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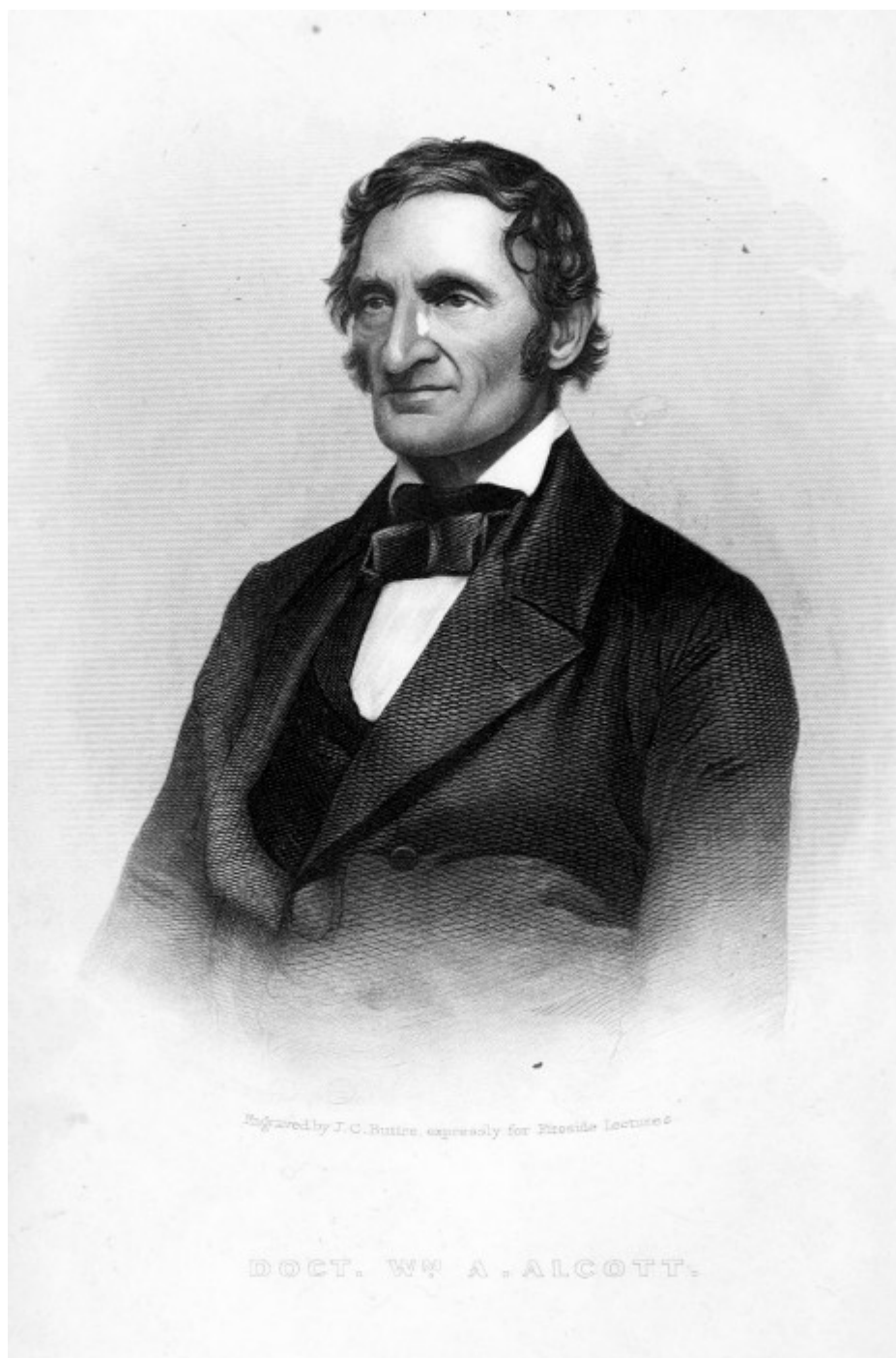
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**FORTY YEARS
IN THE WILDERNESS
OF
PILLS AND POWDERS;
OR, THE**

COGITATIONS AND CONFESSIONS OF

AN AGED PHYSICIAN.

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PREFACE.

The present volume was one of the last upon which its author was engaged, the facts having been gathered from the experience and observation of a long life. It was his design to publish them anonymously, but under the changed circumstances this is rendered impracticable.

A short time previous to his death, the writer spoke of this work, and said, in allusion to the termination of his own somewhat peculiar case,—"*This last chapter* must be added." In accordance with this desire, a brief sketch, having reference chiefly to his health and physical habits, with the closing chapter of his life, has been appended.

BOSTON, June, 1859.

TO THE READER.

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In the sub-title to the following work, I have used the word "Confessions"—not to mislead the reader, but because *to confess* is one prominent idea of its author. It is a work in which confessions of the impotence of the healing art, as that art has been usually understood, greatly abound; and in which the public ignorance of the laws of health or hygiene, with the consequences of that ignorance, are presented with great plainness. The world will make a wiser use of its medical men than it has hitherto done, when it comes to see more clearly what is their legitimate and what their ultimate mission.

These remarks indicate the main intention of the writer. It is not so much to enlighten or aid, or in any way directly affect the medical man, as to open the eyes of the public to their

truest interests; to a just knowledge of themselves; and to some faint conception of their bondage to credulity and quackery. The reader will find that I go for science and truth, let them affect whom they may. Let him, then, suspend his judgment till he has gone through this volume once, and I shall have no fears. He may, indeed, find fault with my style, and complain of my literary or philosophic unfitness for the task I assigned myself; but he will, nevertheless, be glad to know my facts. [Pg vi]

Should any one feel aggrieved by the exposures I have made in the details which follow, let me assure him that no one is more exposed—nor, indeed, has more cause to be aggrieved—than myself. Let us all, then, as far as is practicable, keep our own secrets. Let us not shrink from such exposures as are likely, in a large measure, to benefit mankind, while the greatest possible inconvenience or loss to ourselves is but trifling.

Some may wish that instead of confining myself too rigidly to naked fact and sober reasoning, I had given a little more scope to the imagination. But is not plain, "unvarnished" truth sometimes not only "stranger," but, in a work like this, better also, than any attempts at "fiction"?

THE AUTHOR.

AUBURNDALE, March, 1859.

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FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS OF PILLS AND POWDERS.

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CHAPTER I. EDUCATIONAL TENDENCIES.

I was born in a retired but pleasant part of New England, as New England was half a century ago, and as, in many places, despite of its canals, steamboats, railroads, and electromagnetic telegraphs, it still is. Hence I am entitled to the honor of being, in the most emphatic sense, a native of the land of "steady habits."

The people with whom I passed my early years, though comparatively rude and uncultivated, were yet, in their manners and character, quite simple. Most of them could spell and read, and write their names, and a few could "cipher" as far as simple subtraction. To obtain the last-mentioned accomplishment, however, was not easy, for arithmetic was not generally permitted in the public schools during the six hours of the day; and could only be obtained in the occasional evening school, or by self-exertion at home.

The majority of my townsmen also knew something of the dream-book and of palmistry, and of the influence of the moon (especially when first seen, after the change, over the right shoulder), not only on the weather and on vegetation, but on the world of humanity. They also understood full well, what troubles were betokened by the howling of a dog, the blossoming of a flower out of due season, or the beginning of a journey or of a job of work on Tuesday or Friday. Many of them knew how to tell fortunes in connection with a cup of tea. Nay, more, not a few of them were skilled in astrology, and by its aid could tell under what planet a person was born, and perchance, could predict thereby the future events of his life; at least after those events had actually taken place.

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Under what particular planet I was born, my friends never told me; though it is quite possible some of my sage grandmothers or aunts could have furnished the needful information had I sought it. They used to look often at the lines in the palms of my hands, and talk much about my dreams, which were certainly a little aspiring, and in many respects remarkable. The frequent prediction of one of these aged and wise friends I remember very well. It was, that I would eat my bread in two kingdoms. This prediction was grounded on the fact, that the hair on the top of my head was so arranged by the plastic hand of Nature as to form what were called two crowns; and was so far fulfilled, that I have occasionally eaten bread within the realms of Queen Victoria!

According to the family register, kept in the cranium of my mother, I was born on Monday, which doubtless served to justify the frequent repetition of the old adage, and its application to my own case—"Born on Monday, fair of face." I was also born on the sixth day of the month, on account of which it was said that the sixth verse of the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs was, prospectively, a key to my character. It is certainly true that I have dealt out not a little "strong drink to him that" was "ready to perish;" and that few of my professional brethren have furnished a larger proportion of it gratuitously; or as Solomom says, have *given* it.

Whether there was any clear or distinct prophecy ever uttered that I would one day be a knight of the lancet, clad in full armor, is not certain. If there was, I presume it was unwritten. That I was to be distinguished in some way, everybody appeared to understand and acknowledge. I was not only at the head of all my classes at school, in spelling, reading, and writing, but exalted above most of my competitors and compeers by a whole head and shoulders. In ciphering, in particular, I excelled. I understood the grand rules of arithmetic, and could even work a little in the Rule of Three.

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That the thought of being a "doctor" did, in a sort of indefinable way, sometimes enter my head, even at that early period, I will not deny. One of my teachers, as I well remember, had medical books, into which bars and bolts could hardly prevent me from peeping. But there were a thousand lions in the way—or at least *two or three*. One was extreme indigence on the part of my parents. They came together nearly as poor as John Bunyan and his wife, or Sydney Smith and his companion. Or if, in addition to a knife, fork, and spoon, they had a looking-glass, an old iron kettle, an axe, and a hoe, I am sure the inventory of their property at first could not have extended much farther; and now that they had a family of four children, their wants had increased about as fast as their income.

Besides, there was a confused belief in the public mind—and of course in mine—that medical men were a species of conjurors; or if nothing more, that they had a sort of mysterious knowledge of human character, obtained by dealing with the stars, or by reliance on some supernatural source or other. And to such a height as this I could not at that time presume to aspire; though I certainly did aspire, even at a very early period, to become a learned man.

As a means to such an end, I early felt an ardent desire to become a printer. This desire originated, in part at least, from reading the autobiography of Dr. Franklin, of which I was exceedingly fond. It was a desire, moreover, which I was very slow to relinquish till compelled. My father, as we have seen, was a poor laborer, and thought himself unable either to give me any extra opportunities of education, or to spare me from the cultivation of a few paternal acres. Still, in secret, I I clung to the hope of one day traversing the lengths and breadths and depths and heights of the world of science.

But for what purpose, as a final end? for, practically, the great question was, *cui bono*? As for becoming a lawyer, that, with me, was quite out of the question; for lawyers, even thus early, were generally regarded as bad men. All over the region of my nativity the word lawyer was nearly synonymous with liar; and to liars and lawyers the Devil was supposed to

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have a peculiar liking, not to say affinity. I had never at that time heard of but one honest lawyer; and him I regarded as a sort of *lusus naturæ* much more than as an ordinary human being. My friends would have been shocked at the bare thought of my becoming a lawyer, had the road to that profession been open to my youthful aspirations.

The clerical profession was in some respects looked upon more favorably than the legal or the medical. I was scarcely "three feet high" when an aged and venerable grandmother said one day, *in my hearing*, and probably *for* my hearing, "I always did hope one of my grandsons would be a minister." This, however, neither interested me much nor encouraged me; for (reader will you believe it?), as the doctor was regarded in those days as more than half a sorcerer, and the lawyer three-fourths devil, so the minister was deemed by many as almost half an idiot, except for his learning.

I am not, by any means, trifling with you. It was the serious belief of many—I think I might say of most—that those boys who "took to learning" were by nature rather "weak in the attic," especially those who inclined to the ministry. It was a common joke concerning an idiot or half idiot, "send him to college."^[A]

In short, so strongly was this unfounded impression concerning the native imbecility of ministers, and in general of literary men, fastened on my mind as well as on the minds of most people, that I grew up nearly to manhood with a sort of confused belief that as a general rule they were below par in point of good, common sense. One prominent reason, as I supposed, why they were sent to college and wrought into that particular shape, was to bring them up to an equality with their fellows. Hence, I not only repelled with a degree of indignation the thought of becoming a minister, but felt really demeaned by my natural fondness for books and school; and like the poet Cowper, hardly dared, all my early lifetime, to look higher than the shoe buckles of my associates. Still, I could not wholly suppress the strong desire to *know* which had penetrated and pervaded my soul, and which had been nurtured and fed not only by an intelligent mother but by a few books I had read. Perhaps the life of Franklin, already referred to, had as much influence with me as any thing of the kind. For along with the love of knowledge which was so much developed by this book, the love of doing good was introduced. The doctor says, somewhere, that he always set a high value on a doer of good; and it is possible, nay, I might even say probable, that this desire, which subsequently became a passion with me, had its origin in this very remark.

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FOOTNOTES:

- ^[A] To illustrate this point, and show clearly the state of the public opinion, I will relate an anecdote. A certain calf in the neighborhood, after long and patient trial, was pronounced too ignorant to be able to procure his own nourishment, or in other words, was said to be a fool. On raising the question, what should be done with him, a shrewd colored man who stood by, said, "Master, send him to college!"

CHAPTER II.

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MY FIRST MEDICAL LESSON.

Straws, it is said, show which way the wind blows; and words, and things very small in themselves, sometimes show, much better than "two crowns," or the "stars," what is to be the future of a person's life. The choice of a profession or occupation, were we but trained to the habit of tracing effects up to their causes, will doubtless often be found to have had its origin, if not in *straws*, at least in very small matters.

When I was ten years of age, my little brother, of only two years, sat one day on the floor whittling an apple. The instrument in his hand was a Barlow knife, as it was then called. The blade was about two inches in length, but was worn very narrow. How his parents and other friends, several of whom were in the same room, came to let him use such a plaything, I cannot now conceive; but as the point was almost square, and the knife very dull, they do not seem hitherto to have had any fears.

Suddenly the usual quiet of the family was disturbed a little by the announcement, "Somebody is going by;" an event which, as you should know, was quite an era in that retired, mountainous region. All hastened to the window to get a view of the passing traveller. The little boy scampered among the rest; but in crossing the threshold of a door which intervened, he stumbled and fell. A sudden shriek called to him one of our friends, who immediately cried out, "Oh dear, he has put out his eye!" and made a hasty but unsuccessful effort to extract the knife, which had penetrated the full length of its blade. The mother hastened to the spot, and drew it forth, though, as she afterward said, not without the exertion of considerable force. Its back was towards the child, and by pressing the ball of the eye downward, the instrument had been able to penetrate to the bottom of the cavity, and perhaps a little way into the bone beyond. The elasticity of the eyeball had retained it so as to render its extraction seemingly difficult. [Pg 7]

Most of those who were present, particularly myself and the rest of the children, were for a short time in a state of mental agony that bordered on insanity. Not knowing at first the nature of the wound, but only that there was an eye there, and brains very near it, we naturally expected nothing less than the loss of this precious organ of vision, if not of life. There was no practising physician or surgeon, just at that time, within five or six miles, and I do not remember that any was sent for. We probably concluded that he could do no good.

The child's eye swelled, and for a few days looked very badly; but after the lapse of about two weeks the little fellow seemed to be quite well; and so far as his eyes and brain are concerned, I believe he has been well to this time, a period of almost half a century.

Although we resided at a considerable distance from the village, and from any practising physician, there was near by a very aged and superannuated man, who had once been a medical practitioner. Our curiosity had been so much excited by the wonderful escape of the little boy from impending destruction, that we called on the venerable doctor and asked him whether it was possible for a knife to penetrate so far into the head without injuring the brain and producing some degree of inflammation. From Dr. C. we received a good deal of valuable information concerning the structure of the eye, the shape of the cavity in which it is placed, the structure and character of the brain, etc.

This was a great treat to me, I assure you. It added not a little to the interest which was imparted by his instructions when he showed us, from the relics of better days, some of the bones of the skull, especially those of the frontal region, in which the eye is situated. Of course the sight of a death's head, as we were inclined to call it, was at first frightful to us; but it was a feeling which in part soon passed away. It was a feeling, most certainly, which in me was not abiding at all. Indeed, as the title to the chapter would seem to imply, I received in this dispensation of Providence and its accompaniments my first medical lesson; though without the remotest thought, at the time, of any such thing. I was only indulging in a curiosity which was instinctive and intense, without dreaming of future consequences. [Pg 8]

CHAPTER III.

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THE ELECTRICAL MACHINE.

Two years after this, an aged man, a distant relation, came to reside in my father's family for a short time, and brought with him a small electrical machine. He was a person of some intelligence, had travelled much, and had been an officer in the army of the American Revolution. On the whole, he was just such a man as would be likely to become a favorite with children. He was, moreover, fully imbued with the expectation of being able to cure diseases by means of electricity; which in our neighborhood, at the least, was quite a novel, not to say a heterodox idea.

Curiosity alone had no small share of influence in bringing my mind to the study of electricity; but a general desire to understand the subject was greatly strengthened by the hope of being able to apply this wonderful agent in the cure of disease. One of the most interesting phases of Christianity is that the love and practice of healing the bodily maladies of mankind are almost always seen in the foreground of the New Testament representations of our Saviour's doings; and it is no wonder that a youth who reverences his Bible, and has a little benevolence, should entertain feelings like those above mentioned.

The owner of the machine had brought with him a book on the subject of curing by electricity. It was a volume of several hundred pages, and was written by T. Gale, of Northern New York. It had in it much that was mere theory, in a highly bombastic style; but it also professed to give with accuracy the details of many remarkable cures, in various forms and stages, of several difficult diseases; and some of these details I knew to be realities. One or two cases at or near Ballston Springs were those of persons of whom I had some knowledge; and one of them was a relative. This last circumstance, no doubt, had great influence on my mind.

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As I had in those days some leisure for reading, and possessed very few books, I read—and not only read but studied—Dr. Gale's work from beginning to end. It is scarcely too much to say, that I read it till I knew it almost "by heart;" and my heart assented to it. I believed a new dispensation was at hand to bless the world of mankind; and what benevolence I had, began to be directed in this particular channel. I do not mean to say, that at twelve years of age I began to be a physician, for I do not now recollect that either our aged friend or myself ever had a patient during the whole year he remained with us.

Eight or ten subsequent years at the plough and hoe, and the absence of book, electrical machine, and owner, did much towards obliterating the impressions on this subject I had received. Still, I have no doubt that the affair as a whole had a tendency to lead my thoughts towards the study and practice of medicine, and even to inspire confidence in electricity as a curative agent. In other and fewer words, it was, as I believe, a part of my medical education.

CHAPTER IV.

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THE MEASLES AND POURING DOWN RUM.

When I was about fourteen years of age, an event occurred which left a stronger impression on my mind than any of the foregoing; and hence in all probability did more to give my mind a medical bias and tendency.

It was in the month of August. My father, assisted by two or three of his neighbors, was mowing a swamp meadow. It was an unusually wet season, and the water in many places was several inches deep,—in some few instances so deep that we were obliged to go continually with wet feet. To meet, and as it was by most people supposed to remove the danger of contracting disease, a bottle of rum was occasionally resorted to by the mowers, and offered to me; but at first I steadfastly refused it.

At length, however, I began to droop. A feverish feeling and great languor came over me, and I was hardly able to walk. I was not then aware, nor were my friends, that I had been exposed to the contagion of measles, and therefore was not expecting it. I spoke of my ill health, but was consoled with the answer that I should soon get over it. But no; I grew worse, very fast. "Turn down the rum," said one of the mowers, "if you mean to work." But I hesitated. I was not fond of rum at any time, and just now I felt a stronger disinclination to it than ever before. "Turn down the rum," was repeated by the mowers, from time to time, with increased emphasis.

At length wearied with their importunity; and, not over-willing to be the butt of their mirth and ridicule, I went to the spring, where the bottle of rum was kept, and, unperceived by any one, emptied a large portion of its contents on the ground. The mental agitation of temporary excitement dispelled in part my sufferings, and I proceeded once more to my work. [Pg 12]

In a very short time my noisy alcoholic prescribers went to the spring to pour rum down their *own* throats. "What," said they, with much surprise, "has become of the rum?" "Have you drank it?" said they, turning to me. "Not a drop of it," I said. "But it is almost all gone," they said; "and it is a great mystery what has become of it." "The mystery is easily cleared up," I said; "you told me to turn it down, and I have done so."—"Told you to turn it down!" said one of them, the most noisy one; "I told you to drink it."—"No," said I, "you told me to turn it down; and I have poured it down—my part of it—at the foot of the stump. If you have forgotten your direction to turn it down, I appeal to two competent witnesses."

The joke passed off much better than I expected. For myself, however, I grew worse rapidly, and was soon sent home. My mother put me into bed, applied a bottle of hot water to my feet, and gave me hot drinks most liberally, and among the rest some "hot toddy." Her object was to sweat away a supposed attack of fever. Had she known it was measles that assailed me, or had she even suspected it, she would almost as soon have cut off her right hand as apply the sweating process. She would, on the contrary, have given me cooling drinks and pure air. She was not wholly divested of good sense on this point, neither was the prevailing public opinion.

I suffered much, very much, and was for a part of the time delirious. At length an eruption began to be visible, and to assume the appearance which is usual in measles, both to my own relief and that of my parents and other friends. But the mistaken treatment, or the disease, or both, gave a shock to my already somewhat delicate constitution, from which I doubt whether I ever fully recovered. The sequel, however, will appear more fully in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

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LEE'S PILLS, AND THE DROPSY.

In consequence either of the disease or its mismanagement, I was left, on recovering from the measles, with a general dropsy. I might also say here, that at the recurrence of the same season, for many years afterwards, I was attacked with a complaint so nearly resembling measles that some who were strangers to me could hardly be diverted from the belief that it was the veritable disease itself.

But to the dropsy. This disease, so unusual in young people, especially those of my sanguine and nervous temperament, alarmed both my parents and myself, and medical advice was forthwith invoked. Our family physician was an old man, bred in the full belief of the necessity in such cases of what are called "alteratives," which, in plain English, means substances so active as to produce, when applied to the body either externally or internally, certain sudden changes. Alteratives, in short, are either irritants or poisons.

Our aged doctor was called in to see me; and after the usual compliments, and perhaps a passing joke or two,—for both of which he was quite famous,—he asked me to let him see my tongue. Next, he felt my pulse. All the while—a matter exceedingly important to success—he looked "wondrous wise." He also asked me sundry wondrous wise questions. They were at least couched in wondrous words of monstrous length.

The examination fairly over, there followed a pause; not, indeed, an "awful pause," but one of a few seconds, or perhaps in all of half a minute. "Now," said he, "you must take one of Lee's pills every day, in roasted apple." There were other directions, but this was the principal, except to avoid taking cold. The pills, of course, contained a proportion of mercury or calomel, on the alterative effects of which, as I plainly perceived, he placed his chief dependence. [Pg 14]

I took the pills, daily, for about six weeks; but they produced very little apparent effect, except to spoil my appetite. What their remoter effects were on my constitution generally, is quite another question. Suffice it to say, for the present, that for his occasional calls and wondrous wise looks, and his Lee's pills, he made quite a considerable bill. We were, it is true, always glad to see him, for he was pretty sure to crack a joke or two during his stay, and he sometimes told a good story. Nor, after all, were his charges remarkably high. For coming two or three miles to see me, he only made a charge of fifty cents a visit.

It was near the beginning of October, and I was "getting no better very fast." A young physician had in the mean time come into the place, and my friends were anxious to call him in as "counsel." He proposed digitalis, and the family physician consented to it. But it was all to no purpose; I was still a bloated mass, and extremely enfeebled.

At length, after some two or three months of ill health and loss of time, and the expenditure of considerable money on physicians and medicine, our good family doctor proposed a tea made from certain sweet roots, such as fennel, parsley, etc. Of this I was to drink very freely. I followed his advice, and in a few days the dropsy disappeared. Whether it was ready to depart just at this precise time, or whether the tea hastened its departure, I never knew. In any event, one thing is certain; that, either with its aid or in spite of it, I got rid of the dropsy; and it nevermore returned.

But it is one thing to get rid of an inveterate disease, and quite another to be restored to our wonted measure of health and strength. The disease or the medicine or both had greatly debilitated me. I tried to attend school, but was unable till January or February; nor even then was I at all vigorous. I was able in the spring to work moderately; but it was almost a whole year before I occupied the same ground, physically, as before. Indeed, I have very many doubts whether I ever attained to the measure of strength to which I might have [Pg 15]

attained had it not been for the expenditure of vital power in a long contest with Lee's pills and disease.

One lesson I learned, during my long sickness, in moral philosophy. I allude to the power of associated habits. Thus I was accustomed to take my pills daily for a long time, in combination with the pulp of a certain favorite apple. By degrees this apple, before so congenial to my taste, became so exceedingly disgusting to me that I could hardly come in sight of it, or even of the tree on which it grew, without nausea; and this dislike continued for years. By the aid of a strong will, however, I at length overcame it, and the apple is now as agreeable to my taste, for any thing I know, as it ever was.

CHAPTER VI.

[Pg 16]

THE COLD SHOWER-BATH.

My long experience of ill health, and of dosing and drugging, had led me to reflect not a little on the causes of disease, as well as on the nature of medicinal agents; and I had really made considerable progress, unawares, in what I now regard as the most important part of a medical education. In short, I had gained something, even by the loss of so precious commodity as health. So just is the oft-repeated saying, "It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good."

It was about this time that I began to reflect on bathing. What gave me the first particular impulses in this direction I do not now recollect, unless it was the perusal of the writings of Dr. Benjamin Rush and Dr. John G. Coffin. My attention had been particularly turned to cold shower bathing. I had become more than half convinced of its happy adaptation to my own constitution and to my diseased tendencies, both hereditary and acquired.

But what could I do? There were in those times no fleeting shower-baths to be had; nor indeed, so far as I knew, any other apparatus for the purpose; and had there been, I was not worth a dollar in the world to buy it with; and I was hardly willing to ask for money, for such purposes of my father.

I will tell you, very briefly, what I did. My father had several clean and at that time unoccupied stables, one of which was as retired as the most fastidious person could have wished. In one of these stables, directly overhead, I contrived to suspend by its two handles a corn basket, in such a way that I could turn it over upon its side and retain it in this position as long as I pleased. Into this basket, when suspended sideways, and slightly fastened, I was accustomed to set a basin or pail of water; and when I was ready for its reception, I had but to pull a string and overturn the basket in order to obtain all the benefits of a cold and plentiful shower.

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Here, daily, for almost a whole summer, I used my cold shower-bath, and, as I then thought and still believe, with great advantage. My consumptive tendencies were held at bay during the time very effectually. I was fortunate, indeed, in being able always, with the aid of a coarse towel and a little friction, to secure a pretty full reaction.

This season of cold bathing was when I was about sixteen years of age. I shall ever look back to it as one of the most important, not to say most interesting, of my *experiences*. Indeed, I do not know that in any six months of my life I ever gained so much physical capital—thus to call it; by which I mean bodily vigor—as during these six months of the year 1814.

