of heaven, to his great surprise, greeted him with a smile of ineffable compassion. "Pass on, poor martyr," said Mahomet. "You have indeed been a great sinner, but you have suffered enough upon the earth, so be of good cheer, for you will meet your wife here."

A man who had hitherto crept up to heaven, now stood up confidently and presented himself to the prophet upon the ground that he had been twice married.

"Nay," said the prophet, angrily; "paradise is no place for fools."

A ruffian young fellow married the widow of a great Khan. On the wedding-night he determined to assert his authority over him. So he treated him with great contempt when he came into the ante-room, and sat luxuriously imbedded in rose-leaf cushions, cursing a large white cat, of which she pretended to be a devoted friend. She appeared to be annoyed at her husband's entrance, and looked at him out of the corners of her eyes with a look of cold disdain.

"I dislike cats," remarked the young soldier, blandly, as if he was making a mere casual observation; "they offend my sight."

If his wife had looked at him with a glance of cold disdain before, her eyes now wore an expression of anger and contempt such as no words can express. She did not even deign to answer him, but she took the cat to her bosom and fondled it passionately. Her whole heart seemed to be in the cat, and cold was the shoulder which she turned to her husband. Bitter was the sneer upon her beautiful lips.

"When any one offends me," continued the gallant, gayly, "I cut off his head. It is a peculiarity of mine which I am sure, will only make me dearer to you." Then drawing his sword, he took the cat gently but firmly from her arms, out off its head, wiped the blade, sheathed it, and sat down, continuing to talk affectionately to his wife as if nothing had happened. After which, says tradition, she became the most submissive wife in the world.

A henpecked fellow meeting him next day as he rode with a gallant train through the market-place, began to exclaim with him.

"Ah!" said the henpecked, with deep feeling, "you, too, have taken a wife, and got a tyrant. You had better have remained the poor soldier that you were. I pity you from my very heart."

"Not so," replied the ruffier, joyfully, "keep your sights to curl yourself next summer."

He then related the events of his wedding-night, with their satisfactory results.

The henpecked man listened attentively, and pondered long.

"I also have a sword," said he, "though it is rusty, and my wife is likewise fond of cats. I will cut off the head of my wife's favorite cat at once."

He did so, and received a sound beating. His wife, moreover, made him go down upon his knees and tell her what gin, or evil spirit, had prompted him to commit the bloody deed.

"Fool!" said the lady, with a vixenish smile, when she had possessed herself of the henpecker's secret, "you should have done it the first night."

MORAL.—Advice is useless to fools.

The Dead of Pompeii Exhumed.

A correspondent of the London Athenaeum gives some interesting particulars concerning the exhuming the dead of Pompeii. He says:

Further researches led to the discovery of a male body, another woman, and that of a young girl; but that which first awakened the interest of the excavators, was the finding of ninety-one pieces of silver money, four ear-rings, a finger-ring, all of gold; together with two iron keys and evident remains of a linen bag. These interesting relics have been now successfully removed, and are lying in a house not far distant. They are to be preserved in Pompeii, and four bronze tables, of an antique fashion, are preparing for their reception.

The first body discovered was that of a woman, who lay on her right side, and, from the twisted position of her body, had been much convulsed. Her left hand and arm were raised and contorted, and the knuckles were bent in tightly; the right arm was broken, and at each end of the fragments the cellular character of bones was seen. The form of the head-dress and the hair were distinctly visible. On the bone of the little finger of the left hand were two silver rings, one of which was a guard. The sandals remain, or the soles, at least, and iron or nails are unmistakably to be seen. Though the body was much bent, the legs were extended as if under the influence of extreme pain.

In an inner chamber was found the figure of the young girl lying on its face, resting on its clasped hands and arms; the legs drawn up, the left lying over the right—the body thinly covered over in some parts by the scorified plaster, which the skull was visible, highly polished. One hand was partially closed, as if it had grasped something, probably her dress, with which it had covered the head. The finger-bones protruded through the incrustated ashes, and on the surface of the body in various parts were distinctly visible the seals of lime, with which it had been covered. There was lying by the side of the child a full-grown woman, the left leg slightly elevated, whilst the right arm is broken; but the left, which is bent in perfect, and the hand is closed. The little finger has an iron ring; the left ear, which is uppermost, is very conspicuous, and stand off from the head.—The folds of the drapery, the very web, remain, and a nice observer might detect the quality of the dress.

The body of the man lay upon its back, with the legs stretched out to their full length. There was an iron ring in the finger of the right hand, which, together with the arm, was supported by the elbow. The folds of the dress on the arm and over the whole upper part of the body were visible: the sandals were there, and the bones of the foot protruded through what might have been a broken sandal. The traces of the hair of the head and beard were there, and the breath of life, adds the writer, had only to be inspired into this and the other three figures to restore to the world of the nineteenth century the Romans of the first century. They might have fallen buty decided them to remain so long if only permitted to imagine. They were three women who, terror struck, had been unable, perhaps, to act, until aided and urged forward by the man. It may be that with this attachment which binds us all so closely to our native homes, we all hope that the storm would soon pass away.