I may also add here, that it has been my lot all my life long to learn quite as much from experiment and observation as in any other way. The foregoing experience gave me much knowledge of the laws of hygiene. Sometimes, while reflecting on this subject, I have thought of the assurance of the Apostle John, that he who "doeth truth cometh to the light," and have wondered whether the good apostle, along with this highly important truth, did not mean to intimate that the natural tendency of holy living was to an increase of light and love and holiness. And then I have gone a step further, and asked myself whether it was not possible that the doing of *physical* truth as well as *moral*, had the same tendency.

I have alluded to experience, or experiment. It is sometimes said that medical men are very much inclined to make experiments on their patients. Now, although I have a few sad confessions of this sort to make hereafter, yet I can truly say, in advance, that while I have made comparatively few experiments on other people, I have probably, during the progress of a long life, made more experiments on myself, both in sickness and in health, than any other existing individual. Whether I have learned as much in this way as I ought, in such favored circumstances, is quite another question.

CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 18]

MY FIRST SICKNESS ABROAD.

When I was about half-way through my nineteenth year, a desire to see the world became so strong that I made up my mind to a little travelling. Accordingly, having provided myself with an employment which would, without a great deal of hindrance, enable me to earn my passing expenses, I set out on my journey.

It was in the month of March, and near its close. The weather was mild, and the snow was fast disappearing—but not as yet the mud. In walking all day, my boots became soaked and my feet wet. The era of India rubbers had not then arrived. In truth, I went with my feet wet in the afternoon two or three days.

On the evening of the third day I came to the house of the friends with whom I was desirous of stopping not only for the Sabbath's sake, which was now at hand, but to rest and recruit. The next morning I was quite sick, and my friends were alarmed. It was proposed to send for a physician; but against this I uttered my protest, and the plan was accordingly abandoned.

The next purpose of my kind friends was to bring on a perspiration. They were accustomed in these cases to aim at sweating. This is indeed a violence to nature; but they knew no better. The mistress of the house was one of those self-assured women who cannot brook any interference or submit willingly to any modification of their favorite plans. Otherwise I should even then have preferred a gentle perspiration, longer continued. Yet on the whole, for the sake of peace, I submitted to my fate, and went through the fiery furnace which was prepared for me. More than even this I might say. I was cooler, much cooler, when I got through the fire than when I was in the midst of it!

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In three days I was, in a good measure, restored. I was, it is true, left very weak, but was free from fever. My strength rapidly returned; and on the fifth day I was able to set out for home, where in due time I safely arrived.

During this excursion I learned one good lesson, if no more. This was, the danger of going day after day with wet feet. A vigorous person may go with wet or damp feet a little while,

in the early part of the day, when in full strength, with comparative safety; but towards evening, when the vital forces are at ebb tide, or at least are ebbing, it is unsafe. The feeble especially should guard themselves in this direction; nor should those who may perchance at some future time be feeble, despise the suggestion.

One important resolution was also made. This was never to use violent efforts to induce perspiration. Such a course of treatment I saw clearly, as I thought, must be contrary to the intentions of nature; and time and further observation and experiment have confirmed me in this opinion. There may of course be exceptions to the truth of such a general inference; but I am sure they cannot be very numerous. What though the forcing plan seems to have succeeded quite happily in my own case? So it has in thousands of others. So might a treatment still more irrational. Mankind are tough, and will frequently live on for a considerable time in spite of treatment which is manifestly wrong, and even without any treatment at all.

CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 20]

LESSON FROM AN OLD SURGEON.

Five or six miles from the place of my nativity a family resided whom I shall call by the name of Port. Among the ancestry of this family, time out of mind, there had been more, or fewer of what are usually called natural bone setters. They were known far and near; and no effort short of miraculous would have been sufficient to shake the confidence which ignorance and credulity had reposed in them.

One or two of these natural bone setters were now in the middle stage of life, and in the full zenith of their glory. The name of the most prominent was Joseph. He was a man of some acquired as well as inherited knowledge; but he was indolent, coarse, vulgar, and at times profane. Had it not been for his family rank and his own skill as a surgeon, of which he really had a tolerable share, he would have been no more than at best a common man, and occasionally would have passed for little more than a common blackguard.

I was in a shop one day conversing with Capt. R., when Dr. Port came in. "Capt. R., how are you?" was the first compliment. "Very well," said the captain, "except a lame foot." "I see you have one foot wrapped up," said Dr. Port; "what is the matter with it?"—"I cut it with an axe, the other day," said he, "very badly."—"On the upper part of the foot?" said the doctor. "Yes, directly on the instep," said Capt. R. "Is it doing well?"—"Not very well," he replied; "and I came into town to-day partly to see and converse with you about it."—"Well, then, undo it and let me have a look at it."

Wrapper after wrapper was now taken from the lame foot, till Dr. Port began to scowl. "You keep it too warm," said he. "A wound of this sort should be kept cool, if you don't wish to have it inflame. A slight wrapping is all that is needful." They came at length to the wound. "It does not look very badly," said Dr. Port; "but you must keep it cool. And then," added he with an oath, the very thought of which to this day almost makes me shudder, "You must keep your nasty, abominable ointments away from it. Remember one thing, Capt. R., whenever you have a new flesh wound, all you can possibly do with any hope of advantage is to bring the divided edges of the parts together and keep them there, and nature will take care of the rest."

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"Would you, then, do nothing at all but bind it up and keep it still?" said Capt. R. "Nothing at all," said he, "unless it should inflame; and then a little water applied to it is as good as

any thing."—"But is there nothing of a healing nature I can use?" said the captain. "I have told you already," said he, with another strange oath, "that you don't want any thing healing on the outside, if you had a cart-load of medicaments. All wounds, when they heal at all, heal from the bottom; and of course all your external applications are useless, except so far as is necessary to protect the parts from fresh injury and keep them from the air."

The crowd around looked as if they were amazed; but it was Dr. Port who said it, and therefore it must be swallowed. I was somewhat surprised with the rest. And I have not a doubt that what he said was to most of them an invaluable lecture. For myself, as a student of *man*, it was just what I needed. It set me to thinking. It was a lesson which I could never forget if I were to live a thousand years.

It was a lesson, moreover, which I have repeated almost a thousand times, in circumstances not dissimilar. Indeed, I believe this very occurrence did much to turn my attention to the medical profession. I saw at once it was a rational thing; a matter of plain common sense; a thing of principle; and not on the one hand a bundle of mysteries, nor on the other a mere humbug.

Dr. Port long ago paid the debt of nature; but not till he had made his mark on the age he lived in. If, indeed, he died as the fool dieth,—and thus it was said he *did* die,—he was at least a means of teaching others to live right. He did great good by his frequent wise precepts, as well as not a little harm by his sometimes immoral example. For myself, I honor him because he was my teacher on a point of great practical importance, and because he was to thousands of over-credulous people a light and a benefactor. [Pg 22]

Although I had not at this time any very serious thoughts of becoming a physician and surgeon, yet I certainly inclined in that direction. My great poverty was the chief difficulty that lay in my way; but this difficulty at that time seemed insurmountable. Besides, I was wedded to my father's farm, and I did not see how the banns could very well be sundered.

CHAPTER IX.

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LEE'S WINDHAM BILIOUS PILLS.

I was, at length, twenty-two years of age. I had about fifty dollars in my pocket, besides a few books. But what would this do towards giving me a liberal education? And yet, to an education in the schools, of some sort, either as a means to a profession, or as affording facilities for obtaining knowledge or communicating it to others, I certainly did aspire. But I seemed compelled for the present to plod on in the old way.

There had been, but recently, a gold fever—not, it is true, of California, but of Carolina. The young men of the North, shrewd, intelligent, active, and ambitious Yankees, had flocked by hundreds, if not by thousands, from New England to the Southern States, to sell tin ware and clocks, especially the former. The trade at first had been very lucrative. Though many had been made poor by it, yet many more had been made rich. I do not say how honorably the trade had been conducted. To sell tin lanterns, worth fifty cents each, for silver, at fifty dollars, and tin toddy sticks, worth a New York shilling, for twelve dollars, did not in the final result redound much to our New England credit. Though it brought us gold, it did not permanently enrich us.

A much better trade had now, in 1820, sprung up with the South. The North—the great nursery of America—had still a surplus of young men who wanted to go somewhere. A part

of them found their way to Carolina and Georgia, and engaged during the winter, and occasionally through the year, in teaching; while another part labored on their canals and railroads and in their shops. This was to furnish the South with a commodity of real value, for which we received in return a fair compensation. Besides, it had a better effect than clock and tin peddling, both on the seller and buyer. [Pg 24]

To improve my pecuniary condition, and to acquaint myself with the world, I prepared to embark for the South. My purpose was to teach. It was the beginning of October, and yellow fever was said to be raging in Charleston, where I purposed to disembark. Was it, then, safe for me to go? Should the prospect of doing good, improving my mind, and bettering my condition in many other respects, weigh against the danger of disease; or was it preferable that I should wait?

My numerous friends counselled me according to their various temperaments and prepossessions. The strong and vigorous in body and mind said, *Go on*; the feeble and timorous and trembling interposed their caution. But the vessel was ready and would soon sail; and I saw on board many of my acquaintances. The temptation was before me, and was great; the dangers, though many, were remote—the dangers of the sea excepted. For these, it is true, I was, like everybody else, entirely unprepared, having never before in my life crossed more than a single river. I was moreover exceedingly timid.

One kind friend—kind, I mean, in general intention—who had been many years at the South, amid the ravages of the gold fever, as well as other fevers more or less yellow, whispered me just at this critical moment, "Take with you a box of Lee's Windham Bilious Pills; and as soon as you arrive at Charleston, make it your rule to swallow, every other day, one of these pills. That will prevent your getting the fever. I have often tried it, and always with success."

My friend's words gave me more courage than his pills. I saw that he had been in the midst of sickness and had lived through it. Why might not I? My mind was soon made up to proceed on the journey.

We sailed from New Haven in Connecticut, and were seventeen days on our passage. When we reached Charleston, either the yellow fever had spent itself or it had not recently been there, except in a few rare instances. I found no use for pills of any kind, except *such as grew on fruit-trees*—the apple, peach, orange, persimmon, etc., or such as were the products of the corn, potato, and rice fields; nor did I ever take any other while I remained in the South. A queer idea, I often said to myself, that of taking poison while a person is well, in order to prevent becoming sick! In any event, I did not do it. [Pg 25]

There was sickness in the country, however, if not in the city; and I was much and often exposed to it. But what then? How would one of Lee's pills defend me from it, even for two days? I preferred to eat and drink and sleep correctly, and then trust to my good fortune and to Him who controlled it, rather than to nauseous and poisonous medicine. And I had my choice, and with it a blessed reward. I was in the low country of North and South Carolina and Virginia six months or more, and often and again much exposed to disease, and yet I never had a sick day while I remained there. And yet, as I have before intimated, I never took a particle of medicine during the whole time.

Once, indeed, I was beguiled into the foolish habit of using French brandy with my dinner, under the idea that it would promote digestion. But I did not continue it long; and I verily believe that it did me more harm than good while I used it; for I have at no other period of my life suffered so much from dyspeptic tendencies as during the summer which followed this temporary indulgence of brandy with my dinner.

During my wanderings in the South, I had, much of the time, a fellow traveller, who, though he took no medicine, was less cautious than myself, and less fortunate. Perhaps his very

recklessness served as a warning to me. In truth, without being much of a theologian, I have sometimes thought that the errors of mankind were intended in the divine plan—at least in part—for this very end. Happy, then, if this is so, are they who make a wise use of them!

CHAPTER X.

[Pg 26]

DR. SOLOMON AND HIS PATIENT.

I have said that my fellow traveller was less cautious than myself, and have intimated much more. He was in some respects cautious, and yet in others absolutely reckless. When hot and thirsty, for example, instead of just rinsing out his mouth and swallowing a very little water, he would half-fill his stomach with some of that semi-putrid stuff, ycleped water, which you often find in Virginia and the Carolinas; and when hungry, he would eat almost any thing he could lay hold of, and in almost any quantity, as well as at almost any hours, whether seasonable or unseasonable.

This course of conduct seemed to answer very well for a few months; but a day of retribution at last came. He was then in Norfolk, in Virginia. I had been absent from the place a few weeks, and on my return found him sick with a fever, and without such assistance as was absolutely and indispensably necessary. There were Yankees in the place in great numbers, and some of them were his personal acquaintances and friends; but they had hitherto refused to come near him, lest they should take the fever.

I proceeded to take care of him by night and by day. At the suggestion of an old citizen, in whom I placed great confidence, Dr. Solomon was called in as his physician. There was some bleeding and drugging, and a pretty constant attendance for many weeks; but the young man finally recovered.

If you ask what this chapter has to do with my medical confessions, I will tell you. Dr. Solomon was an old school physician, and made certain blunders, which I am about to confess for him. He prescribed—as very many of us his medical brethren formerly did, for the *name* of a disease rather than for the disease itself, just as it now appeared. [Pg 27]

Thus, suppose the disease was typhus fever; in that case he seemed to give just about so many pills and powders every day, without much regard to the circumstances; believing that somehow or other, and at some time or other, good would come out of it. If his patient had sufficient force of constitution to enable him to withstand both the disease and the medicine, and ultimately to recover, Dr. S. had the credit of a cure; not, perhaps that he claimed it,—his friends awarded the honor. If the patient died, it was on account of the severity of the disease. Neither the doctor nor his medicine was supposed to be at fault. Some, indeed, regarded it as the mysterious work of Divine Providence.

Dr. S. attended my young companion in pedestrianism a long time, and sometimes brought a student into the bargain. He probably kept his patient insane with his medicine about half the time, and greatly prolonged his disease and his sufferings. But he knew no better way. He was trained to all this. The idea that half a dozen careful visits, instead of fifty formal ones, and a few shillings' worth of medicine instead of some twenty or thirty dollars' worth, would give the young man a better prospect of recovery than his own routine of fashionable book-dosing and drugging, never for once, I dare say, entered his head. And yet his head was large enough to hold such a simple idea, had it been put there very early; and the deposit would have done much to make him—what physicians will one day become—a rich blessing to the world.

Reader, are here no confessions of medical importance? If not, bear with me awhile, and you will probably find them. We have yet a long road to travel, and there are many confessions to be made in which I have a personal concern and responsibility, and, as you may perhaps conclude, no small share of downright culpability.

CHAPTER XI.

[Pg 28]

PHYSICKING OFF FEVER.

The eyes of my mind having just begun to be opened to the impotence of a mere routine of medication as a *substitute for nature*, rather than *as an aid to her enfeebled efforts*, I was prepared to make a wise use of other facts that came before me, especially those in which I had a personal concern and interest. Here is one of this description.

On the morning of March 12, 1821, during the very period when I was watching over my sick friend, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, I took from the post-office a letter with a black seal. It contained the distressing intelligence of the death of a much-valued sister and her husband, both of whom, but a few months before, I had left in apparently perfect health.

On a careful inquiry into the particulars, both by letter and, after my return, in other ways, I learned that the Connecticut River fever, as it was then and there called, having carried off several persons who were residing in the same house with my brother, the survivors were advised to do something to prevent the germination and development of such seeds of the disease as were supposed to be in their bodies and ready to burst forth into action. I do not know that any medical man encouraged this notion, the offspring of ignorance and superstition; but my brother and his wife had somehow or other imbibed it, and they governed themselves accordingly.

Both of them took medicine—moderate cathartics—till they thought they had physicked off the disease; and all seemed, for a time, to be well, except that they complained still of great weakness and debility. It was not long, however, before they were both taken with the disease and perished; my brother in a very short time, and my sister more slowly. [Pg 29]

My sister, on being taken ill, had been removed to the house of her mother, in the hope that a change of air might do something for her; but all in vain. My mother and a few other friends who were with them as assistants sickened, but they all ultimately recovered. They, however, took no medicine by way of prevention.

Now I do not presume to say, that my young friends were destroyed solely by medicine, for the assertion would be unwarranted. I only state the facts, and tell you what my convictions then were, and what they are still. My belief is, that though they might have sickened had they taken no medicine or preventive, yet their chance of recovery after they sickened was very much diminished by the unnecessary and uncalled-for dosing and drugging.

The notion that we can physick off the seeds of disease, or by our dosing prevent their germination, is as erroneous as can possibly be, and is a prolific source of much suffering and frequent death. The best preventive of disease is good health. Now, physicking off generally weakens us, instead of giving strength. It takes away from our good health instead of adding to or increasing it. As a general rule, to which there are very few exceptions, all medicine, when disease is unusually common or fatal, is hazardous without sound medical advice, and not generally safe even then. It is fit only for extreme cases.

You may be at a loss to understand how such facts and reflections as these could allure me to the study and practice of medicine as a profession. Yet they most certainly had influence. Not that I felt a very strong desire to deal out medicine, for to this I felt a repugnance which strengthened with increase of years and experience. What I most ardently desired was to know the causes of disease, and how far they were or were not within human control. Such a science as that of *hygiene*—nay, even the word itself, and the phrase *laws of health*—was at that time wholly unknown in the world in which I moved. There was, in truth, no way then to this species of knowledge, except through the avenues opened by a course of medical study. Hence it was that I blundered on, in partial though not entire ignorance, for some time longer, groping and searching for that light which I hardly knew how or whence to seek, except in pills and powders and blisters and tinctures. [Pg 30]

CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 31]

MANUFACTURING CHILBLAINS.

At the period of my life to which we have at length arrived, I was for four or five months of every year a school teacher. This was, in no trifling degree, an educational process; for is it not well known that,

"Teaching we learn,
and giving we
retain?"

It was at least an education in the great school of human nature.

Every morning of one of these winter sessions of school keeping, Lydia Maynard, eight years of age, after walking about a mile, frequently in deep snow, and combating the cold northwest winds of one of the southern Green Mountain ranges, would come into the schoolroom with her feet almost frozen, and take her seat close to the stove, so as to warm them and be ready for school as quickly as possible. Here she would sit, if permitted to do so, till the bell rang for school.

It was not long before I learned that she was a great sufferer from chilblains. Whether she inherited a tendency to this troublesome and painful disease, which was awakened and aggravated by sudden changes of temperature, or whether the latter were the original cause of the disease, I never knew with certainty. But I was struck with the fact that sudden warming was followed by such lasting and terrible consequences.

And herein is one reason why I have opposed, from that day to this, the custom or habit, so exceedingly prevalent, of rushing to the fire when we are very cold, and warming ourselves as quickly as possible. I have reasoned; I have commanded; and in some few instances I have ridiculed. Every one knows it is hazardous to bring the ears or fingers or toes, or any other parts of the body, suddenly to the fire when really frozen,—that is, when the temperature is lowered down in the part to 32°; and yet, if it is only down to 33°, and the part not quite frozen, almost every one, young and old, will venture to the fire. Can there be such a difference in the effects when there is only a difference of one degree in temperature? No reflecting person will for one moment believe it. The trouble is we do not think about it. [Pg 32]

Sudden changes from heat to cold are little more favorable than when the change is in the other direction. Indeed, it often happens that children at school are subjected to both these causes. Thus, in the case of Lydia, suppose that after roasting herself a long time at the

stove, she had gone to her seat and placed her feet directly over crevices in the floor, through which the cold wind found its way at almost freezing temperature. Would not this have greatly added to the severity of the disease?

There are, it is true, other reasons against sudden changes of temperature, particularly the change from cold to heat, besides the fact that they tend to produce chilblains; but I cannot do more just now than barely advert to them. The eyes are apt to be injured; it renders us more liable than otherwise we should be to take cold. Occasionally it brings on faintness and convulsions, and still more rarely, sudden death. I will only add now, that sudden warming after suffering from extreme cold, whether we perceive it or not at the time, is very apt to produce deep and lasting injury to the brain and nervous system.

But my main object in relating the story is answered if I have succeeded in clearly pointing out to the reader one of the avenues through which light found its way to my benighted intellect, and led me to reflection on the whole subject of health and disease. Here was obviously one cause of a frequent but most painful complaint. It was natural, perfectly natural, that by this time I should begin to inquire. Have all diseases, then, their exciting causes? Many certainly have; and if many, perhaps all. At least, how do we know but it may be so? And then again, if the causes of chilblains are within our control, and this troublesome disease might be prevented, or its severity mitigated if no more, why may it not be so with all other diseases? [Pg 33]

To revert for a moment to the case of Lydia Maynard. Though I was the cause, in a certain sense, of her suffering, yet it was a sin of ignorance. But it taught me much wisdom. It made me cautious ever afterward. I do not doubt but I have been a means of preventing a very considerable amount of suffering in this form, since that time, by pointing out the road that leads to it.

Prevention is better than cure, was early my motto, and is so still. And from the day in which I began to open my eyes on the world around me, and to reason from effects up to their causes, I have been more and more confirmed in the belief that mankind as a race are to be the artificers of their own happiness or misery. All facts point in this direction, some of them with great certainty. And facts, everywhere and always, are stubborn things.

CHAPTER XIII.

[Pg 34]

HOW TO MAKE ERYSIPELAS.

My periodical tendency to a species of eruptive disease closely resembling measles, was mentioned in Chapter IV. During the summer of 1823 this affection became unusually severe, and seemed almost beyond endurance. The circumstances were as follows:—

I had in charge a large and difficult school. The weather was very hot, and I was not accustomed to labor in summer within doors. Besides, my task was so difficult as to call forth all the energies of body and mind both; and the "wear and tear" of my system was unusually great. It was in the very midst of these severe labors, in hot and not well-ventilated air, that the eruption appeared. Perhaps it was aggravated by my diet, which, in "boarding around," was of course not the best.

The eruption not only affected my body and reached to the extremities, but was accompanied by an itching so severe that I was occasionally compelled to lie awake all

night. My general strength at last began to give way under it, and I sought the advice of our family physician.

He advised me to use, as a wash to the irritated and irritable surface, a weak solution of corrosive sublimate. I hesitated; especially as I believed it to be, with him, an experiment. But on his repeated assurance, that if I would take special care of myself and avoid taking cold, there was no danger, I waived my objections, and proceeded to carry out his plan.

The solution was applied, accordingly, to the letter of the doctor's directions. For many days no change appeared, either favorable or adverse. At length a most distressing headache came on and remained. My sufferings became so severe that I was obliged to postpone my school and return to my father's house. [Pg 35]

On the road, I observed that an eruption of a peculiar kind had appeared, particularly about the forehead, accompanied with small blisters. It was not here that I had applied the solution, but on the arms, chest, and lower limbs. Of course the corrosive sublimate, if at all operative, had affected me through the medium of the circulation and not by direct contact.

Our physician came, pronounced the disease erysipelas, and without saying a word about the cause, prescribed; and I followed out carefully his prescription. But the disease had its course in spite of us both, and was very severe. It took away my sleep entirely for a day or two. It proved a means of removing the hair from one side of my head, and of so injuring the skin that it never grew again. Indeed, gangrene or mortification had actually commenced at several points. Suddenly, however, the pain and inflammation subsided, and I recovered.

Now my physician never said that I was poisoned by the corrosive sublimate, probably for the two following reasons: 1, I never made the inquiry. 2, He would probably have ascribed the disease to taking cold rather than to the mercury, had I inquired. I do not believe I took cold, however. How it came to affect me so unfavorably I never knew with certainty; but that it was the medicine that did the mischief I never for one moment doubted. I suppose it was absorbed; but of the manner of its introduction to the system I am less certain than of the fact itself.

But besides the absorption of the corrosive sublimate into the system, and its consequences—a terrible caution to those who are wont to apply salves, ointments, washes, etc., to the surface of the body unauthorized—I learned another highly important lesson from this circumstance. Active medicines, as I saw more plainly than ever before, are as a sword with two edges. If they do not cut in the right direction, they are almost sure to cut in the wrong.

I must not close, however, without telling you a little more about the treatment of my disease. After I had left my school and had arrived at home, a solution of sugar of lead was ordered in the very coldest water. With this, through the intervention of layers of linen cloth, I was directed to keep my head constantly moistened. Its object, doubtless, was to check the inflammation, which had become exceedingly violent. Why the sugar of lead itself was not absorbed, thus adding poison to poison, is to me inconceivable. Perhaps it was so; and yet, such was the force of my constitution, feeble though it was, that I recovered in spite of both poisons. Or, what is more probable, perhaps the lead, if absorbed at all, did not produce its effects till the effects of the corrosive sublimate were on the wane; so that the living system was only necessitated to war with one poison at a time. Mankind are made to live, at least till they are worn out; and it is not always easy to poison a person to death, if we would. In other words, human nature is tough. [Pg 36]

Now I do not know, by the way, that any one but myself ever suspected, even for one moment, that this attack of erysipelas was caused by the corrosive sublimate. But could I avoid such a conclusion? Was it a hasty or forced one? Judge, then, whether it was not perfectly natural that I should be led by such an unfortunate adventure to turn my attention more than ever to the subject of preserving and promoting health.

For if our family physician—cautious and judicious as in general he was—had been the unintentional cause of a severe attack from a violent and dangerous disease, which had come very near destroying my life, what blunders might not be expected from the less careful and cautious man, especially the beginner in medicine? And if medical men, old and young, scientific as well as unscientific, make occasional blunders, how much more frequently the mass of mankind, who, in their supposed knowledge of their own constitutions and those of their families, are frequently found dosing and drugging themselves and others?

I do not mean to say that in the incipency of my observations and inquiries my mind was mature enough—well educated enough, I mean—to pursue exactly the foregoing train of thought; but there was certainly a tendency that way, as will be seen more fully in the next chapter. The spell at least was broken, and I saw plainly that if "died by the visitation of God" *never* means any thing, it *generally* does not. And as it turned out that the further I pushed my inquiries the more I found that diseases were caused by transgression of physical and moral law, and hence not uncontrollable, why should it not be so, still farther on, in the great world of facts which I had not yet penetrated? [Pg 37]

CHAPTER XIV.

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STUDYING MEDICINE.

My thoughts were now directed with considerable earnestness and seriousness, to the study of medicine. It is true that I was already in the twenty-fourth year of my age, and that the statute law of the State in which I was a resident required three years of study before receiving a license to practise medicine and surgery, and I should hence be in my twenty-seventh or twenty-eighth year before I could enter actively and responsibly upon the duties of my profession, which would be rather late in life. Besides, I had become quite enamored of another profession, much better adapted to my slender pecuniary means than the study of a new one.

However, I revolved the subject in my mind, till at length, as I thought, I saw my path clearly. It was my undoubted duty to pursue the study of medicine. Still, there were difficulties which to any but men of decision of character were not easily got removed. Shall I tell you how they were gradually and successfully overcome?

Our family physician had an old skeleton, and a small volume of anatomy by Cheselden, as well as a somewhat more extended British work on anatomy and physiology; all these he kindly offered to lend me. Then he would permit me to study with him, or at least occasionally recite to him, which would answer the letter of the law. Then, again, I could, during the winter of each year of study except the last, teach school, and thus add to my pecuniary means of support. And lastly, my father would board me whenever I was not teaching, and on as long a credit as I desired. Were not, then, all my difficulties practically overcome, at least prospectively?

It was early in the spring of the year 1822 that I carried to my father's house an old dirty skeleton and some musty books, and commenced the study of medicine and surgery, or at least of those studies which are deemed a necessary preparation. It was rather dry business at first, but I soon became very much interested in the study of physiology, and made considerable progress. My connection with our physician proved to be merely nominal, as I seldom found him ready to hear a recitation. Besides, my course of study was rather desultory, not to say irregular. [Pg 39]

In the autumn of 1824, having occasion to teach school at such a distance as rendered it almost impracticable for me to continue my former connection as a student, I made arrangements for studying with another physician on terms not unlike those in the former case. My new teacher, however, occasionally heard me recite, especially in what is properly called the practice of medicine and in surgery. His instructions, though very infrequent, were of service to me.

In 1825 I became a boarder in his family, where I remained about a year. Here I had an opportunity to consult and even study the various standard authors in the several departments which are usually regarded as belonging to a course of medical study. So that if I was not in due time properly qualified to "practise medicine and surgery in this or any other country," the fault was chiefly my own.

However, in the spring of 1825, after I had attended a five months' course of lectures in one of the most famous medical colleges of the Northern States, I was regularly examined and duly licensed. *How* well qualified I was supposed to be, did not exactly appear. It was marvellous that I succeeded at all, for I had labored much on the farm during the three years, taught school every winter and two summers, had two or three seasons of sickness, besides a severe attack of influenza (this, you know, is not regarded as a disease by many) while attending lectures, which confined me a week or more. And yet one of my fellow students, who was present at the examination, laughed at my studied accuracy!

One word about my thesis, or dissertation. It was customary at the college where I heard lectures—as it probably is at all others of the kind—to require each candidate for medical license to read before the board, prior to his examination, an original dissertation on some topic connected with his professional studies. The topic I selected was pulmonary consumption; especially, the means of preventing it. It was, as may be conjectured, a slight departure from the ordinary routine, but was characteristic of the writer's mind, prevention being then, as it still is, and probably always will be, with him a favorite idea. I go so far, even, as to insist that it should be the favorite idea of every medical man, from the beginning to the end of his career. "The best part of the medical art is the art of avoiding pain," was the motto for many years of the *Boston Medical Intelligencer*; and it embraced a most important truth. When will it be fully and practically received? [Pg 40]

But I must recapitulate a little; or rather, I must go back and give the reader a few chapters of incidents which occurred while I was a student under Dr. W., my second and principal teacher. I will however study brevity as much as possible.

CHAPTER XV.

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NATURE'S OWN EYE WATER.

When I began the study of medicine, my eyes were so exceedingly weak, and had been for about ten years, or indeed always after the attack of measles, that I was in the habit of shading them, much of the time, with green or blue glasses. My friends, many of them, strongly objected to any attempt to pursue the study of medicine on this very account. And the attempt was, I confess, rather hazardous.

What seemed most discouraging in the premises was the consideration that I had gone, to no manner of purpose, the whole round of eye waters, elixir vitriol itself not excepted. Was there room, then, for a single gleam of hope? Yet I was resolutely, perhaps obstinately, determined on making an effort. I could but fail.

Soon after I made a beginning, the thought struck me, "Why not make the experiment of frequently bathing the eyes in cold water?" At that very moment they were hot and somewhat painful; and suiting the action to the thought, I held my face for some seconds in very cold water. The sensation was indescribably agreeable; and I believe that for once in my life, at the least, I felt a degree of gratitude to God, my Creator, for cold water.

The practice was closely and habitually followed. Whenever my eyes became hot and painful, I put my face for a short time in water, even if it were *twenty* times a day. The more I bathed them, the greater the pleasure, nor was it many days before they were evidently less inflamed and less troublesome. Why, then, should I not persevere?

I carried the practice somewhat further still. I found from experiment, that I could open my eyes in the water. At first, it is true, the operation was a little painful, and I raised, slightly, its temperature. Gradually, however, I became so much accustomed to it that the sensation was not only less painful, but even somewhat agreeable. In a few weeks I could bear to open my eyes in the water, and keep them open as long as I was able to hold my breath, even at a very low temperature.

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Perseverance in this practice not only enabled me to proceed with my studies, contrary to the expectation of my friends, and in spite, too, of my own apprehensions, but gave me in addition the unspeakable pleasure of finding my eyes gaining every year in point of strength, as well as clearness of sight. My glasses were laid aside, and I have never used any for that specific purpose since that time. Of course I do not mean by this to say that my eyes remain as convex as they were at twenty-five or thirty years of age, for that would not be true. They have most certainly flattened a little since I came to be fifty years of age, for I am compelled to wear glasses when I would read or write. I mean, simply, that they have never suffered any more from inflammation or debility, since I formed the habit of bathing them, even up to the present hour.

The more I observe on this subject, the more I am persuaded—apart from my own experience—that pure water, at the lowest temperature which can be used without giving pain, is the best known eye medicine in the world, not merely for one, two, or ten in a hundred persons, but for all. I recommend it, therefore, at every opportunity, not only to my patients but to others. It may doubtless be abused, like every other good gift; but in wise and careful hands it will often accomplish almost every thing but downright miracles. We may begin with water a little tepid, and lower the temperature as gradually as we please, till we come to use it ice cold.

CHAPTER XVI.

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THE VIPER STORY.

I was, early in life, greatly perplexed in mind by the oft-recurring question, why it was that in the hands of common sense men, every known system of medicine—even one which was diametrically opposed to the prevailing custom or belief, like that of Hahnemann, seemed to be successful. Not only the botanic practitioner with his herbs, and the homœopathist with his billionth dilutions, but even the no-medicine man^[B] could boast of his cures, and, for aught I could see, of about an equal number—good sense and perseverance and other things being equal. And then, again, he that bled everybody, or almost everybody, if abounding in good sense, like the late Dr. Hubbard, of Pomfret, in Connecticut, was about as successful as those who, like Dr. Danforth, once an eminent practitioner of Boston, would bleed nobody, nor, if in his power to prevent it, suffer the lancet to be used by anybody else.

While cogitating on this subject one day, the following anecdote from a surgical work—I think a French work—came under my eye, and at once solved the problem, and relieved me of my difficulty. It may probably be relied on.

When the Abbé Fontana, a distinguished medical man and naturalist, was travelling, once, in some of the more northern countries of Europe, he was greatly surprised to find such a wonderful variety of applications to the bite of the viper, and still more to find them all successful, or at least about equally so. Even those that were in character diametrically opposed to each other, *all cured*. His astonishment continued and increased when he found at length that those who applied nothing at all recovered about as readily as any of the rest.

In the sequel, as the result of diligent and scientific research, it turned out that the bite of this animal, however dangerous and fatal in hot climates, is scarcely dangerous at all in cold ones. Hence it was that all sorts of treatment appeared to cure. In other words, the persons who were bitten all recovered in spite of the applications made to their wounds, and generally in about the same period of time. [Pg 44]

Thus, as I began to suspect,—and the reader must pardon the suspicion, if he can,—it may be with our diversified and diverse modes of medical treatment. A proportion of our patients,—perhaps I should say a large proportion,—if well nursed and cared for and encouraged, would recover if let alone so far as regards medicine. And it is in proof of this view, that nearly as many recover under one mode of practice, provided that practice is guided by a large share of plain, unsophisticated sense, as another. And does not this fully account for a most remarkable fact?

Hence it is, too,—and perhaps hence alone,—that we can account for the strange development in Boston, not many years since, during a public medical discussion; viz., that he who had given his tens of pounds of calomel to his patients, and taken from their arms his hogsheads of blood, had been on the whole about as successful a practitioner as he who had revolted from the very thought of both, and had adopted some of the various forms of the stimulating rather than the depleting system.

"Is there, then, no choice between medication and no-medication? For if so, what necessity is there of the medical profession? Why not annihilate it at once?"

My reply is,—and it would have been about the same when these discoveries began to be made,—that there is no occasion to give up the whole thing because it has been so sadly abused. Every mode of medical practice, not to say every medical practitioner from the very beginning, has been, of necessity, more or less empirical. The whole subject has been involved in so much ignorance and uncertainty, that even our wisest practitioners have been liable to err. They have been led, unawares, to prescribe quite too much for names rather than for symptoms; and their patients were often glad to have it so. And were the whole matter to come to an end this day, it might well be questioned whether the profession, as a whole, has been productive of more good than evil to mankind. But then, every thing must have its infancy before it can come to manhood. And it is a consolation to believe that the duration of that manhood always bears some degree of proportion to the time required in advancing from infancy to maturity. [Pg 45]

Medicine, then, as a science, is valuable in prospect. And then, too, it is worth something to have a set of men among us on whom we may fasten our faith; for, credulous as everybody is and will be in this matter of health and disease, till they can duly be taught the laws of hygiene, they will lean upon somebody; it is certainly desirable that they should rely on those whom they know, rather than upon strangers, charlatans, and conjurors, of whom they know almost nothing.

But I shall have frequent occasion to revert to this subject in other chapters, and must therefore dismiss it for the present, in order to make room for other facts, anecdotes, and

reflections.

FOOTNOTES:

[B] Of the hydropathist at that time I had not heard.

CHAPTER XVII.

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STRUCK WITH DEATH.

Throughout the region where I was brought up, and perhaps throughout the civilized world, the notion has long prevailed that in some of the last moments of a person's life, he is or may be "struck with death;" by which, I suppose the more intelligent simply mean that such a change comes over him as renders his speedy departure to the spirit-world inevitable.

Now that we are really justified in saying of many persons who are in their last moments, that they are beyond the reach of hope, is doubtless true. When decomposition, for instance, has actually commenced, and the vital organs have already begun to falter, it would be idle to conceal the fact, were we able to do so, that life is about to be extinguished beyond the possibility of doubt.

In general, however, it is never quite impossible for the sick to recover even after recovery *seems* to be impossible. So many instances of this kind have been known, that we ought at least, to be exceedingly cautious about pronouncing with certainty, and to encourage rather than repel the application of the old saying, "as long as there is life, there is hope." [C]

I had a lesson on this subject while a medical student, which was exceedingly instructive, and which, if I were to live a thousand years, I could never forget. It was worth more to me in practical life afterward, than all my books and recitations would have been without it. The facts were these:—

My teacher of medicine used occasionally to take his students with him when he rode abroad on his professional visits. One day, it fell to my lot to bear him company. His patient was an aged farmer, a teamster rather, who had been for some time ill of a fever, and had not been expected to recover. Yet his case was not so desperate but that the physician was expected to continue his daily visits.

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On our arrival at the house of the sick man, we were met by a member of the family, who said, "Come in, doctor, but you are too late to do us any good. Mr. H. is struck with death; all the world could not save him now."

We entered the room. There lay the patient almost gone, surely. So at least, at the first view, it appeared. It was a hot summer day, and hardly a breath of air was stirring. The friends were gathered around the bed, and there was less freedom of circulation in the air of the sick-room than elsewhere. It was almost enough to kill a healthy man to be shut up in such a stagnant atmosphere; what, then, must have been the effect on one so sick and feeble?

The doctor beckoned them away from the bed, and requested them to open another window. They did it rather reluctantly; but then, *they did it*. The sufferer lay panting, as if the struggle was almost over. "Don't you think he is struck with death, doctor?" whispered one and another and another. Almost out of patience, the doctor at length replied: "Struck with

death? What do you mean? No; he is no more struck with death than I am. He is struck much more with the heat and bad air. Raise another window."

The window was raised. "Now," said he, "set that door wide open." It was quickly done. "Now bring me a bowl of water, and a teaspoon." The bowl of water was quickly brought. "Put a little water into his mouth with the teaspoon," said he. "O doctor," they replied, "it will only distress him; he is already struck with death."—"Try it then, and see."

Tremblingly they now moistened his parched lips. "Put a little of it in his mouth, with the teaspoon," he said. They shuddered; the doctor persisted. "Why," said the attendant, "he has not been able to swallow any thing these two hours." "How do you know?" said he. "Why, he has been all the while struck with death."—"Nonsense! have you tried it?" "Tried it? oh, no; by no means."—"Why not?"—"Because we knew it would only distress him. He is too far gone to swallow, doctor; you may rely on it."

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The physician's patience was now well nigh exhausted, as well it might have been, and seizing the bowl and teaspoon with his own sacrilegious hands, "I will see," said he, "whether he is struck with death or not."

He not only wetted his lips and tongue, as they had partially done before, but gradually insinuated a few drops of Nature's best and only drink, into the top of his throat. At last he swallowed! The doctor's hopes revived; while the family stood as if themselves struck, not with death, but with horror. At length, he swallowed again and again. In half an hour, he opened his eyes; before we left him, he had become quite sensible, and, had we encouraged it, might have spoken.

To make my story as short as possible, the next day he could swallow a little gruel. The third day, he could be raised upon the bed. The fourth, though still weak, he was dressed and sat up an hour. In a fortnight, he was once more driving his team; and for ought I know to the contrary, unless debarred by reason of age, he may be driving it at this very moment!

Going home together from our visit, already so fully described, the conversation turned on the silly notion which so extensively prevails about being struck with death. We talked of its origin, its influence, and its consequences. It had done no good in the world, while it had been the means, we could not doubt, of indirectly destroying thousands of valuable lives.

OF ITS ORIGIN.—How came the notion abroad that a person can be struck with death, so affected that there is no possible return for him, to life and health? Struck! By whom? Is there a personage, spiritual but real, that strikes? Is it the Divine Being? Surely not. Is it an arch enemy? is it Satan himself?

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"No day, no glimpse of
day, to solve the
knot."

The doctor and I had, however, one conjecture concerning it, which, if it should not instruct the reader, may at least, afford him a little amusement. It certainly amused us.

You have seen the old-fashioned New England Primer. It has been in vogue, I believe, a full century; perhaps nearer two centuries. It has done not a little to give shape to New England character. In its preliminary pages is a sort of alphabet of couplets, with cuts prefixed or annexed. One of the couplets reads thus:—

"Youth forward slips,
Death soonest nips."

While at its left, is the representation of a skeleton, armed with a dagger, and pursuing a youth—a child rather—with the apparent intention of striking him through. Now I cannot say how this picture may have affected others, but to my medical teacher and myself, as we mutually agreed, it always brings up the idea of striking down a youth or child prematurely, and sending him away to the great congregation of the dead.

Nor am I quite sure that this representation, innocent as may have been its intention, has not been the origin of a relentless and cruel superstition. I know certainly, that my own early notions about being struck with death, had, somehow or other, a connection with this picture; and why may it not be so with others?

But the *influence* and *consequences* of this superstition must be adverted to for a moment. I said they affect and have affected thousands; perhaps I ought to have said millions. Under the confused and preposterously silly idea that Death, the personification of Satan or some other demon, has laid hold of the sick or distressed, and that it would be a sort of useless, not to say sacrilegious, work to oppose, or attempt to oppose, the grim messenger, we sometimes leave our sick friends in the greatest extremity, to suffer and perhaps die, when the gentle touch of a kind hand, a mere drop of water, or a breath of fresh air, might often bring them back again to life and health and happiness and usefulness. [Pg 50]

If this chapter should not be deemed a confession of medical impotence, it is at least a practical confession of medical selfishness or ignorance. If duly enlightened themselves, medical men ought long ago, to have rid society of this abominable superstition; and if not sufficiently enlightened to perceive its existence and evil tendency, they ought to have abandoned their profession.

FOOTNOTES:

- [C] Dr. Livingstone, in his work of Travels and Researches in Africa, tells us that during his residence among the Backwains, a tribe in the African interior, two persons who had been hastily buried, perhaps "struck with death" in the first place, returned home "to their affrighted relatives." p. 143.

CHAPTER XVIII.

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EFFICACY OF COLD SPRING WATER.

An aged man not far from where I was studying, had an attack of dysentery which was long and severe. Whether the fault of its long continuance lay in his own bad habits, or the injudicious use of medicine, or in both, we can inquire to better advantage by and by. I was not, however, very much acquainted with his physician, so as to be able in the premises to form a very correct opinion concerning him.

The greatest puzzle with me, at that time, was why he should live so long after the disease appeared to have spent itself, without making any advances. The physician used to call on him day after day, and order tonic medicine of various kinds, all of which was given with great care and exactness. Every thing in fact, seemed to be put in requisition, except what were most needful of all, pure air and water. The former of these was, as is usual in such cases, neglected; the latter was absolutely interdicted.

For this last, as not unfrequently happens at this stage of acute diseases, the poor man sighed from day to day as though his heart would break. But, no; he must not have it. The effect on his bowels, he was told, would be unfavorable. And such at that day was the general *theory*. It was not considered that a very small quantity at first, a few drops merely, would be a great relief, and might be borne, till by degrees a larger quantity would be admissible.

After repeated efforts, and much begging and crying for a little water to cool his parched tongue, the old gentleman, one night dreamed that he drank from a certain cold spring, which really flowed at a remote corner of his farm and was a great favorite both with him and his whole family, and that it almost immediately restored him. Delighted with his dream, he no sooner fairly awaked than he called up his eldest son and sent him with a bottle, to the spring. He did not now *plead*, he *commanded*. The son returned in due time, with a bottle of water. He returned, it is true, with great fear and trembling, but he could do no less than obey. The demands and commands were peremptory, and the father was almost impatient.

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"Now, my son," said the father, "bring me a tumbler." It was brought, and the father took it. "Now," said he, "pour some of that water into it." Samuel could do no other way than submit to the lawfully constituted authority, though it was not without the most painful apprehensions with regard to the consequences, and he kindly warned his father of the danger. Nor were his sufferings at all diminished when the father, in a decided tone of voice, ordered him to fill the tumbler about half full.

Whether he had at first intended to drink so large a draught and afterwards repented, is not known; but instead of swallowing it all at a draught, the son's distress was greatly mitigated when he saw that he only just tasted it, and then set down the tumbler. In a few minutes he drank a little more, and then after a short time a little more still. He was about half an hour drinking a gill of water. When that was gone, he ordered more; and persisted in this moderate way till morning. By ten o'clock, when his physician arrived, he had drunk nearly a quart of it, and was evidently better. There was a soft, breathy perspiration, as well as more strength.

The physician no sooner saw him than he pronounced him better. "What have you been doing?" he said, rather jocosely. The sick man told him the simple story of his rebellion from beginning to end. The doctor at first shook his head, but when he came to reflect on the apparent good consequences which had followed, he only said: "Well, I suppose we must remember the old adage, 'Speak well of a bridge that carries you safe over,'" and then joined in the general cheerfulness.

The patient continued to drink his spring water from day to day, and with increasing good effects. It acted almost like a charm; it was not only food and drink to him, but also medicine. Doubtless his great faith in it was not without its efficacy; still it was not to be denied that the water did him great and positive good.

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He soon found his newly discovered medicine not only more agreeable to his taste, but cheaper also than Huxham's tincture and quassia. He also found that his son's daily visits to the spring cost him less than Dr. Physic's daily rides of three or four miles. So that though he was greatly delighted to see the smiling face, and hear the stories and jolly laugh of the latter, he was glad when he proposed to call less frequently than he had done and to lay aside all medicine.

He recovered in a reasonable time, and lived to a very advanced age. A friend of his and mine, found him in his eighty-sixth year, mowing thistles barefooted. Two or three years still later, I found him—it was during the cold month of January, 1852—in the woods with his hired man far from his house, assisting in cutting and loading wood; in which

employment he seemed to act with much of the energy and not a little of the activity of his earlier years.

I do not of course undertake to say that he owed his recovery from his long sickness, above described solely to drinking cold water, there are so many other circumstances to be taken into the account, in settling all questions like this, that such an assertion would be hazardous, not to say foolish. His fever at the time of making his experiment, had already passed away; and having great tenacity of life, it was but reasonable to expect nature would ere long, rally, if she *could* rally at all. It is also worthy of remark, that though his physician was one of those men who place their chief reliance on the medicine they give, rather than on the recuperative powers of the system, yet to his credit be it said, he had in this instance departed from his usual routine, and given comparatively little.

Perhaps we may explain the phenomenon of his recovery, as follows: nature long oppressed, yet by rest partially restored to her wonted energy, was now ready to rally as soon as she could get the opportunity; this the moderate draughts of water by their effects on the circulation enabled her to do; then, too, one consideration which I forgot to mention in its place, deserves to be noticed. When the sick man began the use of water, he laid aside (without the knowledge of his physician) most of what pills and powders and tinctures were prescribed him. And finally he had great faith in the water, as you have already seen; whereas he had lost all faith in drugging and dosing. And the efficacy of faith is almost sufficient in such cases, to work a cure, were this our only reliance. Of this we shall have an illustration in Chapter LXXVI.

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But though the water, as I now fully believe—and as I more than half believed when I heard of the facts at the time,—was fairly indicated, there is great hazard, in such circumstances in its use. Had this gentleman taken a large draught at first, or had he swallowed more moderate draughts with great eagerness, and a quick succession, it might have produced an ill effect; it might, even, have provoked a relapse of his dysentery and fever. Many a sick patient in the same circumstances, would have poured the cooling liquid into an enfeebled throat and stomach without the least restraint. And why did not he?

I will give you one reason. He was early taught to govern himself. He told me, when eighty-eight years of age, he had made it a rule, all his life long, never to eat enough, but always to leave off his meals with a good appetite. He did not indeed, follow out with exactness the rule of the late Amos Lawrence: "Begin hungry and leave off hungrier," but he came very near it. He managed so as always to have a good appetite, and never in the progress of more than fourscore years, whether by night or day, to lose it. Such a man, if his mind is not too much reduced by long disease, can be safely trusted with cold spring water, even during the more painful and trying circumstances of convalescence from acute disease.

Another thing deserves to be mentioned in this connection. He had not kept his bowels and nervous system, all his life long, under the influence of rum, tobacco, opium, coffee, tea, or highly seasoned food. He did not it is true, wholly deny himself any one of these, except opium and tobacco; but he only used them occasionally, and even then in great moderation. Nor was it from mere indigence, or culpable stinginess that he ate and drank, for the most part in a healthful manner. It seemed to be from a conviction of the necessity of being "temperate in all things;" and that such a course as he pursued tended to hardihood. As one evidence of a conviction of this kind, I have known his children and their school teacher to carry to the schoolroom for their dinner, a quantity of cold Indian cake—ycleped Johnny cake—and nothing else; nor was there an attempt at the slightest apology. Such a man would not be very likely to have an ulcerated alimentary canal, or bad blood; or to be injured by swallowing every five minutes a table-spoonful of cold water; no, nor to sink as quickly as other people under the depressing tendency of irritating or poisonous medicine.

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This last-mentioned fact concerning the use of water,—for it is a fact on which we can rely, and not one of those statements which Dr. Cullen was accustomed to call "false facts,"—was to me exceedingly instructive. It taught me more concerning the human constitution and the laws of health and disease than I had ever before learned from a single case of mere disease, in my whole life; and I endeavored to make a wise use of it—of which as I trust, I shall give some evidence in the very next chapter.

CHAPTER XIX.

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CHEATING THE PHYSICIAN.

It was by no means an uncommon thing with me, while studying medicine, to take long walks. One day, in the progress of one of these rambles, I came so near the family mansion of a young man with whom I had formerly been acquainted, that I thought I would, for once, go a little out of my way and make a call on him. And judge, reader, if you can, of my surprise, when I found him exceedingly sick. For residing, as we did, only a few miles apart, why had I not heard of it? Most people, in truth, would have called on some of the young doctors—for there were three or four of us together,—to take care of the sick man, especially by night. Young doctors, I grant—and this for various reasons which might be named, were it needful—are usually the very worst of watchers and nurses of the sick; but the public often appear to think otherwise, and even to prefer them.

I found him under the care of an old school physician;—one who, though he otherwise prescribed very well, gave quite too much medicine; and like the old physician mentioned in the preceding chapter, mortally detested cold water; at least he detested its use in bowel complaints. The young man's case, however, was as yet wholly unlike that of the elderly gentleman of the foregoing chapter; and cold water at first, was not particularly needed; nor perhaps quite safe.

Some few days afterward, I called again. Found my young friend rather less feverish, but no better; in fact, he was much worse, and was most obviously running down. I continued after this to call on him daily, till he too, like the old man before mentioned, began to beg for cold water. But his physician said, "No, not a drop," and with a good deal of emphasis.

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One day, while I was at his bedside, he turned to me, and with a most imploring look begged to know whether I believed a very little cold water would really hurt him. I told him no; but that a good deal doubtless would, and might even prove the means of his destruction. "Simple a thing as water is," I said, "it is to you, in circumstances like yours, a sword with two edges. If it should not cut away the disease, it would probably cut in the other direction, to the destruction of your health, if not of your life."

My remarks had both awakened his curiosity and increased his desires for the interdicted beverage. I found I had gone too far, and I frankly told him so. I told him it was not in accordance with medical etiquette, nor even with the rules of good breeding, for one medical man to prescribe for another's patient without his knowledge. But this explanation did not satisfy him. Water was what he wanted; and as I had opened the budget and removed some of his fears, water he must have. He was willing, he said, to bear the responsibility.

Water, then, in exceedingly small quantity at a time, was permitted; but it was to be given by stealth. The physician was not allowed to know it, or, at all events, he was not to know under whose encouragement he acted. His friends were very careful in regard to the

quantity, and I had the happiness of finding him, in a few days, very much better. But, as I said in reflecting on the recovery of my aged friend before mentioned, it is not quite certain, after all, how much was effected by the water, and how much by the recuperative efforts of Nature herself. She might have been long waiting for that opportunity to rally, which the judicious introduction of the water, and the partial or entire discontinuance of other medicine, greatly facilitated.

CHAPTER XX.

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THE MEDICINAL EFFECTS OF STORY TELLING.

My aged father sickened about this time, and remained in a low condition many months. I was at a distance so great, and in circumstances so peculiar, that I could not see him often enough to become his medical adviser. Besides, in my then unfledged condition as a disciple of Galen, I should not have regarded myself competent to the discharge of so weighty a responsibility, had I even been at home with him. The result was that he employed his family physician as usual, and went through, as might have been expected, with the whole paraphernalia of a dosing and drugging campaign.

Among other troubles, or rather to cap the climax of his troubles, he was exceedingly low-spirited. Confined as he had been to the house almost all winter, and seeing nobody to converse with,—no new faces, I mean,—was it very strange that his mind turned, involuntarily, to his complaints, and preyed upon itself, and that he was evidently approaching the deep vortex of hypochondria? Medicine did him no good, and could do him none. It is true he had, after three months, almost left off its use; but the little to which he still clung was most evidently a source of irritation.

My own occasional visits, as I soon found out, did him more good than any thing else. This gave me a needful hint. Near him was an old Revolutionary soldier, full of mirthfulness, and a capital story teller. Unknown to my father, and even to the family, I employed this old soldier to visit my father a certain number of evenings in each week, and tell stories to him.

Sergeant K. complied faithfully with the terms of the contract, and was at my father's house three evenings of each week for a long time. This gave the old gentleman something else to think of besides himself, and it was easy to see, did him much good. During the progress of the fourth month his improvement became quite perceptible; and in another month he was nearly recovered.

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But, as I have repeatedly said of cold water, and indeed of all other remedial efforts or applications, whether external or internal, and whether moral, mental, or physical, too much credit should not be given, at least hastily, to a single thing. The opening spring was in my father's favor, as well as the story telling. The bow, so long retained in an unnatural position, on having an opportunity, sprung back and resumed its wonted condition. Still, I could never help awarding much credit to the Revolutionary soldier.

Most persons must have observed the effects which cheerfulness in a medical man has on his patients. The good-natured, jolly doctor, who tells a story now and then, and cracks a joke and has occasionally a hearty laugh *with you*, or *at you*, about something or nothing, will do you much more good, other things being equal, than the grave, staid, sombre practitioner, who thinks it almost a sin to smile, especially at the sick-bed or in the sick-room.

I think story telling, as an art, should be cultivated, were it only for its good effects in sickness. But this is not all. Its prophylactic or preventive tendencies are much more valuable. Few people know how to tell a story of any kind; while others, in some few remarkable instances, such as I could name, will make a story of almost any thing, and bring it to bear upon the precise point or end they wish to accomplish. It is yet, in reality, a mooted point, which could make the deepest, or at least most abiding, impression, Daniel Webster by a Congressional oration, or Jacob Abbott by a simple story. If this is an indirect or incautious confession of medical imperfection or impotence, let me say as Patrick Henry once did, in Revolutionary days, "then make the most of it."

While on this topic of story telling, I must not forget to allude to its moral effects. Lorenzo Dow, the eccentric preacher, is not the only pulpit occupant who has acquired the art of "clinch[ing] the nail," in his discourses by a well told story. It was quite a habit, in former times, with certain preachers of certain denominations of Christians, whose sermons were chiefly unwritten, to tell stories occasionally. And I appeal to Father Waldo, late chaplain in the United States Senate, to see whether the effects of these discourses were not as deep and as lasting, to say the least, as many of our modern sermons, which, while they smell much more of the lamp, fall almost lifeless upon the sleepy ears of thousands of those whom Whitfield by his more practical course would have converted. [Pg 60]

CHAPTER XXI

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OSSIFIED VEINS.

While I was studying medicine with my new or second master, I had several excellent opportunities for studying health and disease through the medium of the doctor's patients.

One of them was a swaggering man of wealth, about sixty-three years of age. He had long lived very highly, had eaten a good deal of roast beef, and drunk a good deal of wine, and had almost swum in cider. He was in short, one of that class of men who "go off" in very many instances, at the grand climacterical period, some of them very suddenly.

"Doctor," said the general, exhibiting himself in full size and the boldest relief, "I want to be bled."—"What do you want bleeding for?" said the doctor. "Oh," said he, "bleed me, and you will see. You will find my blood in a very bad state."—"Your blood, general, was always in a very bad state," said the shrewd son of Galen, with a sardonic grin. "None of your fun, doctor," was the prompt reply; "I must be bled. I have headache and giddiness half the time, and must have some blood taken."—"Very well," said Dr. S. "It shall be as you desire. Here, my son, bring me a bowl."

An older student assisted, while I, glad of the privilege, kept aloof, and at a distance. The general's brawny arm was mauled a long time; and even then not much blood was obtained. At last the attempt was given up, and the man returned home, though not, as might have been expected, very well satisfied.

When he was gone, I inquired of Dr. S., as modestly as I could, what serious difficulties he had to encounter in his attack on Gen. Upham's arm. "Why was it," said I, "that you could get no more blood?" "For the plainest reason in the world," he answered; "his veins were all ossified." [Pg 62]

I was quite satisfied at the time, with this answer; for I knew so well the habits of Gen. U. that I stood ready to believe almost any thing in regard to him, especially when it came from

a highly respectable source. Yet I have often suspected since that time, that there was a serious mistake made. Ossified or bony arteries, even at this great distance from the heart, in such a man, ought not to excite surprise; but these would hardly be met with in attempting to open a vein, since the arteries are much more deeply imbedded in the flesh than the veins are. And as for ossified veins themselves, especially in the arm, they are seldom if ever heard of.

You may wonder why I did not satisfy my curiosity at the time, by making diligent inquiry at the proper source of information; and I almost wonder too. But, in the first place, my curiosity did not rise so high on any occasion whatever, as it has since done. For, though I was hungering and thirsting for knowledge thirty years ago, my solicitude to know has so increased with increasing years that my present curiosity will admit of no comparison with the former. Secondly, I was exceedingly diffident. Thirdly, my mind was just then fully occupied with other things. And lastly, whenever I was in the company of Dr. S., both while I remained in the office and subsequently, it was only for a very short time, perhaps a single half hour, at best; and we had always so many other things to talk about, that Gen. U. and his *ossified veins* never entered our minds.

However, it was not many years afterward that I heard of the old general's death. Of the manner of his exit except that it was sudden, I never heard a word, up to this hour. It is by no means improbable that there was ossification about his heart, for he was a very fit subject for ossification of any parts that could be ossified. I do not know, indeed, that a post mortem examination was ever made; the family would doubtless have opposed it. The uses of the dead to the living are in general very little thought of.

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Such cases of disease are, however, a terrible warning to those who are following in the path of Gen. Upham. They may or may not come to just such an end as he did, but of one thing we may be well assured; viz., that the wicked do not live out half their days, or, in other words, that sins against the body, even though committed in ignorance, can never wholly escape the heaven-appointed penalty of transgression. "The soul that sins must die." For no physical infraction of God's holy, physical laws, do we know of any atonement. We may indeed, be thankful if we find one in the moral world or anywhere else.

CHAPTER XXII.

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HE'LL DIE IN THIRTY SIX HOURS.

In the autumn of 1824, while a severe sickness was sweeping over one or two towns adjacent to that in which I resided, and considerable apprehension was felt lest the disease should reach us, the wife and child of my medical teacher, and myself, suddenly sickened in a manner not greatly dissimilar, and all of us suffered most severely.

It was perfectly natural, in those circumstances, to suspect, as a cause of our sickness, the prevailing epidemic. And yet the symptoms were so unlike those of that disease, that all suspicions of this sort were soon abandoned. Besides, no other persons but ourselves, for many miles around, had any thing of the kind, either about that time or immediately afterward. I have said that the symptoms of disease in all three of us were not dissimilar. There was much congestion of the lungs and some hemorrhage from their organs, and occasionally slight cough, and in the end considerable tendency to inflammation of the brain. The last symptom, however, may have been induced at least, in part, by the large amount of active medicine we took.

When the news of my own sickness reached my near relatives who resided only a few miles distant, they were anxious to pay such attention to me as the nature of the case appeared to require. But they soon tired; and it was found needful to employ an aged and experienced nurse to take the general charge, and under the direction of the physician, assume the entire responsibility of the case.

This nurse was one of those conceited people whose aid, after all, is worth very little. He was as far from affording the kind of assistance I required as could possibly be. And yet his intentions were in the main excellent. [Pg 65]

The selection of physician was equally unfortunate. My teacher had nearly as much as he could do to take care of his wife and child. At his request, and in accordance with the wishes of my friends, their and my former physician were called in. When the danger became more imminent, a third was occasionally consulted. It was supposed, no doubt, that in the midst of counsellors there was safety.

The counsels of our third man, or umpire, may have had influence; but his manners were coarse, and in many respects objectionable. He was in favor, also, of a highly stimulating treatment, which appeared to me to add fuel to the flame, for I soon began to be at a loss when called upon to recollect things and circumstances. He saw the tendency, and, partly by way of "showing off" his powers of diagnosis, as well as in part to gain applause should a case so desperate turn out favorably, said, in the hearing of my nurse, "He'll die in just thirty-six hours."

Now, whatever his intentions were, and however honest his declaration, my nurse swallowed it at once, and was restless till he had an opportunity to divulge what he regarded as an important secret. It is by no means improbable that he entertained the usual impressions that a special preparation should be made for death, and that it was needful I should know my danger and attend to the subject before it was too late.

In one of my most lucid intervals, therefore, he said to me, "Do you expect to recover from your disease?"—"Most certainly I do," was the reply. "Do you know what Dr. Thornton thinks about it?"—"Not certainly; but from his cheerful manner, I suppose he thinks favorably."—"Do you think you could bear to know the truth? For if it was unfavorable, would it not be too much for you in your enfeebled condition?"

My heart was in my mouth, as the saying is, at this broad hint; and with a strong and earnest curiosity, I begged to know the worst, and to know it immediately. My attendant saw, in my agitation, his error, and would doubtless have receded had it been in his power; but it was too late; the die was cast; my curiosity was all on tiptoe, and I trembled, as a sailor would say, from stem to stern. "Well," said he, at length, putting on a face which of itself was enough to destroy some very feeble persons, "he says you cannot live more than thirty-six hours." [Pg 66]

My friend, in divulging what he deemed an important secret, doubtless felt relieved; but not so with me. My philosophy had disappeared with the progress of my disease, and I was now, in mind, a mere child. In short, I was so much agitated by the unexpected intelligence, that I sank at once under it, and remained in this condition for several hours. When I awoke from this delirium, the symptoms of my disease were more favorable, and from that day forth I began to recover.

But the risk was too great for my enfeebled and diseased frame, and should not have been incurred. Dr. Thornton, though a physician of much reputation, was nevertheless a man of very little principle, and though respected for his medical tact and skill, was beloved by very few. He died, moreover, not many years afterward, as the fool dieth; viz., by suicidal hands. Nor do I know that as a man—a mere citizen—he had many mourners.

The reader will pardon me, perhaps, for saying so many times, and with so much emphasis, that "it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good." But I must be allowed to repeat the saying here, and to observe that while I entirely disapprove of the course my attendant took in the present instance, I am by no means sure that the delirium into which I was thrown by his tattling propensity was not safer for me than a restless apprehension of danger would have been, especially when long continued; nor that it did not contribute, indirectly, to bring about my recovery.

I was confined to the house by my sickness about five or six weeks, or till it was midwinter. And yet, all covered as the earth was when I first ventured forth, no Paradise could ever appear more beautiful to any son or daughter of Adam than did this terrestrial abode to me. And if ever I shed tears of devout gratitude to my Father in Heaven, it was on this very occasion.

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It was a long time, however, after I got out of doors, before I was strong enough, in body or mind, to attempt to perform much labor. At the time of being taken sick, I was teaching a public school; and as soon as I began to be convalescent my patrons began to be clamorous about the school. They were hardly willing to wait till my physicians and myself deemed it safe to make a beginning. Indeed, notwithstanding all my caution, I was hurried into the pedagogic chair quite too soon.

But it is time for me to inform my readers what were the probable causes of my sickness; for I have already said, more than once, that to be able to do this is a matter of very great importance, both as it concerns ourselves and others; and it is a thing which can be done, at least to a considerable extent, whenever parents and teachers shall be wise enough to put their children and pupils upon the right track. I am well acquainted with a minister of the gospel, now nearly sixty years of age, who says he never had any thing ail him in his whole lifetime of which he could not trace out the cause.

For some months before my sickness I had been curtailing my hours of sleep. I had resolved to retire at eleven and rise at four. But it had often happened that instead of retiring at exactly eleven and rising exactly at four, I had not gone to bed till nearly twelve, and had risen as early as half-past three. So that instead of sleeping five full hours, as had been my original intention, I had often slept but about four.

How far this abridgment of my sleep had fallen in with other causes of debility, and thus prepared the way for severe, active disease, I cannot say. I was at this time tasking my energies very severely, for I was not only pursuing my professional studies with a good deal of earnestness, but at the same time, as has been already intimated, teaching a large and somewhat unmanageable district school. If ever a good supply of sleep is needful, whatever the quantum required may really be, I am sure it is in such circumstances.

But then it should be remembered, in abatement of all this, that the symptoms of disease, in all the three cases which I have alluded to, as occurring in the family with which I was connected, were very much alike; whereas neither the mother nor the child had suffered, prior to the sickness, for want of sleep. Must we not, therefore, look for some other cause? Or if it is to be admitted that sleeplessness is exceedingly debilitating in its tendencies, must there not have been in addition some exciting cause still more striking? We will see.

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During the latter part of the autumn which preceded our sickness, the water of the well from which we were drinking daily had a very unpleasant odor, and a fellow student and myself often spoke of it. As it appeared to give offence, however, we gradually left off our remarks and complaints about the water, and only abstained, as much as we could conveniently, from its use.

In the progress of the autumn, the well became nearly dry, and the offensive odor having become troublesome to others no less than to ourselves, it was very wisely concluded to

draw out the water to the bottom, and thus find and remove the impurities. The task was exceedingly trying, but was at length accomplished.

Besides other impurities, there were found at the bottom of the well, several toads in a state of putrefaction, and so very offensive that it was difficult to approach them, or even to approach the top of the well that contained them. They were of course removed as soon as possible, and every practicable measure was adopted which was favorable to cleanliness. This final clearing of the well was about two months before the sickness commenced.

Now whether there was a connection between the use of this water and the sickness which followed, is a curious, and at the same time, a very important question. Against this belief, at least apparently so, is the fact that our disease resembled in no trifling degree, the prevailing disease in certain neighboring towns. Another fact is also worthy of consideration. The rest of the family drank freely of the water, why did not they sicken as well as we?

But as a deduction from the force of these facts, it is to be observed that nobody else around us for several miles had the prevailing epidemic unless it was ourselves. And then as to the objection that only a part of the family sickened, it is to be recollected that in the case of some of them who sickened there might have been, nay, probably were, other debilitating causes in operation previously, to prepare the way; such as, for example, in my own case, the want of sufficient sleep.

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Thus far, then, though we arrive at nothing positive, we yet find our suspicions of a poisonous influence emanating from the putrid reptiles remaining. Indeed, it were impossible wholly to suppress them, and I will ask the candid reader's attention for a few moments to certain analogical evidence in the case, which, it is believed, will greatly aid the mind in coming to a right decision on the subject.

An eruptive disease broke out in two families residing in a house in Eastern Massachusetts, a few years ago, which was observed to affect more or less, every member of the two families who had drunk water from the common family well, except two; and these last had drunk but very little. On cleaning the well, the same species of reptiles which I have already mentioned, were found in it, in a state of decomposition, and highly offensive. No eruptive complaints of the same general kind prevailed at the time in the neighborhood, and those which I have mentioned disappeared soon after resuming the use of pure water.

Another instance occurred in this same region, a few years afterward. In the latter case, however, the putrid animals were rats and mice, and the eruption, instead of having a diffused or miliary appearance, partook largely of the character of the common boil.

Forty years ago a sickness broke out in Litchfield county in Connecticut, in a neighborhood where the wells were all very low; and the water which remained being in a cavity of rock, and continuing unchanged or nearly so, had at length become putrid. It was late in the autumn when the disease broke out, and it disappeared as soon as the wells were duly filled for the winter. It is true, I never heard in the latter case, any thing about putrid animals, but their existence and presence under such circumstances, would be natural enough.

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It has, I know, been sometimes said that putrid animal substances, however unpleasant their odor might be, were not poisonous. But this opinion is doubtless unfounded; and, for myself, I find it difficult to resist the belief that in all the foregoing cases, except the last, and very possibly in that too, animal putridity had influence.

The practical lessons to be derived from the developments of the foregoing chapter are exceedingly numerous. I shall direct your attention for a few moments, to some of the more important.

First, we learn the necessity of keeping our wells in a proper condition. Could it be even proved that dead reptiles never produce disease, it is at least highly desirable to avoid them. No reasonable person would be willing to drink water highly impregnated with their odor, even if it did not reach his own seat of sensation.

Secondly, we should avoid the use of stagnant water, even though it should be free from animal impurities. Especially should we be cautious where there is a liability, or even a possibility, to impurity and stagnation both. Either of these causes may, as it is most fully believed, produce disease; but if so, what is not to be expected from a combination of the two?

Our wells should be often cleaned. It is not possible, of course, to say with exactness, how often, but we shall hardly err in the line of excess. Very few wells are cleaned too often. Once a year, in ordinary cases, cannot be too much; nor am I quite sure that twice would be useless.

It seems to me quite possible to exclude animals from our wells, would we but take the necessary pains; and this, too, without covering them closely at the top. I can not see how any toad, unless it be the tree-toad so called, could climb a well-curb three feet high. Other animals, however, might do so, and therefore I would keep a well as closely covered as possible.

Many, I know, believe it desirable that the surface of the water in a well should be exposed to the air. I do not believe there is any necessity for this, though it is certainly desirable to avoid stagnation of the air at the bottom. Motion is essential, I might even say indispensable. I have sometimes thought the modern endless or chain pump as perfect a fixture as any other. [Pg 71]

Thirdly, we may learn from the details of the foregoing chapter, the necessity of having in our sick-chambers the right sort of nurses or attendants. There should be a class of persons educated to this service, as a profession; and most happily for the prospects of the great human family, such efforts are now being made; it is hoped and believed they will be crowned with success.

One thing more may, as I think, be inferred from the story of my sickness as above:—the folly of multiplying physicians. In the present case, when the physician's own family was in a condition to demand a large share of his attention, if not to absorb all his energies, it may have been desirable to call in an additional medical man as counsellor. But the multiplication of counsel, besides adding to the danger of too much dosing and drugging, brings with it a host of ills too numerous to be mentioned in this place, and should be studiously avoided. My full belief is, that Dr. Thornton was a principal agent in creating the dangers he deprecated, and which came so near effecting my own destruction.

CHAPTER XXIII.

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ABOUT TO DIE OF CONSUMPTION.

I have already mentioned more than once,—or at least done so by implication,—that I hold my existence, on this earth by a very feeble tenure. Consumption, by right of inheritance, made very early claims; and its demands, as I approached manhood, became more and more cogent, in consequence of measles, dropsy, Lee's Pills, and the injudicious use of medicine and many other errors. My employment, too, as school teacher had been far enough from

favorable to health. While thus engaged from winter to winter, and sometimes from year to year; I was accustomed to have cold upon cold, till at length especially towards the close of winter and at the opening of the spring, I was often apparently on the verge of a rapid decline. A ramble up and down the country, with a summer or part of a summer on the farm or garden, did indeed for a time partially set me up again, so that I could return to my favorite employment of teaching in the autumn and during the winter; and thus time with me went on.

A course of medical lectures which I heard in 1825-6, left me, in March, 1826, in about as bad a state of health as school keeping usually had done. However I was too indigent, I might even say too destitute, to be idle. Scarcely was my license to practise medicine and surgery fairly in my pocket, than I found myself turning towards the district school again. Yet I did not continue it many weeks before my old enemy returned upon me with renewed strength; till I was at length compelled to abandon the school entirely. I had as much as I could do, in attempting to keep up a successful war with cough, night-sweats, purulent expectoration, and hectic fever.

This was one of the darkest periods of my life. Destitute of money, and even somewhat in debt, yet too proud or self-relying to be willing to ask my friends to aid me; my hopes of usefulness defeated in two favorite fields of activity, teaching and medicine; and practically given up to linger out a year or two and then die, how could I avoid discouragement? Was it strange even, if I approached at times, the very borders of despair? [Pg 73]

For some time prior to this crisis—indeed at certain seasons all my life long,—I relied not a little on medicine, in various forms, especially in the shape of tonics. Strange that I should have done thus, when my general impressions were so unfavorable to its exhibition; and yet such inconsistencies have been, and may be again. Huxham's tincture, quassia, ale, and other bitter infusions and tinctures, had been successively invoked, and I still clung to ale. I also used some wine, and I attached a good deal of importance to a stimulating diet. But it was all to no purpose, the disease was marching on steadily, and appeared destined to triumph; and that, too, at no very distant period.

In these circumstances, I repeat, what could be done? Nature's extremity is sometimes said to be God's opportunity. But without assuming that there was any special providence about it, I will say, that I was driven to desperation, nay almost to insanity or madness. I deemed myself on the very verge of a mighty precipice, beneath which yawned a gulf unfathomable. I must make a last mighty struggle, or perish irretrievably and forever.

It was July 4th, the anniversary of American Independence; I sought and found a few moments of calm reflection, and began to interrogate myself. Why was I so dependent on the physician and the apothecary's shop, and so tremblingly alive to every external impression of atmospheric temperature, or purity? Why must I, at the early age of twenty-eight, be doomed to tread the long road of decline and death? Why can I not declare independence of all external remedial agents, and throw myself wholly on nature and nature's God? I know, full well, the laws of my being. If trust in these, and faithful and persevering obedience will not save me, nothing will. Thus I mused; but alas! it was to muse only. Though almost ready to take the critical step,—I will not say make the desperate plunge,—the fourth of July finally passed away, and found me still lingering, to use a Scripture expression, "between the porch and the altar." [Pg 74]

July the fifth at length arrived. And is it all over? I said to myself. Has the "glorious" *Fourth* gone by and I have not acted up to the dignity of a well-formed and glorious resolution? Must I, alas! now go on to woe irretrievable? Must I go down to the consumptive's grave? Must I perish at less than thirty years of age, and thus make good the declaration that the wicked shall not live out half his days?

A new thought came to me. "One of the South American provinces celebrated her Independence to day, the fifth. I will take the hint,—I will yet be free. I will escape from present circumstances. I will fly from my native home, and all that pertains to it. I will fly from myself,—It is done," I added, "and I go with the first conveyance."

I could indeed walk a little distance, but it either set me to coughing, severely, or else threw me into a profuse perspiration which was equally exhausting. One favorable symptom alone remained, a good appetite and tolerable digestion. Had there been, in addition to the long train of troublesome and dangerous symptoms above mentioned, a loss of digestive power and energy, with colliquative diarrhœa, my hopes must have been forever abandoned.

But I had made my resolution, and was prepared to execute it, let the consequences be what they might. With little more than a single change of clothing, I contrived to find a conveyance before night, quite beyond my immediate neighborhood. Fatigued, at length I stopped, and without much delay, committed myself to the friendship of Morpheus.

On the top of a considerable eminence, in the very midst of a mountain range, one of the most delightful in all New England, only a few miles from the place of my lodging, was a tower some sixty or seventy feet high, which commanded a view of the surrounding country. I had often wished to enjoy the prospect which this tower afforded. Was there, now an opportunity? I had the leisure, had I the needful strength? Could I possibly reach it? And by what means?

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I rested for the remainder of the day and the night following, at the foot of the eminence, in order to prepare myself for the excursion of the following morning. It was as much as I could do, that night to take care of my irritable and irritated lungs. At length, however, I slept, and was refreshed. The only drawback upon my full renewal, was my usual night—or rather as I ought to say morning—perspiration, which was quite drenching and exhausting; though not much worse after all my fears than usual.

God is good, I said to myself, when I saw from my chamber window the top of the hills I wished to climb, and perceived that the first rays of the morning sun were already falling upon them. By the middle of the forenoon I was at the foot of the mountain, and prepared to ascend it. After a little rest, I wound my way to the tower, and finally to its top, when I took a survey of what seemed to me like a new world. Here I renewed my declaration of independence with regard to those earthly props on which I had so long been wont to lean, and of dependence on God, and on his natural and moral enactments.

Here, too, I formed my programme for the day and for the week. Distant from the point which I occupied not more than eight miles was a most interesting educational institution I had long wished to see; and near it was an old acquaintance, with, whom I might perhaps spend the Sabbath, which was now approaching. Could I carry out my plan? Had I the needful strength?

My resolution was at length made; and no sooner made than begun to be executed. The public houses on the way were miserable things; but they were better far than none.

They gave me a temporary home, such as it was. I reached the institution, had a partial view of it, and, half worn out with my week's labor, was glad to rest the seventh day, "according to the commandment," in the house of an old acquaintance.

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Monday morning came, and with the aid of the intervening Sabbath, brought to my attenuated and almost sinking frame a new recruit of strength. With a new object of interest some fifteen miles distant, I was once more on the road. I could now walk several miles a day without greatly increasing my cough, or ride in a stage coach many miles. Nor was the nightly perspiration, nor even that which was induced by exercise, any more distressing than it had been, if indeed it was as much so.

In due time I reached my point of destination, and curiosity became fully gratified. What next? A few miles distant was a high mountain which I greatly desired to climb. I reached its base; but the heat was great, so dog-days like, that my courage failed me. I had the necessary strength, but dared not use it for such a purpose. Perhaps I acted wisely.

Twelve miles in the distance still was my father's house, now grown from a few patrimonial acres to full New England size; viz., a hundred acres or more, and well cultivated. My wandering abroad had given me a little strength and very much courage. Why should it not? Was it not truly encouraging that while I was making a long excursion, chiefly on foot, in the heats of midsummer, my cough and hectic and night sweats should become no worse, while my muscular strength had very much increased?

My mind's eye turned towards my father's house as a place of refuge. In a day or two I was in it; and in another day or two I was caparisoned as a laborer, and in the field. It is true that I did not at first accomplish a great deal; but I held the implements of husbandry in my hands, and spent a certain number of hours every day in attempting to work. Some of the workmen laughed about me, and spoke of the vast benefits to be derived from having a ghost in the field with them; but I held on in spite of their jokes. I had been accustomed of old to the labor of a farm, which greatly facilitated my efforts. Habit is powerful.

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Not many weeks passed ere I was able to perform half a day's work or more in a day. My consumptive tendencies, moreover, were far less exhausting and trying. In a word, I was better. The Rubicon was already passed. I did not, indeed, expect to get entirely well, for this would have been a hope too big for me. But I should not die, I thought, immediately. Drowning men, as you know, catch at straws; and this is a wise arrangement, for otherwise they would not often be saved by planks.

One point, at least, I had gained. I was emancipated from slavery to external forms, especially medicated forms. But I had not only declared and found myself able to maintain independence of medicine, but I had acquired much confidence in nature and nature's laws. And this faith in the recuperative powers of nature was worth more to me than worlds would have been without it.

Much was said, in those days, not only in books but by certain learned professors, about shaking off pulmonary consumption on horseback. Whether, indeed, this had often been done—for it is not easy, in the case of a joint application of various restorative agencies, such as air, light, full mental occupation etc., to give to each agency its just due—I am not quite prepared to say. But as soon as I was able to ride on horseback several miles a day, the question was agitated whether it was or was not advisable.

In prosecuting this inquiry, another question came up. How would it do, thought I, to commence at once the practice of medicine? But difficulties almost innumerable—some of them apparently insurmountable—lay in my way. Among the rest, I had no confidence in my medical knowledge or tact; I was a better school-master. But teaching, as I had every reason to fear, would bring me down again, and I could not think of that: whereas the practice of medicine, on horseback, which at that time and in that region was not wholly out of date, might, as I thought, prove quite congenial.

Besides being "fearful and unbelieving" in the matter, I was still in the depths of poverty. I had not even five dollars. In fact, during my excursion already described, I had lived on a few ounces of solid food and a little milk or ale each day, in order to eke out my almost exhausted finances; though, by the way, I do not know but I owed my partial final recovery in no small degree to this very starvation system. However, to become a practising physician, money would be indispensable, more or less. What could be done without it? My father had credit, and could raise money for me; but *would* he? He had never wholly

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approved of my medical tendencies and course; and would it be right to ask him to aid me in an undertaking which he could not conscientiously approve?

Just at this time our own family physician wanted to sell, and offered me his stand. His practice, he said, was worth a thousand dollars a year. He had an old dilapidated house and a couple of acres of miserable land, and a horse. These, he said, he would sell to me for so much. I might ride with him as a kind of apprentice or journeyman for six months, at the expiration of which time he would vacate the field wholly.

The house, land, and horse were worth perhaps one-third the sum demanded, but probably not more. However, the price with me, made very little difference. One sum was much the same with another. For I was so anxious to live, that I was willing to pay almost any price which might be required by a reasonable man, and till that time, it had not entered my heart that a good man would take any serious advantage of a fellow being in circumstances so desperate. And then I was not only anxious to live, but very confident I should live. So strong was my determination to live on, and so confident was I in the belief that I should do so, that I was willing to incur a debt, which at any other period of my life would have discouraged me.

There was another thing that tended to revive me and restore my courage. The more I thought of commencing business, and talked about living, the more I found my strength increasing. That talking about dying had a downward or down-hill tendency, I had long known; but that the tendency of talking up-hill was exactly the reverse, I had not fully and clearly understood.

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My father tried to dissuade me from a hasty decision, but it was to no purpose. To me, it seemed that the course I had proposed was my only alternative. "I must do it," I said to myself, "or die;" and life to me, as well as to others, was sweet. But although it was a course to which I seemed shut up, and which I must pursue or die, it was a step which I could not take unaided. I had not the pecuniary ability to purchase so much as a horse, or, had I needed one, hardly a good dog.

It was at length proposed by my medical friend, the seller, to accept of a long credit for the amount due for the place and appurtenances, provided, however, I would get my father or some other good man to be my endorser. But here was a difficulty almost or quite insurmountable. My father had always said he would endorse for nobody. And as for asking any one else to endorse for me, I dared not.

But I cannot dwell at this point. My father at length became my endorser, and the bargain was signed and sealed. It was indeed, a desperate effort, and I have a thousand times wondered how I could have ventured. Why! only one or two years before, I was miserable for several days because I was in debt to the extent of only two dollars for a much-needed article, and actually procured the money with considerable difficulty, and went and paid the debt to get rid of my anguish; whereas now, without much pain and without being worth fifty dollars in the world, I could be willing to contract a debt of from twelve to fifteen hundred dollars, and involve my good old father in the consequences besides. How entirely unaccountable!

But mankind love life, and fear death. The scheme proposed was, as I believed, not only a dernier but a needful resort. It was a wrong step no doubt, but I did not then think so. I believed the end "sanctified" or at least sanctioned the means. How could I have done so? "What ardently we wish, we soon believe." I had most ardently wished, I now began to believe!

My consumptive tendencies now receded apace, even before I was astride of my horse. The stimulus of the hope of life with a forgetfulness of myself, were better tonics than Huxham or ale or rich food. There was the expectation of living, and consequently the beginning of

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life. Mind has great power over even inert matter; how much more over the living animated machine!

CHAPTER XXIV.

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MY JOURNEYMANSHIP IN MEDICINE.

Journeymen in medicine, though without the full responsibilities of the profession, have yet their difficulties. I had mine; and I had not only the ordinary complement of ordinary men, but some which were a little extra.

For example, I was no horseman at all, and people around me knew it. At the first attempt to mount a new horse, and ride out with the old physician, of whom I had purchased my stand, to see his patients, I made an exhibition of my horsemanship which I shall not soon forget, and which I am sure certain wags and half-buffoons and common loungers who witnessed the scene *never* will.

My horse stood at the post all caparisoned, while I made ready. In setting off, I knew well I must submit to the ordeal of being gazed at and commented on by a crowd assembled in an adjoining store. It was a rainy day, and the crowd would doubtless be much larger than usual. Now my love of approbation was excessive; so great as at times to defeat entirely its object. So in truth, it proved on the present occasion.

When I was ready to go forth on my journey, I mounted my horse and attempted to place my right foot in the stirrup. At this critical instant the gaping multitude in the grocery, presented themselves in quite a formidable column at the door to see the young doctor on his new horse. Their appearance threw my mind off its balance to an extent that prevented me from well-balancing my body, and with every possible exertion I could not get my feet firmly fixed in the stirrups. To add to my trouble, my horse was in haste and trotted off high and hard before I could muster presence of mind enough to check him. I rolled this way and that, till at length, down I came headlong. My hat went one way, and my whip another. A great shout was at once raised by the spectators, but being cured by this time, of my excessive diffidence, and not at all hurt, I could soon join in the laugh with the rest. I could most heartily adopt my old maxim, "It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good;" and I had learned by my fall at least, one thing, at least for the moment; viz., my excessive regard to human approbation. Thenceforward, I rode as I pleased.

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But before I enter upon the details and particular confessions of my professional career, it is needful that I should say something of those changes which were made about this time in my physical habits, by means of which I gained at least a temporary victory over my great enemy, the consumption. For it must not be supposed that because I could sit on a horse and ride six, eight, ten, or twelve miles a day, or work in the field or garden half the day, I was out of danger. I had, indeed, gained important victories, but there remained very much land yet to be possessed.

Of my abandonment of all medicine, I have already told you. But I had also greatly changed my dietetic habits. During my excursion of the fifth of July, and subsequently, I had lived almost wholly on what might have been denominated the starvation system. The case was this: I started with less than five dollars in my pocket, and with too much pride to borrow more. That my money might hold out, therefore, though I took care to secure a good, clean bed by nights, even at the full market price (except when I was entertained occasionally, by particular friends), I almost went without food. Many a time was I satisfied, because I was

determined to have it so, with a tumbler of milk and a couple of crackers for my breakfast, or even my dinner; and as for supper, I often dispensed with it wholly; and all this too, strange though it may seem, not only without the loss of strength, but with a slow, yet steady, increase.

These dietetic changes, though they were a necessity, were continued and extended from principle. I had known, for a long time, what the laws of digestion, respiration, circulation, cleanliness, exercise, etc., were, but had not fully obeyed them. But I now set myself obeying them up to the full extent of my knowledge. I do not mean to affirm that my obedience was perfect and entire—wanting in nothing; but only that I made an attempt at sinless perfection. However, I speak here, of course, of the physical code; for to moral obligation, at that time, I do not mean, now, to refer. [Pg 83]

My diet was exceedingly plain and comparatively unstimulating. It consisted chiefly of bread, fruits, potatoes; and, once a day of salted meats. These last should have been exchanged for those which were not pickled, and which are of course less stimulating; but at that time I was not fully aware of their tone and tendency. My drink was water and a little tea; for cider I had long before abandoned.

I paid particular attention to purity of air, and to temperance. Fortunately I resided in a house which from age and decrepitude, pretty effectually ventilated itself. But temperature, as I well knew, must be carefully attended to, particularly by consumptive people. While they avoid permanent chilliness, and even at times, the inhalation of very cold air on the one hand, it is quite indispensable that they should breathe habitually as cool an air as possible, and yet not be permanently chilly. This, by means of a proper dress, by night and by day, and proper fixtures for heating my room, I contrived to secure.

Cleanliness, too, by dint of frequent bathing, received its full share of my attention. It was a rule from which I seldom if ever departed, to wet my body daily with cold water, and follow it up by friction. At home or abroad, wherever I could get a bowl of water I would have a hand bath.

Need I say here that a medical man—one who rode daily on horseback—paid a proper regard to the laws of exercise? And yet I am well persuaded that not a few medical men exercise far too little. Riding on horseback, though it may sometimes shake off consumption, is not so good an exercise for the mass of mankind—perhaps not even for consumptive people themselves—as an alternation of walking with the riding. This, also, I took good care to secure. [Pg 84]

Physicians are usually either very greatly addicted to the habit of dosing and drugging for every little ill, real or imaginary, or particularly hostile to it. I have seldom found any such thing as a golden mean in this respect, among them. My feelings, saying nothing at present of the sober convictions of my head, led me almost to the extreme of no medicine, if extreme it can be called. I did not even retain my daily tumbler of ale.

Though I began my medical career as an apprentice or journeyman, merely, and went abroad chiefly as the associate of my predecessor, I was soon called upon in his absence, and in other circumstances, to take the whole charge of patients; or at least to do so till a longer experience was available. Thus I was gradually inducted into an important office, without incurring a full and proportionate share of its responsibilities.

CHAPTER XXV.

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MY TEMPERANCE PLEDGE.

The subject of Temperance, in its present associated forms, had, at this time, just began to be agitated. At least, it had just begun to receive attention in the newspapers which I was accustomed to see. It could not be otherwise than that I should be deeply interested in its discussion.

I had been brought up, as I have before intimated, to a pretty free use of cider and tea; but not of ardent spirits or coffee. Neither of these was regularly used in my father's family; though both occasionally were. But I had abandoned cider long before this time, because I found it had a tendency to produce, or at least to aggravate, those eruptive diseases to which I was greatly liable. Temperance, then, in the popular sense of the term, was, to me, an easy virtue.

And yet as a temperance man—in the circle of my acquaintance—I stood nearly alone. No individual around me was ready to take the ground I occupied. Of this, however, I was not fully apprised, till a patient attempt to recruit the temperance ranks convinced me of the fact. But I will give you a full account of my enterprise, since it has a bearing on my subsequent history and confessions.

With the aid of a Boston paper which I habitually read, I drew up the customary preamble, declaration, and pledge of a temperance society. It involved the great idea of total abstinence from spirituous liquors; though by the term spirituous liquors, as used at that day, was meant chiefly *distilled* spirits. Having first affixed my own name to the paper I went to the most influential of my patrons and friends and asked them to sign it likewise. But, reader,—will you believe it?—not a single subscriber could I obtain far, or near. They all, with one consent, made excuse. [Pg 86]

The elder deacon of the most evangelical church in the place where I resided, had for his apology that he suffered seriously from a complaint for which his physicians had prescribed the daily use of gin, "Now," said he, "though there is nothing in the pledge which goes to prohibit the use of spirits in a case like my own, yet as some might think otherwise and charge me with inconsistency, I must on the whole be excused from signing it."

His son, who was also a deacon in the same church with the father, excused himself by saying he was young, and without influence, and it would be far better for the old people to put their names down first. "Perhaps," said he, "I may conclude to sign the paper by-and-by. I will consider well the matter, and if I conclude to sign it, I will let you know."

Other leading men in the church as well as in the town affairs, refused to sign the pledge, because Deacon H. and son would not. It belonged to the deacons in the church, they said, to take the lead in all good things, and not to them. When *they* had put *their* names to the document, others would not long hesitate to follow.

In short nobody would consent to sign the paper, and it remains to this day, just as it was when I drew it up; and it is now more than thirty years old. There it is, with my name attached to it, as large as life. I have been President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and "all hands too," of my would-be Temperance Society, from that day to this. I doubt whether many societies can be found which in thirty years have made so little change as the one under consideration.

For about four years from the time of getting up the above-named temperance society, strange as the assertion may seem, I retained the right to use a little beer and a good deal of coffee. But in May, 1830, I abandoned all drinks but water, to which custom I have ever since adhered and in which I shall probably die.

CHAPTER XXVI.

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TRIALS OF A YOUNG PHYSICIAN.

The poet Cowper, in his delineations of a candidate for the pulpit, prescribes, as one needful condition or qualification,

"That he is honest in
the sacred
cause."

So, when I entered upon the medical profession, which I regarded as next of kin to sacred, I deemed honesty quite a high recommendation; and whatever in the abstract appeared to me to be right, I endeavored to pursue through the routine of every-day life. Alas, that I should ever have had occasion to doubt the policy of common honesty!

I was called to see Mrs. ——. The case was an urgent one. There was no time for deliberation or consultation. I understood her case but very poorly; yet I knew that in order to success I must at least *seem* to be wise. Besides, what was to be done must be done quickly; so I boldly prescribed. My prescription was entirely successful, and I left the house with flying colors. I left, moreover, with the full consciousness of having acted in the main like an honest man.

A few days afterward I was sent for by Mrs. —, who immediately filled my ears with the most piteous complaints, the sum total of which was that she was exceedingly *nervous*, and I told her so. Of course I did not complain of culpability or crime. But I told her, very plainly, that she needed no medicine—nothing but plenty of air and exercise, and less high-seasoned food. My great frankness gave offence, and impaired my reputation. She employed, in my stead, Dr. Robinson, who continued to attend her till his bill amounted to a sum sufficient to buy a good carriage and harness, and till his credit for skill was advanced in a degree corresponding.

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Mr. B.'s child was sick, and his wife besides. He came for my predecessor; but, not finding him at home,—though he still remained in the place,—he was compelled to Hobson's choice—myself or nobody; Dr. Robinson lived at too great a distance. I was accordingly employed, and was soon on the spot. The child was very sick; and for some little time after my arrival I was so much occupied in the performance of my duties that I paid no attention to any thing else. But having prescribed for both my patients, I sat down quietly to look over the newspaper.

Presently I heard from Mrs. B. a deep groan. I was immediately at her bedside, anxious to know the cause. "Oh, nothing at all," she said, "except a momentary feeling of disappointment because Dr. — did not come." I said to her, "You can send for him now, madam, as soon as he returns. Do not think yourselves compelled to adhere to me, simply because you have been obliged to call me once. I will yield most cheerfully to the individual of your preference."

Mrs. B. apologized. She knew I had done as well as I could, she said; and perhaps no one could have done better. "But little Leonora," said she, "is dreadfully sick; and I do very much want to see Dr. B. He has had more experience than you. These young doctors, just from the schools, what can they know, the best of them?"

I saw her difficulties; but, as I have already intimated, I did not look so wise as Dr. B., nor had I so grave a face, nor so large an abdomen. I could neither tell so good a story, nor laugh so heartily; I could not even descend to that petty talk which is so often greatly preferred to silence or newspaper reading, not only by such individuals as Mrs. B. and her friends, but by most families. A physician must be a man of sympathy. He need not, however, descend to so low a level as that of dishonesty; but he must come down to the level of his people in regard to manners and conversation. He must converse with them in their own language. He must not only *seem* to be devoted, unreservedly, to their interests, but must actually *be* so. This confession is most cheerfully and sincerely and honestly made; and may he who reads it understand.

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On a certain occasion I was called to prescribe in a family where the disappointment was so great that the patient was actually made worse by my presence, and an unfavorable turn given to the disease. It may be said that people ought not to yield themselves up to the influence of such feelings; and it is certainly true that they ought not. But sick people are not always rational, nor even judicious. Dr. Johnson says: "Every sick man is a rascal;" but we need not go quite so far as that. Sickness changes us, morally, sometimes for the better, but much oftener for the worse; and in general it makes us much less reasonable.

But it is far enough from being my intention to present a full account of the trials incident to the life of a young medical man; for, in order to do this, I should be obliged to carry you with me, at least mentally, to places which you would not greatly desire to visit. Physicians can seldom choose their patients; they are compelled to take them as they find them. They will sometimes be called to the vilest of the vile and the filthiest of the filthy.

Their office is indeed a noble one; but is noblest of all when performed honestly, in the fear of God, with a view to do good, and not merely to please mankind and gratify their own ambition. Above all, they should not practise medicine for the mere love of money. A physician should have a heart overflowing with benevolence, and should feel it incumbent upon him, at every step in his professional life, not only to do good to his patients, but to all around him. He should be a guide to mankind, physically, for moral ends. He should let his light so shine, that they, seeing his good works, may be led to glorify the Father who is in heaven. His object should be to spread, by the good he performs, the everlasting gospel, just as truly as this should be the object of him who ministers in holy things at the altar. Such a physician, however, at first, I was not. Such, however, I soon aspired to be; such, as I trust, I at length became. Of this, however, the reader will judge for himself, by-and-by. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

CHAPTER XXVII.

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A DOSING AND DRUGGING FAMILY.

For several months of the first year of my medical life, I was a boarder in a family, all of whom were sickly. Some of the number were even continually or almost continually under the influence of medicine, if not of physicians. Here my trials were various, and some of them severe.

But I must give you a particular description of this family; for I have many things to say concerning it, some of which may prove instructive.

Mr. L. had been brought up a farmer; but being possessed of a delicate constitution, had been subsequently converted into a country shop-keeper,—a dealer, I mean, in dry goods

and groceries. As is usual in such cases, he was in the habit of keeping a small assortment of drugs and medicines. The circumstance of having medicine always at hand, and often *in* hand, had led him, as it has thousands of others, into temptation, till he had formed and confirmed the habit of frequent dosing and drugging his frail system. But as usually happens in such cases, the more medicine he took, the more he seemed to require, and consequently the more he swallowed. One thing prepared the way for another.

With Mrs. L. matters were still worse. In the vain belief that without a course of medication, *she could never have any constitution*, as she was wont to express it, her mother had begun to dose and drug her as early as at the age of twelve or fourteen years. And what had been thus early begun, had been continued till she was twenty-four, when she married Mr. L. But she was feebler, if possible, at twenty-four, than at fourteen, and believed herself under the necessity of taking medicine in order to be able to sit up a part of the day and perform a little light, but needful, family labor, such as sewing, mending, etc. [Pg 91]

When I first had a seat at their family table, it was by no means uncommon for Mr. and Mrs. L. to begin their meal, as soon as "grace" was over, with Stoughton's bitters, or some other supposed cordial, or strengthener of the appetite. As I not only refused to join them, but occasionally spoke a kind word against the custom into which they had fallen, the bitters at length fell into disuse; and it was found that their meals could be digested as well without the stimulus, as with its aid.

But I was much less successful in preventing the torrent of medicine from producing its wonted — upon this family, at other times and seasons; for which Mr. L.'s business furnished such facilities. But you must not think of Mrs. L. as a mere tyro in this business of compounding medicine, nor in that of administering it, especially to herself. From the apothecary's shop of her husband, as well as from other sources, she selected one thing after another, not merely for the time, but for permanent purposes, till it was almost difficult to say which had the best assortment, she or her husband. And she not only had it on hand, but she took it, as freely, almost so, as her food and drink.

More than even this should be affirmed. Had she at any time flagged in this work of self-destruction, she would have been brought up again to the line by her mother. For though the latter resided at a considerable distance, she paid Mrs. L. an occasional visit, and sometimes remained in the family several weeks. Whenever she did so, little was heard of in the usual hours of conversation,—especially at the table,—but Sarah's stomach, Sarah's nerves, and what was good for Sarah. It was enough to make one *sick at the stomach*, to witness the conversation even for a single day; and above all to be compelled to join in it.

She was there once, in the early spring, and remained until the ground was fairly settled. No sooner could she get into the woods, and come to the naked surface of the earth, than the whole country around was laid under tribute to furnish roots "good for the blood." These were put into a beer to be prepared for Sarah. It was supposed by many,—and by this wondrous wise old lady, among the rest,—that the efficacy of these medicinal beers in cleansing the blood, must ever be in due proportion to the number of their respective ingredients. Thus, if twenty articles, "good for the blood," could be procured and boiled in the wort, the result would be a compound which would be worth twenty times as much, or at least be *many* times as useful, in accomplishing its supposed specific purpose, as if only one kind of root had been obtained. [Pg 92]

It was a long time before I could break in upon this tissue of error, to any practical purpose. For so deeply imbedded in the human brain is the idea of purifying the blood by some such unnatural means, that one might almost as well think of building a railroad to the moon, as of overcoming it. They never thought—perhaps never knew—that the blood of the human body of to-day, will be little more the blood of the body to-morrow, than the river which

flows by our door to-day will be the river of to-morrow; and that the one can no more be purified independently of any and all things else, than the other.

But it is said to be a long road which never turns. Some good impressions had been made on this family, as we shall see hereafter. Not, indeed, until there had been much unnecessary suffering, and many an unwilling penalty paid for transgression, as well as much money uselessly expended for physicians and medicine. For though I was somewhat a favorite in the family, I was as yet young and inexperienced, and many a wiser head than mine was from time to time invoked, and much time and money lost in other ways, that might have been saved for better and nobler purposes.

Among the items of loss, as well as of penalty, was that of offspring. These were generally still-born. One, indeed, lived about two weeks and then perished. The parents seemed to be written childless. Or rather, they seemed to have written themselves so. They seemed destined moreover, to follow their premature children, at no great distance, to an untimely grave. For nothing was more obvious—I mean to the medical observer—than at an age when everybody ought to be gaining in bodily no less than in mental and moral vigor, they were both of them growing feeble as well as irresolute.

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As a boarder, I left the family some time afterward, though I did not lose sight of it wholly; nor did they entirely forget or disregard the numerous hints I had given them. They made some progress every year. At length, however, I lost sight of them entirely, and only kept up a faint recollection of them by means of an occasional word of intelligence from the place where they resided, showing that they were still alive.

One day, after the lapse of about eight years, as I was passing through a charming New England village, the stage-coach stopped to let the passengers dine, when, to my great surprise, on stepping out of the coach, whom should I see but my old friend Mr. L.? He was equally surprised, and perhaps equally rejoiced, to see me. The interview was utterly unexpected to us both.

"How do you do?" said he, grasping my hand. I returned the compliment by inquiring after his own health and that of Mrs. L. It turned out that he had failed in his business a few months before, and that, as a consequence, he had been compelled to remove to the place where he now was, and engage in an employment which brought his skin into contact with the air, and his muscles into prolonged and healthful activity. It appeared also that both he and his family had long since banished the use of medicine. "And now," said he, "thank God I know what it is, once more, to enjoy health; I can not only eat, but work."

It was Monday, the great *washing-day* of Yankee house-keepers; and while we were talking together with so much earnestness, that, like Milton's first pair in innocence, we "forgot all time," a female approached, with her sleeves rolled up, greeted me with much cordiality and seized me by the hand. "Can this be Mrs. L.?" I asked. How changed! She was, it is true, like her husband, a little sunburnt; but then she was as she assured me, and, as I had every reason for believing to be true, comparatively healthy.

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While I was still in amazement, hardly knowing whether I was awake or dreaming, a little girl approached us. Though somewhat slender and delicate, she was only slightly diseased; rather, she was only predisposed to disease by inheritance; and mere predispositions no more destroy us, than a train of powder explodes without igniting. The girl was about four or five years old. "Who is this?" I inquired. "Not yours, most certainly," I added, turning to Mr. and Mrs. L. "We call her ours," they said, "and yours; for we, no doubt, owe her life and health, in no small degree, to your instructions."—"This," said I, "is what I little expected to see; but you may thank God for it rather than me, since she lives by virtue of obedience to his laws, and not mine. Then you are not only pretty healthy yourselves," I added, "but you

have a healthy child."—"We have two," said they. "The other is in the cradle; we will go and bring her."

At this moment, the loud declaration, "The coach is ready, gentlemen," reminded us that our conversation was at an end for the present, and we were obliged to separate. Not, however, till we had enjoyed a most luxurious mental repast in "the feast of reason, and the flow of soul," with no abatement but the consciousness, on my part, of a little loss to the landlord, who had provided for the passengers a smoking dinner.

This, reader, to speak somewhat paradoxically, was one of the proudest, and yet one of the humblest days of my life. To have been the Heaven-appointed instrument of such a marked change for the better in a human family, was more than could have been foreseen or even expected. It is more than has often fallen to my lot. True, I do not hesitate to regard it as an extreme case; and yet it is, in magnitude, just what I could show you in miniature, at various points in the same vicinity, and indeed, all over the country.

Mr. and Mrs. L. still pursue the even tenor of their way, and have their reward in it. One of their two daughters,—buds of early promise,—though probably more or less scrofulous, hardly reached maturity, ere she descended to the tomb. The rest enjoy a tolerable degree of health. Of course, I do not speak of their health as greater than that of the average of mankind, notwithstanding their thorough reformation. It is much, all things considered, that it should be equal to that average. [Pg 95]

As for the mother of Mrs. L., who still occasionally visits the family, she looks on in silent amazement, hardly knowing whether to recommend any more beer, with all sorts of roots good for the blood in it, or whether to give up the pursuit. I believe, however, that she does not often presume to interfere with their habits. Perhaps she has learned—if not, she may possibly live long enough to acquire the lesson,—to "let well alone," as her children and grandchildren already have. I certainly hope she has. It will conduce greatly to her health and happiness, as well as make her a better citizen and better Christian.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

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POISONING WITH LEAD.

Nearly at the beginning of my practice in medicine, I was called to see a fine and hitherto healthy youth, twelve years old, but who had for several weeks before application was made to me, complained of a steady and sometimes severe pain in his bowels, attended with more or fewer febrile symptoms and a loss of appetite.

In endeavoring to trace out carefully the causes of his disease, the first thing that attracted my attention was his employment. His father was a blacksmith, and being in moderate circumstances and destitute of any other help besides this son, had for a considerable time required him to perform the work of an adult, or nearly such. It had not been suspected at the time, that the work injured him, though he had sometimes complained of great fatigue, and of a slight weakness and uneasiness in the place where the pain had now become fixed. As the result of my investigations, I came to the conclusion that he had been overworked, and certain ligaments of the bowels had been weakened.

My treatment in the case was at first mild and palliative, in the hope that after a few days of rest the trouble would disappear. Instead of this, however, it grew worse. At my special request, various counselling physicians were called in; but I do not know that they were of

any service to me. No new light was thrown on the case, though we could all converse very learnedly on the subject.

Like many other young practitioners, I was at that time apt to indulge in gloomy fears about poisons. I seldom had a case of acute disease, without suspecting their influence. I suspected poison now, and accordingly made search into every possible nook and corner whence such an influence could possibly have emanated. For a long time nothing could be found.

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One day, on examining a pot of pickled cucumbers which had hitherto escaped observation, I found that a part of its glazing had been destroyed by the acid. I no sooner saw this than I was ready to say, *eureka* (I have found it), and to inform the family and my patient. It appeared that the pickles had been there for some time, and that the boy had eaten of them very freely. The parents and friends, though they had much confidence in the wisdom and skill of their physician, were very slow to believe in the injurious tendency of the pickles. They admitted the danger of such cases generally; but how could the boy be injured, and not the rest of them? they asked. They forgot, or did not know, that the poison would be more likely to affect one who was weakened in the abdomen from other causes, than those who were sound; especially when he took much more of it into his stomach than they did.

In my suspicion about lead poisoning, I had very little sympathy from those around me. Even the counselling physicians had little confidence in any such existing cause of disease. They were nearly as ready as other people to leave the case in the dark, and to say, practically, "The finger of Providence is here;" or, in other words, It comes of some cause which God alone knows or *can* know.

How much of human ignorance—ay, and of human credulity and folly, too—is clustered round the well-known decision of many a court of inquest; viz., "Died by the visitation of God!" What do they mean by it? Do they suppose that since Satan or some other personage whom we call Death, is guilty of striking us down here and there, those who are not "struck with death" are struck down by the great Source of light and life?

The far greater probability is, that they know not what they *do* mean. Mankind are not addicted to thinking, especially on subjects of this sort. It is much easier, or at least much lazier, to refer all our ills and complaints, as well as their unfavorable terminations, to God or Satan, friend or foe,—to some agency exterior to themselves,—than to consider themselves as the probable cause, and proceed to make diligent search for their own errors.

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Thus it was, in a remarkable degree, in the region where it was my lot to meet and palliate and try to cure diseases. I say, here, *cure*; for the idea would hardly have found a lodgment, at that early period, in any human brain which could have been found in that region of rural simplicity, hardly in my own somewhat more highly enlightened cranium, that *medical men never cure*; and that when people get well, it is the result of the operations and efforts of nature, or of nature's God, who is doing the best thing possible to set matters right.

It was even deemed by many as not only foolish, but almost sacrilegious, to say much about the causes of disease, and especially about lead. And then to talk about lead as connected with the use of their favorite red earthen, which had been in use time immemorial, and which had never, in all past time, killed anybody, as they supposed, was the dictate of almost any thing else rather than of good, sound, sober, common sense.

You can hardly imagine, at this day, in the year 1859, what an air of incredulity the gaping countenances of the family and neighbors of my young friend and patient presented, when I told them stories of lead disease in different parts of the country, especially of such cases as were then recent and fresh in my memory. One of these stories may not be out of place in the present connection.

About the year 1812, the people of Elizabethtown, Penn., put up what they called their apple butter in these same red earthen vessels, glazed, as almost everybody now knows, with an oxyde of lead. There had been a pottery established near the village that very year, and it was thought not a little patriotic to purchase and use its products, thus favoring the cause of home manufacture. Nearly every family, as it appeared in the sequel, had bought and used more or fewer of these vessels.

This was, of course, some time in the autumn. In the progress of a few months a dreadful disease broke out in the village, which baffled the skill of the best physicians, and consigned some forty or fifty of the inhabitants to the grave. The cause, at first, was not at all suspected. At length, however, from a careful examination of facts, it was ascertained that the disease which had proved so fatal must have had its origin in the glazing of these vessels. The sickness abated only when it had attacked all whose bowels—already weakened by some other cause or causes—were duly prepared for the poisonous operation of the lead. It is indeed true that the physicians supposed the disease came to a stand on account of the overwhelming tendency of huge doses of calomel, which they gave to almost everybody who had used the apple butter; but of this there was no satisfactory evidence. It ceased, as I believe, and as I have already intimated, because—except in the case of those who were enfeebled by other causes, nature was too strong for it, or her recuperative powers too energetic.

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Now this story illustrates a case which, in magnitude or in miniature, is in our country of almost every-day occurrence; and the only reason why the results everywhere else are not like those at Elizabethtown, is simply this: that there is not so much of the poison used in any one village, at the same time, as there was at that place in the circumstances which have been mentioned. One is sick here, another there, and another elsewhere. In one, owing to peculiar predisposition or habit, it takes the shape of fever; in another, of palsy; in another, of eruptions or boils; in another, of bowel complaint. And as all these and many other diseases have been known before, and have been induced by other causes equally unobserved or obscure, we have fallen into the habit of supposing that these things must needs be, do what we will. In other words, God the Creator, is supposed to have made the world and appointed to us, for trial or otherwise, these various forms of disease; and they are for the most part dealt out to us arbitrarily; or, if not arbitrarily, by chance or hap-hazard.

But to return to the young man. There was such a hostility of the public mind to the idea that his disease was induced or even aggravated by lead, that I receded in part from my suspicions. At least, I proceeded, with fresh energy and enthusiasm, to search for other and more probable or popular causes. Cause there must have been, of some sort, I was confident; while to all my efforts of this kind the friends of the boy stood opposed. They did not, it is true, say much against it; but then it was perfectly evident from all their conversation and conduct that they regarded it as not only idle, but presumptuous, perhaps wicked. How can it be, they seemed to say, by those looks and actions which so often speak louder than words, that this young doctor is always trying to ferret out the causes of disease, while Dr —— (my predecessor) never attempted any such thing, but rather dissuaded us from it?

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Yet thus it was precisely. For three long months I was endeavoring to meet and obviate the symptoms of a disease which I secretly believed was induced by lead, but of which I had no such strong evidence as would have justified the positive affirmation that it was so, or prevented me from searching for other causes. This state of mind was by no means favorable to my success as a medical practitioner; for it somehow greatly impaired or weakened their general confidence in my wisdom and skill. Had I, on the other hand, "looked very wise," declared the disease to be so and so, with great pertinacity, and adhered, through good report and through evil, to my opinion, whenever it was assailed, and withal manifested no desire to receive medical counsel, I should have had a larger measure of their

esteem, and a very much larger measure, as a professional man, of their confidence. They might then have thought me a very wise and good physician.

A man who wishes to be greatly popular in the world must learn the ways of the world, and walk in them more or less, whether they are crooked or straight. He must not be over-modest, or over-honest; nor must he be over-solicitous to improve his own mind or heart, or encourage others, by precept or example, to walk in the way of improvement. He must not only make up his mind to take the world as it is, but to suffer it to remain so. The world does not like to be found fault with; it has a great deal of self-confidence.

The young man, in the end, recovered; not, as I now believe, in consequence of the treatment, but in spite of it. Had he been nursed carefully from the first, and kept from every source of irritation, both external and internal, even from food, except a very little of the mildest sort, just enough to keep him from absolute starvation; and had his air been pure and his temper of mind easy, cheerful and hopeful, he would probably have recovered much sooner than he did, and with far better prospects for the future. But he had been frightened about himself, from the very first, by my own inquiries about poison,—which had unwarily been communicated to him,—and his fears never wholly subsided. [Pg 101]

How much wisdom from both worlds does it require in order to be a physician! The office of a medical man, I repeat, is one of the noblest under the whole heaven. The physician is, or should be, a missionary. Do you regard this assertion as extravagant or unfounded? Why, then, was it made an adjunct, and more than an adjunct, in the first promulgation of the gospel, and this, too, by the gospel's divine Author? Why is it that our success in modern times, in spreading the gospel, has been greater—other things being equal—in America or China, in proportion as its preachers have attended to the body as well as to the soul?

At the time of my commencing the practice of medicine, I was no more fit for it than I was to preach the cross of Christ; that is, I was almost entirely unqualified for either profession. I was honest, sanguine, philanthropic, but I was uneducated. I knew very little, indeed, of human nature; still less did I know of the sublime art of becoming all things to all men, in the nobler and more elevated sense of the great apostle Paul. I would yield to no other compromise than such as he encourages, of course. Let us be honest and truthful, though the heavens fall.

CHAPTER XXIX.

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STANDING PATIENTS.

Medical men well know—should any such condescend to look over this volume—what is meant when I affirm that I was not long in securing to myself a good share of *standing patients*. They are the dread, not to say the curse, of the profession. And yet they abound. They are found throughout the length and breadth of the land, and in great numbers.

They are a class of persons, not always of one sex, who hang continually, like an incubus, on the physician, and yet are forever a disadvantage to him. They are never well enough to let him alone, and yet seldom ill enough to require much medical advice or treatment. And yet, medicine they will have, of somebody, even if they go to the apothecary for it, without so much as the semblance of a medical prescription of any sort. But then, after all, they are seldom reduced to any such necessity. They usually have on hand prescriptions enough of some sort. A dearth of Yankee physicians—could such a thing possibly occur—would still

leave us a supply of Indian doctors, mesmeric doctors, nutritive doctors, etc., etc., to say nothing of doctresses, in liberal abundance, ever ready to prescribe.

When I succeeded Dr. —, in the chair of medicine, surgery, etc., at —, I received, as if by contract, if not by inheritance, his whole stock of standing patients. They were not slow to *call on*, sometimes to *call in*, the new doctor. Nor was I often long in the house before comparisons began to be made between my predecessor and myself. They did not, of course, directly traduce or slander Dr. —, but they were very careful to intimate that, having got his name up, he had grown careless about his patients, especially such of them as did not belong to his clique, political or sectarian; and that, on this account, they were almost willing to part with him, and to receive and accept as his substitute one who was not only younger and more active, but also less tinctured with conservatism and aristocracy!

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A very large amount of valuable time was spent during the first year of my practice as a physician, in endeavors to do good to these very devoted and loving and loyal patients; for if they did not always call me when I had occasion to pass their doors, I knew full well they expected me, and so I usually called. Besides, in many an instance I was sent for in post haste, with entreaties that I would come and see them immediately; and no atonement for neglect or even delay—if such neglect or delay was ventured—would suffice. And yet, despite of their fears of "monarchy and aristocracy," they were my most truly aristocratic patients. They expected me to come and go at their request, whether anybody else was attended to or not. And, to add to the vexation of the case, though they boasted of having paid most enormous bills to my predecessor, they never, if they could avoid it, paid any thing to me.

Now, I do not suppose that every medical man has as large a share of these standing patients as fell to my unhappy lot; but from the knowledge I have acquired of mankind, and from the acquaintance I have necessarily formed with medical men, I do not think I err when I affirm that they are everywhere numerous, and that they are everywhere not only a pest to society at large, but particularly so to the physician.

But the worst feature of the case is, that after all our efforts, we can seldom, if ever, cure them. They are always hanging upon us like an incubus; and yet like Solomon's daughters of the horseleech, are never satisfied. They take the medicine, and follow the advice, if they *like* it; or they take such parts of it as they choose, and reject the rest. Or they take the advice and follow us to-day, but get discouraged and abandon us, at least practically, to-morrow; especially if some smart young physician happens to come along, who has more than an average share of empiricism and pretension, and more than he has of real merit.

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I must here confess, among other confessions, that at first I was not a little deceived by their open countenances and concealed thoughts, and unintelligent and hence unconfiding professions. It was a long time before I relinquished the hope of doing them good; or at least a portion of them. But I was at length compelled. There was nothing on which to build. If a foundation seemed to be laid one day, it would disappear the next.

One fundamental difficulty lay in the way of these persons to health, as it has to thousands of others. They were all the while talking or thinking about themselves, their ailments and woes and abuses and neglects. They were particularly inclined to turn their attention to their own diseased feelings. Now it may be pretty safe to say that no individual can fully recover from chronic disease,—nervous, stomachic, or glandular—who is always turning his thoughts inward, and watching his own feelings, and perhaps relating his woes to every one he meets with. We must learn to forget ourselves, at least a part of the time, and think of others, if we are in earnest to get rid of chronic disease. I do not say, of course, that everybody would recover of disease, even if they acted right in every particular; but this I *do* say, that if every person who is ill would act wisely, and if their physicians, in every instance, were wise enough to take the best course, the number of these standing patients

would soon dwindle to a very small remnant. Instead of thousands, or tens of thousands, it would soon be reduced to hundreds.

CHAPTER XXX.

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KILLING A PATIENT.

President Lindsley, late of one of our south western colleges,—a very shrewd and observing, as well as learned and excellent individual—has been often heard to say that no half-educated young physician ever succeeded in obtaining a good run of professional business, and a fair medical reputation, without despatching prematurely to the other world, at least as many as half a dozen of his patients.

It is said that most rules have their exceptions; and it is even affirmed by some, that the exceptions strengthen the rule. If this is so, perhaps the rule of Pres. L. may stand; though to many it seems at first exceedingly sweeping. One known exception to its universality may be worth mentioning, on which the reader may make his own comments, and from which he may draw his own inferences. I was so fortunate for one, as to attain to the eminence he mentions, without killing any thing *like* half a dozen patients; at least, so far as I know.

And yet, as I verily fear and most honestly confess, I *did* kill one or two. Not, of course, with malice aforethought, for they were among my very best friends; and one in particular was a near and highly valued neighbor. Let me give you a few details concerning the latter. It may serve as a lesson of instruction, as well as a confession.

He was about six feet high, with large vital organs; and though by no means possessed of a strong constitution, yet in virtue of a most rigid temperance, generally healthy. He was, however, subjected to the habitual influences of a most miserable cookery. Indeed, I never knew worse. Seldom, if ever, did he pass a single week—I might even say a single day—without having his alimentary organs irritated to subinflammation by more or fewer of what Dr. Dunglison, the physiologist, would call "rebellious" mixtures. I do not wonder, in truth, that he occasionally sickened. The wonder with me is, that he did not sicken and die long before he did. And though the blow that finished his perilous mortal career, was doubtless inflicted by my own hand, I do not hesitate to say that his "housekeeper" had nearly half destroyed him before I was called.

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It was a midsummer night, when the messenger came across an intervening field, and aroused me from my slumbers with the intelligence that Mr. M. was very sick, and wanted to have me come and see him immediately. Although it was fully twelve o'clock, and I had been so fully occupied during the preceding evening, that I had but just crawled into bed and begun my slumbers, I was instantly on my feet, and in about twelve minutes at the bedside of the sick man.

He had been affected with a bowel complaint, as it appeared, for several days, during which his wife, who was one of those conceited women who know so much, in their own estimation, that nobody can teach them any thing, had dosed him with various things, such as were supposed to be good for the blood, or the stomach, among which was brandy and loaf sugar. Now his bowels, though they were inflamed, might have borne the sugar; but the brandy was a little too much for them. They had endured it for a time, it is true, but had at length yielded, and were in a worse condition than when she began her treatment. And what was worse, her alcoholic doses, frequently "inflicted," had heated the circulatory apparatus, and even the whole system, into a burning fever.

It needed no very active imagination, in such circumstances, to make out, at least in prospect, a very "hard case." And as he who has a giant foe to contend with, arms himself accordingly, I immediately invoked the strongholds of the *Materia Medica* for the strongest doses which it could furnish, and these in no measured or stinted quantity. In short, I attacked the disease with the most powerful agents of which I could avail myself. [Pg 107]

I will not trouble the non-professional reader with the names of the various and powerful drugs which were laid under contribution in this trying and dangerous case, and which were most assiduously plied. It is sufficient, perhaps, to say that on looking over my directions—fairly written out as they were, and laid on a small stand near the sick-bed—you might have discovered that hardly a half-hour, by night or day, could pass, in which he was not required to swallow some very active or in other words poisonous medicinal agent or other. For though I was even then greatly opposed, in *theory*, to the exhibition of much medicine in disease, yet in *practice* I could not free myself wholly from the idea that my prospects of affording aid, or rather of giving nature a chance of saving a patient, was nearly in proportion to the amount I could force into him of opium, calomel, nitrate of silver, carbonate of ammonia, etc.

It was, in short, enough to kill a Samson or a Hercules; and I repeat that I verily fear that it did kill in the present instance; not, however, immediately. For several days and nights we watched over him, heating his brain, in our over-kindness, to a violent delirium on the one hand, or to a stupor almost like the sleep of death on the other.

Not satisfied with our own murderous efforts, we at length applied for medical counsel. My predecessor was not so far off as to be quite beyond our reach, and was in due time on the spot. He, good man, sanctioned the deeds already done, and only made through the force of their prepossessions, an addition to the dark catalogue of demons which already assailed if they did not actually possess him.

For the first time in my medical career, I suffered, here, from a loss of the confidence of my employers. A very mean man, who could gain notoriety in no other way, undertook to insinuate that I did not understand well my profession; and this story for a short time made an impression. However, there was soon a reaction in my favor, so that nothing was lost in the end. More than even this might be said—that I rose higher, as the result of the report. [Pg 108]

Mr. M. at length began to decline. Nature, though strongly entrenched in her citadel, and loth to "give up the ship," began to succumb to the powers of disease and the load of medicine; and he gradually descended to the tomb. His whole sickness was of little more than a week's duration.

I was present at the funeral, but I could scarcely hold up my head, or look any person in the face. To my perturbed imagination every one who was but "three feet high" was ready to point at me the finger of scorn, and say, "You have killed that man." The heavens themselves seemed covered with thick darkness, and the green earth with sackcloth and ashes. "Never again," I said to myself a thousand times, "can I bear up under such sad and severe responsibilities."

And yet—will the reader believe it?—no one circumstance of my whole medical life ever did more to establish my reputation than this. True, I had contended on the battle field, and had been beaten, but then it was thought I had contended against a powerful foe. Men sometimes think it honorable even to be beaten. I well remember an instance of this sort. A very great scoundrel heaped insults upon a worthy justice of the peace, till the latter seized him and held him down to the ground for a considerable time. The man was quite respectable afterward, and told the story to his own praise a thousand times over! He had measured lances with 'Squire H.! And though the 'Squire was too much for him, he obtained a town-wide reputation by the contest.

You will see, more and more, as I proceed with these confessions, that it is not in him that willeth nor in him that runneth, to be acceptable as a physician, but in certain circumstances, partly within and partly beyond our control. You will see, however, that the best way in the end is, boldly and fearlessly to do right, and then trust in Him who loves right, and whose throne is in the Heavens, for the final issue. We may not always be popular in doing right—probably we shall *not* be—but we shall, in any event, have a clear conscience.

CHAPTER XXXI.

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A SUDDEN CURE.

I was called one morning very early, to see a little girl, five or six years of age, who, it was said, was extremely sick, and without immediate aid could not probably long survive.

She was one of a very numerous family, most of whom, though suffered to run almost wild, like so many rabbits, were comparatively healthy. I do not suppose they had ever called in a physician more than once or twice in a year. In truth, they had very little confidence in physicians; though in extremities, they were accustomed to call on them almost as much as other people. In any event Caroline was very sick now; and they loudly demanded aid. I was forthwith on the spot. Caroline was groaning most piteously. "Where is your distress?" I inquired. She gave no direct answer, but continued to groan and writhe, as if she were impaled. As I could obtain no reliable information from her, and could discover no special or exciting cause of her suffering, and as the case was urgent, I proceeded to do *something*, though, as I must honestly confess, it was to labor quite in the dark. One thing I knew, it is true; that there were spasms, and that it depended on a diseased condition of the brain and nervous system; but what the cause or causes were, I could hardly divine. Nor, in truth, had I time to ask many questions.

Though the days of Hydropathy had not yet arrived, the world, even then, had a good deal of water in it, and physicians were sometimes wise enough to use it. It was demanded, as I thought, on the present occasion. It would, at least, by whiling away the time, give opportunity for further observation and reflection, and deeper investigation. There was a good fire in the kitchen, and I ordered a warm bath immediately.

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Every effort was made to hasten the process of warming the water, as well as to keep the patient quiet and within doors; for she raved like a maniac—partly indeed from a childish fear, but partly also from real bodily suffering. The family and neighborhood—for the latter were very largely collected together—were almost as much alarmed and distressed as the little patient, and this reacted on the patient to her increased disadvantage.

As there were no special preparations in those days for bathing—I mean in the region of which I am now speaking—we used a large wash-tub. The water was soon ready, and was made rather warm, quite above 100° of Fahrenheit. I had taken the precaution to have my patient already undressed, so as to lose no time. The very instant the bath was ready, she was plunged into it. It cost some trouble, for she resisted with almost superhuman strength, and uttered most terrific screams. But as the ox is dragged to the slaughter, she was dragged into the water and held in it.

The effect was like magic. She had not been in the water twenty seconds before every thing was quiet; and I do not know that she has ever had another pang to the present hour. Certain it is that she seemed to be entirely cured by this single bath, and none of her spasms ever returned.

The family were greatly delighted, and so were the neighbors. And was the physician, think you, an uninterested spectator? Had he been wholly destitute of the love of doing good, by relieving human distress, he must at least have been susceptible of receiving pleasure from general approbation.

He certainly sought respectability as a physician. And this he was by degrees now attaining.

It is hardly possible to refer the sudden quiet which followed in this instance from the application of warm water, to a mere coincidence, as if the system was ready, just at this very instant, to react or rally. The bath must have had something more than a mere imaginary or accidental effect, though its prescription may be said to have been empirical.

Had the experiment in the present instance wholly failed, it is by no means improbable the physician would still have been on a par with other men. The *guess* he made was his *only* thought. He had nothing in reserve. But he was successful; he *guessed right*, and it built him up. His fame now began to spread far and wide, wafted, as it were, on the wings of every breeze. If he succeeded, it was supposed to be undeniable proof of his skill; if he failed, it was not supposed to be so much his fault as the result of circumstances; or, more properly, the severity of the disease. And even in the case of failure, as I have said elsewhere, he often gained credit; for he had boldly contended, at great odds, with a mighty because intangible antagonist! [Pg 111]

It is an old proverb,—but by no means the less true for its age,—that when a person is going down hill every one will give him a kick. But is it not equally true that when he is resolutely going up hill, they are equally ready to help him on? So at least I found it at this period of my progress.

CHAPTER XXXII.

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GIGANTIC DOSES OF MEDICINE.

Although I was opposed to the frequent and free use of medicine, I early fell into one habit which was as diametrically opposed to my general theory as could possibly have been. I refer to the habit of giving my patients, at least occasionally, most enormous doses of those more active preparations which should seldom, if ever, be administered in this way. As nearly as I can now recollect, I fell into this habit in the following manner:

Among my standing patients, before mentioned, were several drunkards. Occasionally, however, they were more than standing or standard patients; they had attacks of mania, or as it is usually called in the case of drunkards, delirium tremens. In these circumstances, among these patients, I often had the most severe trials. Sometimes I could relieve them; but sometimes, too, I failed.

One night, while endeavoring to relieve the sufferings of one of these patients in delirium tremens, almost to no purpose, the thought struck me, "What effect would a prodigious dose of calomel have on the poor creature? Can it kill him? I doubt it. I will venture on the trial."

So, without communicating the slightest hint to any one around me of what I was about to do, I contrived to insinuate a hundred grains or more of this substance into the man's stomach, that like a chemical receiver took what was poured into it. Having succeeded in the administration of the dose, I waited patiently the issue.

The medicine had, in due time, its full ordinary effect; but the degree of its cathartic effect was not in proportion to the largeness of the dose. Its activity hardly amounted to violence. [Pg 113] It seemed, however, to quiet the brain and nerves as if by magic; nor am I aware that any injurious effects, either local or general, ever followed its exhibition. I had the full credit of a speedy and wonderful cure.

Another fact. I was frequently called to prescribe for children who were threatened with the croup. One night, on being called to a child of some eight or ten months, I thought of large doses of calomel. Was there any great risk in trying one? I ventured. I gave the child almost a teaspoonful of this active cathartic. It was indeed a gigantic dose, and the treatment was bold if not heroic.

For a couple of hours the patient breathed badly enough. There was evidently much oppression, not only of the lungs but of the nervous system. The parents and friends of the child grew uneasy. They were not, however, more uneasy than their physician. But I consoled myself by laboring to compose them. I preached to them long and loud, and to some extent with success.

At the end of about two hours, the latter part of which had been marked by a degree of stupor which almost discouraged me, a gentle vomiting came on, followed by moderately cathartic effects; and the child immediately recovered its mental activity, and in a few days was well.

Empirical as this practice was, I ventured on it again and again, and with similar success. At length the practice of giving giant doses in this disease became quite habitual with me, and I even extended it to other diseases. Not only calomel, but several other active medicines were used in the same bold and fearless manner. I do not know that I ever did any direct or immediate mischief in this way. On the contrary, I was regarded as eminently successful.

And yet I should not now dare to repeat the treatment, however urgent might seem to be the demand, or recommend it to others. It might, perhaps, be successful; but what if it should prove otherwise? I could make no appeal to principle or precedent in justification of my conduct. It is true, I have met with one or two practitioners whose experience has been similar; but what are a few isolated cases, of even honest practice, in comparison with the deductions of wise men for centuries? There may be after consequences, in these cases, which are not foreseen. Sentence against an evil work, as Solomon says, is not always executed speedily. [Pg 114]

CHAPTER XXXIII

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THE LAMBSKIN DISEASE.

Should any medical man look through these pages, he may perchance amuse himself by asking where the writer obtained his system of classification of disease. It will not, certainly, be very easy to find such a disease as the lambskin disease in any of our modern nosologies. But he will better understand me when he has read through the chapter. He may be reminded, by its perusal and its quaint title, of the classification which is found in Whitlow's New Medical Discoveries, founded, as the doctor says, on the idea that "every disease ought to be named from the plant or other substance which is the principal exciting cause of such disease." It is as follows:

"The Mercurial Disease,

The Belladonna	do
The Stramonium	do
The Tobacco	do
The Cicuta	do
The Butter Cup	do
The Colchicum	do
The Colocynth	do
The Pork or Hog	do
The Vinegar	do
The Fool's Parsley	do
The Fox Glove	do
The Nux Vomica	do
The Quassia	do
The Opium	do
The Hellebore	do
The Salt	do
The Mineral Acid	do
The Acrid	do
The Putrid	do"

If on examination the curious reader should find no such disease as the "Lambskin disease" in Dr. W.'s catalogue, he should remember that the list is by no means complete, and that there will be no objection to the addition of one more. And why, indeed, may I not coin terms as well as others? All names must have been given by somebody.

But I will not dwell on the subject of nosology too long. I have something else to do in this chapter than merely to amuse. I have some thoughts to present on health and sickness,— [Pg 116]
thoughts, too, which seem to me of vast importance.

A son of Mr. G., a farmer, had been at work in an adjoining town, all summer, with a man who was accustomed to employ a great number of hands in various occupations,—farming, road building, butchering, etc., etc. Of a sudden, young G., now about twenty years of age, was brought home sick, and I was sent for late at night—a very common time for calling the doctor—to come and see him.

I found him exceedingly weak and sick, with strong tendencies to putridity. What could be the cause? There was no prevailing or epidemic disease abroad at the time, either where he had been laboring, or within my own jurisdiction; nor could I, at first, find out any cause which was adequate to the production of such effects as were before me.

I prescribed for the young man, as well as I could; but it was all to no purpose. Some unknown influence, local or general, seemed to hang like an incubus about him, and to depress, in particular, his nervous system. In short, the symptoms were such as portended swift destruction, if not immediate. I could but predict the worst. And the worst soon came. He sunk, in a few days, to an untimely grave. I say *untimely* with peculiar emphasis; for he had hitherto been regarded as particularly robust and healthy.

His remains were scarcely entombed when several members of his father's family were attacked in a similar way. Another young man in the neighborhood, who had been employed at the same place with the deceased, and who had returned at the same time, also sickened, and with nearly the same symptoms. And then, in a few days more, the father and mother of the latter began to droop, and to fall into the same train of diseased tendencies with the rest. Of these, too, I had the charge.

My hands were now fully occupied, and so was my head. Anxious as most young men are, in similar circumstances, not only to save their patients, but their reputation, and though the distance at which they resided was considerable, I visited both families twice a day, and usually remained with one of them during the night. I was afraid to trust them with others.

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Physically this constant charge was too much for me, and ought not to have been attempted. No physician should watch with his patients, by night or by day,—above all by night—any more than a general should place himself in the front of his army, during the heat of battle. His life is too precious to be jeopardized beyond the necessities involved in his profession.

But while my hands were occupied, my mind was racked exceedingly with constant inquiry into the cause of this terrible disease,—for such to my apprehension it was becoming. The whole neighborhood was alarmed, and the paleness of death was upon almost every countenance.

My doubts were at length removed, and the cause of trouble, as I then supposed and still believe, fully revealed. The disease so putrescent in its tendencies, had originated in animal putrefaction. The circumstances were as follows:—

The individual with whom the young men who sickened had been residing and laboring, had laid aside, in his chamber, some time before, quite a pile of lambskins, just in the condition in which they were when removed from their natural owners, and had suffered them to lie in that condition until they were actually putrescent and highly offensive. The two young men, owing to the relative position of the chambers they occupied, were particularly exposed to the poisonous effluvia.

I did not forget—I did not then forget—the oft inculcated and frequently received doctrine, that animal impurity is not apt to engender disease. It most certainly had an agency—a prominent one—in the case before us. Perhaps it has such an influence much more frequently than is generally supposed.

One of my patients, in the family which I first mentioned,—a little boy two or three years old,—died almost as soon, after being seized with disease, as his elder brother had done. The rest, though severely sick, and at times given over to die, finally recovered. Some of them were sick, however, many months, and none of them, so far as I now recollect,—with perhaps a single exception,—ever enjoyed as good health afterward as before.

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I had in these families six or eight of the most trying cases I ever had in my life; and yet, with the exceptions before named, all recovered. How much agency my own labors as a medical man had in producing this result, I am at a loss to conjecture. As an attendant or nurse, I have no doubt my services were valuable. And it was because a good nurse is worth more than a physician that I so frequently ran the risk of watching over the sick so closely as considerably to impair my own health.

The neighbors and friends of the two sick families, as I have already intimated, looked on in silent agony during the whole campaign; expecting, first that *their* families, too, would soon be called to take their turn; and secondly, that I, the commander in chief, should be a sufferer, which of course would be a great public disadvantage. They were almost as much gratified as I, when we all came forth from the fire unscathed.

On the whole, except as regards health, I was a gainer rather than a loser by the affair. I mean, of course, in the way of medical reputation. I was by this time fairly established as a powder and pill distributor, of the *first water*. In other words, I was beginning to be regarded as a good family physician, and to be sought for, not only within the narrow limits of my own native township, some four or five miles square, but also quite beyond these narrow precincts. Occasionally I had patients in three or four adjoining towns, and I was even occasionally called as counsel to other physicians. My ambition was high, perhaps higher than it ought to have been; but it had its checks and even its valleys of humiliation; so that on the whole I retained my sanity and a full measure of public confidence.

And yet, in conclusion, I have to confess that besides exposing my own health, I made many medical blunders. I would not again run the risk to health or reputation which, during this long trial of several months, I certainly ran, for any sum of money which king Croesus or the Rothschilds could command. Nor do I believe an intelligent physician can do it, without being guilty of a moral wrong. Every one has his province; let him carefully ascertain what that is, and confine himself to it. The acting commander in an important military expedition has no right to place himself in the ranks of those who are about to leap a ditch, scale a wall, or charge bayonet. Paul has no right to labor in Athens when he knows perfectly well that he can do more good in Jerusalem, and the voice of God, by his Providence or otherwise, calls him thither. And "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

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MILK PUNCH FEVER.

A certain young woman who had great general confidence in my skill, after I had stood by her many long hours in one of Nature's sorest trials, was left at length in a fair way to recover, except that she was exceedingly exhausted, and needed the most careful attendance on the part of those around her. She no longer needed any medicine, nothing but to be let alone. In other words, she needed nothing but good nursing and entire freedom from all care and responsibility.

Being obliged at this juncture to leave her for nearly the whole night, I gave the best directions to her principal nurse of which I was capable, as well as the principal reasons on which it was founded. She seemed entirely submissive, and perhaps, in theory, was so. But in my zeal to make them understand that I was acting on common-sense principles, I committed one error, a very common one, indeed, but yet an error. It was that of reasoning with them with a view to make every thing particularly intelligible. One has authority, in these matters, as long as he takes the *attitude* of authority, but the moment he descends to the general level of his patients, and in true republican style puts himself on a par with them, he begins to lose their confidence as a physician. You may not be sensible of a loss of this sort, nor even the physician. You may even think the reverse were more true. But you deceive yourself. Though your patients may love you better as a friend or even as a father, yet they have lost confidence in you medically, in nearly the same proportion. Strange indeed that it should be so; but so, according to my own observation, it ever has been. That a prophet is "without honor"—and most so in his own country and among his own personal friends—is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago.

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Had I told Mrs. D.'s attendants to do so or so, and left them without saying a word more, they would probably have done it. But I had condescended to reason with them about the

matter; their belief that medical men dealt with the stars, and spoke with a species of supernatural authority, had been shaken; and they were emboldened to reason on the subject, and to hearken to the reasonings as well as to what had but the slightest resemblance thereto in others, during my absence.

Having occasion to use all possible precaution against the supervention of milk fever in my patient, I left particular directions that nothing stimulating should be administered, and assigned several good, substantial reasons. No food was to be given, except a little bread and some plain chicken broth, with no condiment or dressing but a little salt; and this at intervals of about four hours. No drink—not a particle—was to be given, except frequent very small draughts of cold water.

While I was absent Mrs. D.'s mother came into their family, not only to rejoice with them in an accession to their number, but to render them a little aid. She was one of those mothers whose kindness so often defeats their best and purest intentions. She was all eyes, ears, and attention, and *nearly all talk*. The daughter's treatment soon underwent a special scrutiny, and was found "wanting."

"Has the doctor ordered my daughter no milk punch?" she said to the attendants. "Not a drop," they replied. She raised both hands in astonishment. "How, then," she asked, "can the ninny expect she can ever have any nourishment for that *boy*?" The attendants could not inform her. "The doctor," they said, "gave reasons," but they could not fully understand them.

"He did not probably understand them himself," said she. "There are no reasons against it, I am confident. It is only a notion of his. These young doctors are always full of their book wisdom. Why, a little experience is worth a whole world full of theories. Now *I* know—and so does every other person who has nursed children—that a little milk punch, in these cases, is necessary. Not a great deal, it is true; but a little, just enough to give the system strength. Nature is weak in these cases. I wish some of these young doctors themselves were obliged to endure the trials we have to endure, and we should see whether they could get along with no drink but cold water!" [Pg 122]

The rebellion soon reached the daughter's ears, who, till now, had confided in the "doctor's" prescription, and was doing well. She was soon as uneasy with things as they were, as her mother and the nurse and the neighbors. The husband was not of the clique; but then he was one of those good-natured men who leave every thing to their wives; and though they may not fully approve of every thing that is attempted, will yet do and refrain from doing many things for the sake of peace. He interposed no veto on the present occasion.

The mother, in short, soon reigned "sole monarch," and proceeded to issue from her imperial throne, the sage decree that a little milk punch must be made. Judith, the nurse, was to have it prepared so and so, and she would herself administer it. Only just so many spoonfuls of rum must be added to the tumbler of milk and water, and just so much sugar. It must be weak, the decree said.

Mrs. D. drank freely of the punch, because her mother told her that it would do her good. True, she asked after the first swallow, "what will the doctor say to this?" but her mother bade her be quiet, she would see to all that. "It is made very weak," said the mother, "on purpose for you; drink of it a little and often. It will be both food and drink to you. It will be good for the babe, dear child! how can these doctors wish to starve folks? I have no notion of starving to death, or having my children or grandchildren starved."

It was now past midnight, and Mrs. D. had as yet slept but very little. Had she simply followed out my directions she might have slept an hour or two before midnight, and several hours in the aggregate afterward. This, though done by stealth and in short naps,

would have given her more real rest and strength than a whole gallon of milk punch, and instead of kindling fever, would have carried off all tendencies of the kind. [Pg 123]

On my arrival, early the next morning, I found a good deal of headache, such as cold water and plain food and rest seldom, if ever, create. My fears were at once excited, and they were greatly strengthened when I saw her mother. But the blow had been struck, and could not be recalled. Mrs. D., in short, was already in the beginning stage of a fever which came within a hair's breadth of destroying her.

It is indeed true that she finally recovered. No thanks, however, were due to the mother's over-kindness, nor to my own over-communicativeness. Had I done my duty, had I kept my own counsel, nobody, not even the mother herself, as I now verily believe, would have ventured to disobey my positive injunctions. And had this mother done, as she would have been done by in similar circumstances, all would probably have been well still. We should have saved a little reputation, and a good deal of health.

I learned, I repeat, from this unexpected adventure, that it was wisdom to keep my own secrets. I do not say that I have always acted up to the dignity of this better knowledge, but I am justified in saying that I have sometimes profited from an acquaintance with human nature that cost me dear. It is no trifle to see an individual suffer from painful disease a couple of weeks, and jeopard the life of a child during the whole time, when a little knowledge how to refrain from speaking *ten words* of a particular kind and cast, would have prevented every evil.

CHAPTER XXXV.

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MY FIRST CASE IN SURGERY.

My first surgical case of any magnitude, was that of a wounded foot. For, though I had been required to bleed patients many times,—and bleeding is properly a surgical operation,—yet it had become so common in those days, and was performed with so little science or skill, that it was seldom recognized as belonging to the department of surgery.

One of my neighbors had struck his axe into the upper part of his foot, and cut it nearly through. Happening to be at home when the accident occurred, which was in my own immediate neighborhood, I was soon on the spot, and ready to afford assistance; and, as good luck would have it, the man was not at all weakened by loss of blood, at my arrival.

My lesson from an old surgeon^[D] was not yet forgotten. I still knew, as well as any one could have told me, that to put together the divided edges of the wound and keep them there, was half the cure. But how was this to be done? Slips of adhesion plaster would bring the divided edges of the wounded surface into their place, but would the deeper-seated and more tendinous parts unite while left without touching each other? Or should a few stitches be taken?

The wound was lengthwise of the foot, and no tendons were divided. I made up my mind to dress it without any sewing, and acted accordingly. The bleeding soon ceased. When all was secured, the patient inquired what he should put on it, to cure it. Had he not raised the question, I might, perhaps, have followed out my own ultra tendencies, and left it without any application at all; but as it was, I concluded to order something on which he might fasten his faith,—something which, though it should do no good, would do no harm. [Pg 125]

"Nothing is better for a fresh wound," I said, "than the 'Balsam of Life.' Just send Thomas over to Mr. Ludlow's, and get a couple of ounces of his 'Balsam of Life.'" It was soon brought, and the surface of the wound and its bandages moistened with it. "Now," said I, "keep your foot as still as you can till I see you again. I will be in again before I go to bed."

I called again at nine o'clock in the evening. All appeared well, only the patient had some doubts whether the Balsam of Life was just the right thing. Several of the neighbors had been in, as he said, and, though they admitted that the Balsam might be very good, they knew, or thought they knew, of something better. However, I succeeded in quieting most of his rising fears for the present, by assuring him that nothing in the wide world was equal, for its healing virtues, to the "Balsam." My voice here was law, for *I gave no reasons!*

On making inquiry, afterward, with a view chiefly to gratify curiosity,^[E] I found that the first individual who came in after I had left the house, assured them there was nothing so good for a fresh wound as a peach leaf. The next, however, insisted that the best way was to bind up the part in molasses. The third said the best way was to take just three stitches to the wound, and bind it up in the blood. The fourth said the most sovereign thing in the world, for a fresh cut, was tobacco juice!

Now I could have told these various representatives of as many various public opinions, that all these things and many more which might have been named, are, in a certain sense, good, since any mere flesh wound, in the ordinary circumstances of ordinary life, will heal in a reasonable time, in spite of them. I could have told them, still further, that the Balsam of Life was probably little, if any, better than the other things proposed, any farther than as it secured more faith and confidence, and prevented the application of something which was worse. I could have assured them that all the external applications in the world are of no possible service, except to defend from cold air, and prevent external injuries, or reduce inflammation; and that the last-mentioned symptom, should it occur, would be best relieved by cold water. But what good would it have done? Just none at all, according to my own experience. Positive assurance—mere dogmatism—was much better.

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The wound did well as it was, though it might have done much better, could the patient's faith have been just as firmly fixed on nothing at all but Nature, as it was on *medicaments*. However, the tincture I proposed, which somebody had dignified with the name of Balsam of life, had done very little harm, if any, to the parts to which it had been applied, while it had done a great deal of good to the patient's mind, and the minds of his friends. It was nothing, I believe, but a compound tincture of benzoin. I have used it a great number of times, and with the same wonderful results. The patient always gets well, either on account of it, or in spite of it! Does it make much practical difference which?

FOOTNOTES:

[D] See Chap. VIII.

[E] Even such inquiries as these are usually of doubtful tendency. They weaken public confidence. There must be but one opinion of any value to the physician or his patients, and that must be *his own!*

CHAPTER XXXVI.

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EMILIA AND THE LOVE CURE.

One young family on whom I was accustomed to call from time to time, was not only accustomed to send for me in the night, as did many others, but, what made it much worse for me, they resided some four or five miles distant, among the mountains. They were of that class of people who look every man on his own things, and never, as the apostle would enjoin, on the things of others. They knew very well that a physician, though he might be half a conjuror, required sleep; still, they were willing to finish their day's work, eat their supper, perform a large number of *et ceteras*, even if they did not call for the doctor till he had fairly taken off his boots to retire for the night. But there was one consolation in all this, that they paid me promptly; and medical men, as you know, like other men, work for pay. They cannot live wholly on air.

In the same house with the family alluded to, was a young woman, about twenty-five years of age, who had been confined to her bed ten or twelve years. She was the only daughter of very indulgent parents, who had never, from her earliest years, thought they could do too much for her. In truth, this was the source of her feebleness. Some little ailment, indeed, there might have been at the outset, induced by pie, cake, preserves, pickles, or something which no truly kind parents should permit a child to take; though nothing more than might have been got rid of in its effects, by a little patient waiting. But instead of waiting a little, the anxious mother had dosed and drugged her. And these ill turns had been more and more frequent, just in proportion to the frequency with which she had been drugged for them; till, at twelve years of age, she was almost all the while complaining. And at fourteen, she was completely bedridden—a burden to herself and to others.

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"I wonder," said my principal employer, at about twelve o'clock, when I had attended to his own little family, and was about to leave, "whether you could do any thing for our Millie. She has tried almost all the doctors, to no purpose; but we have so much confidence here in your skill, that she sometimes speaks of trying you. She is hardly willing to 'give up the ship' without another trial."

This, as you must be aware, was a stirring appeal to my love of approbation; but it was too late at night to make a call on her at that moment. So, promising to come and see her shortly, I took my leave, and rode home, as usual, meditating.

Now I had never seen Emilia, but from the account which I had received from the neighbors, as well as from the nature of the case, I knew very nearly how she was; and that the great difficulty in the way of recovery was the constant habit of watching herself and attending to every internal sensation. In other words, she was so completely wrapped up in self, that I could see no reasonable prospect of getting her mind out of the maze in which it had been so long involved.

But I found time, a few days afterward, as I was employed again in the same neighborhood, to call and see her; and I ventured accordingly. She was sitting up in the bed, well bolstered, with a huge mass of clothing both on herself and on the bed. Then, at her right hand, was a stand half covered with bowls, saucers and tumblers; and near it a little closet or recess, in which were nearly an equal number of parcels of medicine, wrapped in papers ready to be used, when they were supposed to be necessary.

I had no sooner entered the room, than she began to give me an account of her medicine, rather than of herself. So rapid was her enunciation, and so eager was she to tell me what she knew—not about the symptoms of her disease, but about the treatment—that it was a full quarter of an hour before I could reach the inmost recesses of her condition. "That," said she, "is for canker in the mouth; that for sore throat; that is an eye wash I sometimes use, and that is a kind of bitters Dr. R. left for me, but which I have now nearly done taking—and they never did me any good," etc.

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When I found an opportunity, I endeavored to investigate, very fully and freely, what had hitherto been supposed to be a very remarkable case. I found, indeed, that the patient had a great many little troubles, dependent mainly on the state of a mind greatly harassed by constant reflex tendencies, not easily eradicable. But I did not find it easy to prescribe for her. She was one of those very inquisitive people who wish to know what every thing you give them is, and who have a very conscientious objection to every thing. However, I at last settled down on a course of treatment, and wrote it out in a fair hand, and left it at the bedside. Not, however, I repeat, till I had foolishly fallen into my former error, and told her all the whys and wherefores.

This familiarity into which she had drawn me, had already extracted one-half the virtue of my medicine; for that is no longer mysterious which the medical man openly and freely discusses. The freedom of thinking she had indulged in while I was present, had been extended to freedom of action; and the very medicine, whose virtues she had dared to discourse upon, she ventured to set aside, when her experience assured her it was not producing the effect she desired, and for which she supposed it was intended. So that what, from the first, I had feared, and more than I had feared, at length happened. She took my medicine, professedly,—that is, just when she pleased,—for about four weeks, to no manner of purpose whatever, except to deceive herself; for during the first and second weeks of its use, she imagined herself all the while getting better; while during the third week she began to doubt, and about the fourth week she came to the sage conclusion that she was just where she had been a month or two before.

The great, abiding difficulties of her case—her want of simple, confiding trust in her physician, and her constant, anxious attention to her own internal sensations, were far enough from being overcome. She was, in short, very nearly where she was ten years before, except that she was in circumstances rather more difficult to be reached, and had become rather more sceptical about medicine.

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What should now be done? Must the case be abandoned? Or was there some other way, some *new* way, by means, of which it could be reached? I was not quite willing to give her up as irrecoverable, and yet I saw nothing remaining which I could do. I revolved the thing in my mind, by night and by day. At last a plan struck me which I verily believed would succeed.

A few miles distant was a young physician, just from the schools, who vainly, though naturally, supposed he knew almost every thing which was known, and who wanted business. As he had nothing to lose, even if he were to fail in a hundred trials, but every thing to gain could he effect one very remarkable cure, I proposed to the family to employ him. I knew well he would have one or two advantages over his older and more experienced brethren. He would not at once place himself on the same platform with his patient and the friends, by answering their numerous questions; and for this plain and simple reason: In the first place, that he *could* not, and very probably knew his own weakness; secondly, he would have more of that blind faith in medicine which inspires the ignorant with confidence.

But there was another thought beyond all this, a wheel within a wheel. The young physician might succeed better than I, in drawing her thoughts, and even her affections, away from herself; for he was a single man, and the patient, though sick, not destitute of charms, especially of that more tangible charm which, to *indigent* young men, and especially young *medical* men, so often eclipses all others. She, on her part, as I well knew, was not wholly resigned to the world of single blessedness, though her long-continued ill health had almost unfitted her for any thing else.

It only required a little *management* to bring about the desired result. Dr. Juvenis was soon employed; and, though he did not always reply to her questions, which were numerous, and

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often wholly irrelevant, yet according to my own secret anticipations, he gradually raised her hopes in another direction, and hence drew her attention in no small degree from herself. His reserve, too, served but to inspire her with confidence in his great wisdom. There was something deep beyond the exterior, she always thought, which did not come out to the full, vulgar gaze.

The final result was a strong attachment on her part, which, though not reciprocated by him in a direct manner, was not by any means repelled. The virtues of the medicines were no longer discussed or doubted; and it was obvious to all that she was beginning to mend.

It was now high time for me to abandon a field which was not only fully occupied, but *well* occupied. The visits of the young physician were continued, at longer or shorter intervals, for years, till the young woman's health was nearly restored; and, as I subsequently learned, they were married. The more recent history of her life, I have not been able to ascertain, except that neither party gained as much by the new connection as had been expected,—a result which, alas! is by no means any thing new, and that there was, after some time, a relapse of disease.

This artifice for restoring health to a bedridden patient, is not mentioned in a way of approbation, but of regret, or at least of confession. Yet, while it declares my weakness, it develops or at least confirms a well-known principle, which it concerns mankind, patients as well as physicians, most fully and clearly to understand. The medical efficiency of an agent is greatly enhanced when the mind can be made to go along with it.

I have wished a thousand times, both by night and by day, that I had never commended Dr. Juvenis to the favorable notice and regard of this illiterate but confiding family. True, I had the good fortune thus to get rid of a most troublesome, standing *patient*. Had I a moral right thus to do? Did the end either sanction or sanctify the means? Grant that I saved, or seemed to save, the patient;—was she really saved? Was there any absolute gain in the end? These are questions which I cannot, as yet, fully settle. Most certainly she was not quite cured. [Pg 132]

What a mighty work for this fallen world education has yet to achieve; especially Physical Education! This, reader, let me say once for all, this physical education, under the guidance of Christianity, whose handmaid all true science should be, and to whose development and application all true religion should be directed, is our chief dependence. It is the lever by which we are to raise the world.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

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HEZEKIAH AND DELIRIUM TREMENS.

One morning, about two o'clock, in the depth of winter, I was roused from my slumbers by a stranger's voice, requesting me to get up and go immediately along the sides of the mountain and see Hezekiah. "And who is Hezekiah?" I said, only half awake; "and where is the side of the mountain? And who are you with whom I am conversing?"

The mystery was easily cleared up, and I mounted my horse and was soon on the road through the sides of the mountain. It was wild and unfrequented; nay, it was, in places, almost impassable, especially in the night. Mr. Judkins, the father of the sick man, not only resided quite beyond my usual range of practice, but almost out of the range of everybody else, squirrels and rabbits and wild fowls excepted.

In passing along, I made many inquiries with regard to the particular condition of the young man, in order to prepare myself for a more rapid investigation of his case whenever I should arrive. But I sought in vain. The messenger's lips were almost wholly sealed. The cause, at that time, I did not at all understand; but I had, subsequently, great reason to believe he was silent and reserved by the special command of the patient's friends. All I could obtain from my guide, was that Hezekiah had an ill turn; that he was occasionally subject to ill turns, and that the family were greatly alarmed about him.

On my arrival, I found a group of friends large enough, almost, for a train band, gathered so closely round the bed of the young man that he could hardly breathe. There was, also, a monstrous fire in the chimney, sufficient to heat well the whole house, had the heat been properly distributed. The air was, at best, greatly confined; but it was particularly so to the poor patient, who lay panting as if in a dying condition.

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Yet I soon saw, and, as it were, instinctively, that he was not likely to die immediately. Some adventitious cause was evidently operating to throw his brain and nervous system into an abnormal condition, nor was I long in determining what it was. The father was a farmer. He possessed immense orchards, and made great quantities of cider, and one of his neighbors owned a distillery. For every barrel of cider Mr. J. carried to the distillery, he received in return a certain amount of cider-brandy; and at the time when I was called to see Hezekiah, he had more than two barrels of this "precious commodity" in his cellar. At the close of autumn he had had three barrels.

Why this deposit of an article so doubtful? And what had become of the one barrel which had disappeared? Not a member of the family would touch it, but Mr. J. himself, and Hezekiah. The women and children did, indeed, sometimes taste a little molasses toddy, as it was called. Mr. J. would prepare it and pass it round in the morning just before breakfast, in the hope and expectation that all would taste it; and they usually did so. It was not, however, quite a voluntary thing on their part, but a species of moral compulsion. Left entirely to themselves, they never would have tasted it.

Now think, reader, of two persons in a family, with two or three barrels of brandy at their entire disposal, with the expectation of consuming it, or the far greater part of it, during autumn and winter. Why, three barrels are more than a quart a day, for every day of the year. Mr. J. drank freely; but not more freely than his son. The latter was treading in the steps of his father, with the almost certain prospect of going, in the end, quite beyond him.

It was not difficult to prescribe for the young man. The far greater difficulty was to induce him to follow out the prescription. I was honest enough to tell the father what ailed the son, and what ought to be done, and to plead with him to change his own habits immediately. I could not, it is true, quite prevail, when I urged him to pour his brandy, the whole of it, into the street; for that, as he said and doubtless thought, would be a waste of property. But he *did* promise to *sell* it; though even this promise he never kept. He even continued to drink it; though as he always insisted, with great moderation. But the greatest drinkers we have among us, are usually the first to speak of their own moderation.

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The sequel of the story may easily be guessed. Hezekiah became a miserable creature, and ere he reached the age of fifty came to a most miserable end,—the drunkard's death, by the drunkard's mania. Mr. J. having inherited a strong constitution passed on to sixty-three, when, like a mighty tree with decayed trunk, a slight wind crushed him to the dust.

His family, most of them, still survive; but they are daughters, and have not inherited the vices of their father, so much as his diseases. They have, at least, inherited the disease which drinking is so apt to entail on the next generation,—I mean scrofula. Several of Mr. J.'s elder daughters are already dead; and the younger ones—for he had a very large family—

are feeble, and always will be so; and their children are still more feeble. Thus "earthward," and not heavenward, "all things" in the family of the drunkard have a tendency.

How painful the reflection that I did not labor with this family, not only in season, as I certainly did, but also out of season, and try to save it! I had influence with them. My honest plainness at my first visit, above described, did not prevent them from calling on me again for counsel; though at first I had feared such a result. I was often in the family, but not so often as I might have been; nor was I so bold as I ought to have been. Shall I be able to render up my account of the intercourse I had with them, in the great day, with joy, or must it be with grief and shame?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

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MY FIRST AMPUTATION.

It is easy in imagination, to be wise, especially at a distance. How many a surgical operation have I performed *on paper*; or still oftener, and with more assurance, in my own brain. The difficulties are much fewer than in the reality.

A fine young man came to me, one day, with a crushed thumb. He had been at work on a wool-carding machine, and through the most inexcusable carelessness had suffered his thumb to be drawn in. On a careful examination, I found the wound to be very severe, and, as I believed, requiring amputation.

But what could I do? I had no surgical instruments. Young medical men, in plain country places, are hardly expected to purchase these conveniences, except perhaps a lancet and the needful instruments for extracting teeth. I had, however, a keen penknife in my pocket, and without the smallest formality, I proceeded to separate the mangled thumb at the joint.

It was a very painful process, and as I now fully believe, quite an unnecessary one. But young men are not apt to see things in the same light with those who have had experience. They are not half as ready to rely on nature. They are inclined to think art will do every thing; nature, almost nothing. They frequently love to use the lancet, the knife, the scalpel, and the trephine. Of this fondness, however, I knew comparatively little. In the present instance, I simply saw it to be a doubtful, and as I thought, a hopeless case to attempt to save the thumb; and therefore, without much reflection, I removed it.

Now I shall never cease to feel a pang, whenever memory calls up this hasty act, as long as I live. Were life to be protracted to a thousand years, I should always reproach myself for it. And yet I am not aware that either the young man himself or his friends ever respected me the less for it. And so far was I from suffering in the eyes of society at large, I verily believe I was a gainer by it. But I respected myself less on account of it. I respect myself less to-day. I am fully conscious I was too hasty,—that had I waited a little, I might have been a means of saving his hand without much deformity. Nature, in such cases, left to herself, will work all but miracles, especially in the young, and in those who have a sound constitution.

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

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MILK, AS A REMEDY IN FEVERS.

Early in my practice as a physician I had a patient, a little girl, who, after having been sick for many weeks with a fever, seemed at length to become stationary. She was not weak or sick enough to die, and yet she seemed not strong enough to recover. Her vitality was almost exhausted, and yet Nature was loth to give up.

On this young patient, during her long sickness, I had tried a thousand things, to see if I could not give Nature a "start;" but all to no purpose. The wheels would not move. She would either vomit up every thing I gave her, or it would pass away as into a reservoir, unchanged. There appeared to be, I repeat, no vital action in the system.

To check the vomiting or prevent it, I had tried various measures, both external and internal. I had used warm applications to her stomach, both dry and moist. I had tried frictions of the skin and fomentations of the abdomen, both simple and medicated. Electricity I believe I had not used. Cheerful conversation, music to some extent, and the society of pleasant faces had all been invoked. Still there she was, on her bed. It seemed next to impossible for her "chariot" to go either backward or forward.

One day she asked for some milk. In an instant I determined to try it. So I took a teaspoonful of this fluid, warm from the animal, and gave it to her, only requiring her to swallow it very slowly. She not only obeyed me, but appeared to relish it. Nor was there any nausea afterward, nor any evidence of evil effects or evil tendencies.

At the end of four hours, I gave her another teaspoonful of milk, in the same way and with similar effects. At the end of four hours more, another was given; and thus onward. In twenty-four hours I was able to increase, slightly, the dose. All this while there was no stomach sickness, in the smallest degree. In three or four days, she could bear a tablespoonful of the "new medicine," every four hours, or a quantity equal to two or three ounces a day. In a week or ten days, she could take nearly half a gill at once, and had gained considerable strength. She recovered in the end, though her recovery was very slow.

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But I had hardly used the milk three days, before I began to be denounced as an almost insane man, especially by those who were wont to set themselves up as the arbiters of public opinion, and who lived too remotely to witness the good effects of the course I was pursuing. The family, of course, though they disapproved of what I did, could say nothing against it, especially as it afforded the only ground of hope of recovery. The whole public mind, in that region, was affected by the belief that milk, in a fever, is heating and dangerous. "What a strange thing it is," said many an old woman, and not a few young ones, "that the doctor should give milk to a person sick with a fever! He will certainly kill the girl before he is through with her. If these young doctors are determined to make experiments, they ought surely to make them on themselves, and not on their patients."

The public complaint involved one serious mistake, else it would have had the semblance of reason to justify it. As a general fact, milk is heating in a fever, and is consequently inadmissible. The mistake to which I allude consisted in the belief that the fever still existed, when it had wholly passed away and left nothing behind it but debility, or the consequences of the fever.

But the evidence that milk did not hurt her, lay, after all, in the indisputable fact that she improved as soon as she began to use it, and under its moderate and judicious exhibition entirely recovered her health. Observe, however, that I do not say it cured her; although I might make this affirmation with as much confidence as can justly exist with regard to any thing belonging to the *materia medica*. All I say is, that after having hung in suspense for some time, neither growing better nor appearing likely to do so, she commenced the use of the milk as aforesaid; and almost as soon as she began to use it she began to be convalescent, and her improvement went on steadily, till it terminated in sound health.

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And yet our good friends, up and down the country, who uttered so many jeremiades about the folly of giving milk to a little girl in a fever, lived to witness her complete recovery, notwithstanding. She is now a mother in our New England Israel, and I believe a very healthy one.

Whether I would venture to pursue exactly the same course in the same circumstances, were I to live my life over again, is not quite certain. And yet I certainly think it not only safe, but desirable in such cases, to do something. Why, I have occasionally, in circumstances of convalescence from fever, given things which, in themselves considered, are much more objectionable than a little milk, and with the most perfect success. I have even given pork, cabbage, cheese, and beans. It is true, I have been compelled to exercise a good deal of care in these cases, with regard to quantity. That which in the quantity of half a pound might destroy life, might in the quantity of half an ounce, be the one thing needful to the salvation, physically, of a valuable member of society.

A man in New Haven County, in Connecticut, some fifty years ago, was for a long time suspended, as it were, between this world and the next, in consequence of being left in great debility after a long and dangerous fever. For several weeks, in fact, it was scarcely guessed, except in the softest whisper, whether the slightest movement or change in his system might not precipitate him at once into the eternal world. In this perilous condition, he one day asked for sweet cider, just from the press. His attendants very properly and naturally hesitated; but the physician, when he arrived and was made acquainted with his request, immediately said, "Yes; give him a teaspoonful of good, clean, sweet cider, every two hours." The cider was given, according to the commandment, and appeared to have a restorative effect. The man recovered in a reasonable time, and is, I believe, alive to this day.

CHAPTER XL.

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THE VIRTUES OF PUMPKIN-SEED TEA.

Physicians are sometimes compelled by the force of circumstances, to visit the poor as well as the rich; albeit, they expect, so far as mere pecuniary compensation is concerned, that they are to have "their labor for their pains." They know well that honesty here, if nowhere else, is the best policy. Dr. Cullen, who became, as is well known, a giant in the profession, first attracted public attention from the act that he was often seen coming out of the hovels of the poor.

My own lot for several years was to labor *chiefly* for the poor. In a region where it had been customary for a medical man who had the whole control of the business to charge one thousand dollars a year, my charges scarcely exceeded three hundred. A few of the wealthy employed me, it is true, but not all; while I had all the poor. Indeed, it is among the poor, as a general rule, that sickness is most frequent and prevalent, not to say fatal.

In one of these poor families, on a certain occasion, I had a long campaign and a hard one. First, I was obliged to travel a great distance to see them; secondly, I had a very severe disease to encounter; thirdly, there were several patients in the house; and the family, usually unprovided with sufficient space for a free circulation of the air, was still more incommoded when sick. Fourthly, the mistress of the house was exceedingly ignorant; and ignorance in a mother is, of itself, almost enough to insure the destruction of all patients over whom she has control.

My chief source of trouble, in the present instance, was the injudicious conduct of the mother to the family; for all else could have been borne. She was almost incessantly trying to do something over and above what I had ordered or recommended. The neighbors, almost as weak as herself, would come in and say: "Why don't your doctor give such or such a thing? Mr. Blarney was sick exactly like Samuel, and they gave him a certain powder and he got right up in a very few days." This would usually be quite sufficient to make Mrs. ——very unhappy, at least till she had again seen me. [Pg 142]

Among the sick members of her family, was a daughter of about fifteen years of age. For this daughter, in particular, more than for the son Samuel, the good matrons of the neighborhood had their thousand remedies; and they regarded them all as infallible. With these, their favorite notions and doses, they were continually filling the ears of Mrs. ——.

One day, when I had been the usual round of the family, and given all needful directions for the day, Mrs. —— came to me and said: "Doctor, what do you think would be the effect of a little pumpkin-seed tea on my daughter Eunice? Do you think it would hurt her?"

"Why, no; I suppose not," I said. "But for what purpose would you give her pumpkin-seed tea? Is she not doing as well as could be expected? And if so, is it not desirable to let well enough alone?"

"To be sure she is doing very well," said Mrs. ——; "and I do not know but every thing is just as it should be. We certainly have great confidence in your treatment. But she is so feeble it seems as if something might be given which would make her gain strength faster. Why, she is very weak, doctor! Mrs. Gay and several others have thought a little pumpkin-seed tea might give her strength; but I do not like to order any thing new without first consulting you."

I did not object to the pumpkin-seed tea, *administered in great moderation*. I did not say as I ought boldly to have said: "I shall be obliged, as your physician, at least till you choose to dismiss me, to pursue the course I have marked out for myself, since I shall have to bear the responsibility." In my modesty and even diffidence, I preferred to let the ignorant friends of the young woman dabble with this comparatively inoffensive article, rather than with something worse. Besides, I wished to have no clandestine movements, and had already rejected so many proposals to give this or that medicament, that I dared not do it longer. "Oh, yes," said I, "you may give her pumpkin-seed tea; but give it in moderation." [Pg 143]

The pumpkin-seed tea was given for the next twenty-four hours, I believe, with great exactness. But as there was no obvious or immediate advantage from using it during that time, it shared the fate which might have been expected. Like the wad in the child's pop-gun, which some new wad soon and effectually expels, the pumpkin-seed tea was thrown aside, and some other infallible cure proposed in its stead.

Now, reader, do not suppose I deemed it at all derogatory to medical authority that pumpkin-seed tea should be proposed by a weak and silly mother for a darling daughter. Such a feeling as that would have placed me on the same level of human folly that she herself occupied. On the contrary, a medical man of any considerable experience among the sick and the friends of the sick, should think himself exceedingly fortunate when nothing worse is suggested by ignorance for his patients than *pumpkin-seed tea*!

CHAPTER XLI.

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BROKEN LIMBS AND INTEMPERANCE.

Wrestling for amusement, in the region where I practised medicine, was a very common occurrence, and certainly had its advantages. But there was one drawback upon its excellence, except to physicians. It involved a good deal of bone-breaking. One famous wrestler with whom I was well acquainted, broke, for his neighbors, an arm and a collar-bone; and in the end almost broke his own neck. He certainly injured it to an extent from which there was never an entire recovery. I shall mention him in another place.

For more or fewer of these broken bones from wrestling, I was called on to prescribe. One case in particular may be worth a few moments' attention, especially as it brings with it certain medical confessions.

I was sent for one evening, about nine o'clock, to visit a young man who had been injured, as it was said, by wrestling. On my arrival, I found him in great distress. He had delayed sending for aid so long that there was much inflammation, and consequent heat, swelling, tenderness, and pain.

It was not easy, at first, to ascertain the exact character of the fractures; but on inquiry and examination, it appeared that while the patient was resting nearly or quite his whole weight on the fractured leg, his antagonist had struck or tripped with his foot so violently as to fracture both bones a little way above the ankle.

It was rather a trying-case to me—for as yet I was, in the art of surgery, a mere tyro. But it was a case which would not admit of much delay; for the inflammation, already sufficiently great, was rapidly increasing. Nor would it do long to hesitate from mere modesty. I was among a class of people, who would, as I well knew, construe modesty, even though it should chance to be, as sometimes it is, an accompaniment of true science, into sheer ignorance; and this would deprive me, as a physician, of my principal lever. For who can lift up the down-fallen without having their full confidence.

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But I must explain. My patient with the fractured leg, though not in the usual acceptation of the term a drunkard, was, nevertheless, in the habit of drinking more or less of ardent spirit; and there were not wanting those who believed he was pretty well heated with liquor at the time his leg was broken. But, however this may have been, his frequent and excessive use of spirituous liquors had rendered his blood exceedingly impure; and I could not help shrinking, at first, from the task of having charge of him. Yet, it was a war from which there was no honorable discharge. There was no other surgeon within a reasonable distance, and why should I refuse to do my best for him? Somebody must assist him; and though the case was a troublesome one, why should I not take my share of troublesome cases among the rest?

There was another consideration. As he was poor, any thing like reluctance would have been construed into a willingness to neglect him on account of his poverty—a suspicion from which I should, at that time, have shrunk as readily as from the charge of robbery or murder.

But his associates were worse than he; and, with the exception of his own immediate relations, not an individual would be likely to call on or proffer him aid who was not half or two thirds of the time steeped in spirits. Has the surgeon or physician, in such circumstances, much reason to hope? And what is the hope of his patient? Can he reasonably expect, even with the aid of a skilful surgeon, ever to have a good leg?

However, I did my duty, according to my best knowledge. I had the man laid in a proper position, then placed the divided bones as nearly in their natural position as possible, and bound them. I confess, here, to very great ignorance. Moreover, I repeat, it was a difficult case. And yet I think I succeeded very well for a beginner.

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Having properly placed the fractured bones and detained them there by suitable means, I gave due orders concerning the patient's management and treatment. I was particularly careful to interdict all stimulating or indigestible food, and all drink but water. My directions were written down with great care, and the strictest charge was given to his friends and family to see that they were faithfully regarded.

But, alas, for the best person in the world with such attendants! Whenever his wife took care of him, things went on very well; but in other instances, almost every thing went wrong. His attendants gave him rum, opium, laudanum, or almost any thing that he called for. It is true—and I mention it to his credit—that he was often rather moderate in his use of interdicted articles; but then he took just about enough of these unnatural or extra stimulants, to prevent the healing process from going forward as fast as in a man of only thirty years might have been expected.

Instead of being on his feet in a couple of months or so, he lay on his bed three months or more. And then, instead of having a good leg, it was not merely slightly crooked, but half an inch too short. And then, in addition,—and what was very hard to endure,—he charged the whole blame of its imperfection on the surgeon, and insisted that it was not "set" right!

Now, while I confess to much awkwardness, and to the possibility that the limb was not managed as well as it might have been, I must maintain, notwithstanding, that such a charge was wholly misplaced and even gratuitous. Had he employed the best surgeon in the world, and had the leg received the best possible attention, it could not have been kept in its proper place with so much distilled spirits in the house, and so many slaves of the bottle! One might almost as well expect a leg to heal in the nether pit. Though I have never said, either by way of retaliating the abuse or otherwise, that his punishment was richly merited, I *might* have said so. A man is hardly entitled to good health and a good frame who keeps such company as he did, whether in sickness or in health. God has so connected law and penalty, that he who should complain of the penalty would but insult the law given. [Pg 147]

Many cases of petty surgery as well as of severe and complicated disease, fell to my lot, which embarrassed me in a manner not unlike the foregoing; though in no one did I suffer quite so much from misrepresentation as in this. For at least twenty years, to my certain knowledge, my patient took pains to speak of me in terms of reproach, and to say that his leg was set badly; and all without the slightest evidence. I do not positively aver, I again say, that the surgery in the case was faultless; but whether it was so or not, neither he nor any living individual could know, unless it were a more skilful surgeon than myself; and no such surgeon, I am sure, ever saw him during the time I was in attendance.

CHAPTER XLII.

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DYING FROM MERE FILTHINESS.

The family of a wealthy farmer came under my hands, as physician, one autumn, in circumstances peculiarly painful and trying. Several of them had been taken suddenly and severely sick, and one or two were almost dead before they were fairly aroused to a sense of danger. They lived, however, quite remote from any village, and were strongly prejudiced against both physicians and medicine. But a fearful foe, in the shape of typhoid dysentery, now assailed them, and handled them so roughly that they laid aside their prejudices for the moment, and cried aloud for help.

I was soon on the spot, but, oh, what a scene presented itself! As I have more than intimated, two of the family were already beyond hope. Others seemed likely to die. What was to be done for them, as I saw plainly, must be done quickly. On nearly every countenance I met with, both within the family and beyond its precincts, were the marks of consternation, and on some, of despair.

In these circumstances—for desperate cases require a desperate remedy—I sought the counsels of an older physician. He came immediately and took a survey of the dreadful field of slaughter. On retiring with him for consultation, he immediately said; "There must be some local cause or causes for all this. Have you," he added, "been into the cellar?" When I replied in the negative, he said, "Then we must go there immediately."

On speaking to the lady of the house, who was among the sick, by the way of asking permission, she objected, and with a good deal of promptitude and spirit. However, she at length yielded, and we made a thorough examination. The results of this examination were such as to confirm our suspicions. "We need not search further for the causes of a deadly disease," said Dr. B., and I thought so too.

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I have said already that the family was wealthy; but wealth need not include negligence, and still more filth. It was now September; and I am quite of opinion that the cellar had not been cleaned in one year, perhaps not in two. I had seen many farmers' cellars before, but I had never seen such an one as this. Nor do I believe my consulting physician ever had, though he was some twenty years older in medical practice than myself. Nor am I certain that what I may state will appear to you wholly reliable.

In the first place there were, in abundance, cabbage leaves and stumps in a semi-putrid state. Next there were decayed potatoes, turnips, beets, and apples. Then there were in various parts of the cellar remnants of cider and vinegar, and cider lees—the latter in a most offensive condition. Finally, there were remnants of barrels of beef and pork, in a bad state—to say nothing of other casual filth—the whole contributing to such a stench as I had never before perceived in a cellar.

The old physician who accompanied me had said, "We need not go farther;" but our determination was, on full and mature reflection, to know the worst and the whole, and we governed ourselves accordingly.

Close to one corner of the kitchen was the well, the water in which was very low, and near to that the sink. And if the contents of the sink did not find their way, from day to day, into the well, thus adding impurity to putridity, it must have been in virtue of some unknown law which stood opposed to the great law of specific gravity and attraction. It is true that many speak of the earth as having a *cleansing* power in such cases; but I know of no power which it possesses of cleaning sink water, while the latter is passing only five or six feet through it. The coarser parts may be strained out, but the essence must remain.^[F]

But our work was not yet finished. The vault, greatly neglected, was not far from the well; and so of the pigsty. Nor was it easy to resist the conviction that there was an underground communication between them. Then, finally, the house instead of standing on an elevation, greater or less,—a very common mode of building in New England,—stood in a sort of concavity, which contained also the barn and barnyard and woodpile;—connected with both of which was a large amount of decayed and decaying animal and vegetable matter.

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Now after such a review as this, he who could remain in doubt with regard to the cause of existing disease, especially on its assuming the form of bowel complaint with typhoid tendencies, must be much more ignorant of the laws of health and disease than I was. In fact the signs were unmistakable.

We immediately made our report to the heads of the family, and recommended a most thorough cleansing, at once. It was easy to see that we gave great offence; indeed we had anticipated such a result. But we were not at all intimidated. We insisted on a work of immediate expurgation, which was finally effected, only we could not put pure water into the well. But we could and did require that the well water should not be used for any thing except washing clothes.

The result was a decided and almost immediate improvement in the condition of the family, except the two already spoken of, and a very young child. These three died. Some of the rest lingered for weeks, and one or two for months; but they finally recovered.

It is worthy of remark, moreover, that of the people of the neighborhood, though they had been excessively frightened and had not at first dared to come near the house, at least without holding their breath, not a person among them sickened. The disease began and ended over the foul cellar I have mentioned; nor has a similar disease ever since broken out there. The fair presumption is, that they have never since suffered such foul accumulations to remain through the hot season, on their premises.

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My honest and truly honorable course of conduct, in this instance, cost me something. Though I was a means of saving their lives, the survivors never thanked me for the exposure I made of their slovenliness. Perhaps I was wrong in reporting it abroad; but it was next to impossible to conceal the facts; and I, for once, did not attempt it. Physicians sometimes thus stand between the living and the dead, and must expect to give offence. They are, however, in duty bound to keep the secrets of their patients' faults as long as they can, unless the greater good of the public demands an exposition.

But while I lost reputation in this particular family, I have not a doubt that I gained a strong hold, by this adventure, on the public mind and feelings. In truth, despite of even some trifling errors, I deserved it. I had, moreover, during the adventure, acquired a good deal of practical knowledge, of which, in the progress of my course as a medical man, I was glad to avail myself.

This was doubtless an extreme case of disease from filthiness; but cases of the same general character are quite numerous. I have sometimes wished the public could have a history of these cases. There is an immense amount of neglect in the departments of cleanliness and ventilation; and the consequent suffering in the various forms of disease, is in similar degree and proportion.

I will conclude this chapter with a single anecdote, which, were it necessary, could be substantiated by a very great number of living witnesses.

Some fifteen or twenty years ago, a severe disease was accustomed to visit one of our New England factory villages, and to carry off more or fewer of its inhabitants. So regular and certain were its yearly visits and ravages, that not a few were disposed to regard it as a sort of necessary evil, or, perhaps, as a divine infliction. At length a very shrewd old gentleman told the people that the troublesome visitor was of human and not of divine origin; and that if they would attend properly to their cellars, sleeping-rooms, wells, etc., it would no more be heard of. At first, they were disposed to laugh at him; but the matter was talked of and agitated, till a work of general purgation was actually attempted and finally accomplished. The disease has never re-appeared. Was all this the result of mere accident? Do our diseases spring out of the ground? Are they the result of chance or hap-hazard? or, are they not the heaven-appointed penalties of transgression?

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FOOTNOTES:

[F] Farmers, in former times, while making cider, were very slovenly. When I observed a large amount of filth adhering to their boots and shoes as they carried the pumice from the vat to the press, I thought of the worms, insects, and dust, which were ground up and incorporated with the mass, I sometimes expressed surprise. "Oh," said they, "the cider will work itself clean!" If so, I thought, and still think, it must be by the operation of some law not yet discovered. It may work itself *clear*, perhaps; but to work itself *clean*, is quite another matter.

CHAPTER XLIII.

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TAKING THE FEVER.

A large family, not much more careful of their habits or cleanly about their premises than the family alluded to in the foregoing chapter, had sickened one autumn, and one of them had died. Anxious to save the rest, I again acted as physician and nurse both, and effected my object; or, at least, appeared to do so. The rest of my patients ultimately recovered.

But while thus watching these patients, by night and day, standing in the very front of the battle, I suddenly sickened. The circumstances, as nearly as I can recollect them, were the following:—

Among the sick of this afflicted family was one unmarried man of rather eccentric and very unsociable habits, and exceedingly negligent both of his person and dress. His linen, and I think also his bed-clothes, were hardly changed once a month; at least as long as he was well. And then he had, of course, extended the same neglect to his sick chamber. Added to this, moreover, was a species of *necessity* at this juncture; for so much distressed were the family, and so difficult was it to procure aid in the neighborhood, that a part of the neglect to which our old bachelor was subjected seemed unavoidable.

I took notice of the neglect, spoke of it repeatedly, and labored assiduously to correct the evil. But the case seemed an almost forlorn one. I was morally obliged, as I then felt, to do a thousand things for him that usually fall to the lot of nurses and assistants. In some instances, I passed even whole nights in the family, in attendance on him and the other sick persons.

My task was the more severe from the fact that a similar fever was prevailing in other parts of the town, and my labors beyond the precincts of this family were exceedingly fatiguing and severe. In truth, I was, in the end, greatly overworked and debilitated, and my system most admirably prepared for the reception of disease.

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For various reasons, some of which, have already been named, I often assisted in turning my bachelor-patient in his foul bed. It is true the process was so offensive that I avoided it whenever I could; but on occasions, I yielded to the pressure of necessity.

One night, when I was greatly fatigued and exhausted, and at the bottom of my condition,—utterly unfit for exertion, even in a pure atmosphere,—I was stooping over Mr. V., to turn him in his bed, when I suddenly felt a sensation like that of receiving a blow externally on the chest and stomach. The thought struck me as quickly as the imaginary blow did—have I not taken the disease? I knew the laws of contagion; the only question was whether any contagion had been generated. My opinion was to the contrary; nevertheless, I could not wholly suppress my fears.

A sensation of oppression which followed the imaginary blow, soon gradually passed away, though I felt, each succeeding day, more and more debilitated. Many a resolution was made to leave my patients, so far as personal manual care was concerned, and be much more than I had been, in the open air, though it was only made for a time—to be broken. At length, however, principle prevailed over sympathy and inclination, and I did as I ought to have done long before. It was, however, rather late, for the die was already cast. I was taken sick, and the symptoms of my disease were precisely like those of Mr. V.

Perceiving now, most clearly, my condition, and that I was engaged in a war from which there could be no discharge, I made preparation for a long and severe sickness. First, I calmly and deliberately adjusted all my domestic concerns of a pecuniary kind, and made such arrangements as would, in case of my demise, render every thing intelligible. Then, in the second place, I made up my mind to submit, as cheerfully as I could, to my condition. I determined to keep quiet, and not indulge for a moment in any undue anxiety. I employed a physician,—my old master—but steadfastly, and almost obstinately determined not to take much medicine;—nor was there much prescribed.

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My disease proved to be much milder than was expected; but it had its regular course. I never wholly lost my muscular strength or my appetite. While I was sick, several of my nearest friends and patrons sickened in a similar way, only more severely; and one or two of them died. On my recovery, however, or about the same time, the most of them began also to recover, and the disease in general abated.

Now, when I came to reflect coolly and carefully on the whole affair, I could not help perceiving that I richly deserved all I suffered. It was the just penalty of transgression. I had been fully and repeatedly warned not to watch with my patients, as those who turn back to Chapter XXIII, and those too who remember its contents, will perceive. It was fit, therefore, that I should feel the rod, even if I could not kiss the hand that had appointed it. The only wonder with me now is, that my punishment was not more severe.

CHAPTER XLIV.

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BLESSINGS OF CIDER AND CIDER BRANDY.

Some of these blessings have been alluded to in Chapter XXXVI. But the subject is one of too much importance to be left in an unfinished state, and I have concluded to make it the principal topic of a separate chapter.

A man came to me, one day, with sundry grievous complaints about his head and stomach. It was easy to see, at once, that they were not of mushroom growth, and that they could not be removed either in an hour or a day. However, I did the best I could with him, and charged him to follow, implicitly, my directions, which he promised faithfully to do. I told him, even, that he was in danger of a severe disease, but counselled him to do his utmost to escape it, if possible.

He was, in the first place, a New England or Yankee farmer. Not quite satisfied with the products of his farm from the labors of the day, he coupled with them the night labors of managing a saw-mill and a distillery. And not satisfied with even these, he sometimes burned charcoal, which also involved more or less of nocturnal labor. In truth, these employments and avocations kept him up a great many nights during a considerable portion of the year, and were evidently wearing him out prematurely; for, though less than forty years of age, he had the appearance of being fifty or sixty.

This severe tasking of his system, had led him greatly into temptation. Not only had he acquired the habit of chewing tobacco, as a solace in his seclusion and toil, but also of drinking very freely of cider and cider brandy; the last two of which, as might naturally be inferred from what has been said, he was accustomed to manufacture in large quantities. He was not a great eater, though I have no doubt he ate too much. But he did not take time to eat—he did not masticate any thing; almost every thing was swallowed in masses, and washed down with tea, coffee, or cider. Then, lastly and finally, he ate, as it were, by the job, when he *did* eat; for his meals were very irregular and sometimes very infrequent.

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Another thing should be noticed. His cider and perhaps his tobacco, having leagued together, took away his appetite. Cider, as is well known, practically and in a gradual way, takes away the appetite, and so does coffee. Many a farmer will tell you that it is a matter of economy to give his laborers cider or coffee, since they will not eat so much. It is highly probable that brandy, and indeed all extra stimulants, have the same appetite-destroying effect.

And as the result of his various irregularities and abuses, his digestive and nervous systems had become very much deranged and disordered, and I could hardly help foreboding evil concerning him. I prescribed for him as well as I could, and requested him to call on me in two or three days, and "report progress."

On the next day but one, I was summoned to his bedside. My medicine had indeed appeared to afford him a little temporary relief, but it was only temporary. He was now much worse than ever before. I prescribed again; but it was with similar effect. Nature, somewhat relieved, as I then vainly imagined, seemed disposed to rally, but was unable. Every successive effort to rally, showed more and more clearly how much she had been crippled. At least she seemed to succumb either to the treatment or the disease, which last became in the end quite formidable.

But though Nature had yielded, apparently vanquished, she still made occasional faint efforts, every two or three days, to regain the supremacy, or, in other words, to set things right; and sometimes we were led to indulge in hope. But the remissions of disease and of suffering were only temporary, and were succeeded, in every instance, by a worse condition of things than before. I called for sage medical counsel, but all to no permanent purpose. Downward he tended, step by step, and no human power or skill seemed likely to arrest his progress.

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In this downward course his constitution held out—for he was by nature exceedingly tenacious of life—till about the twenty-third day, when the vital forces began to retreat. He died on the twenty-fifth.

One practical but general error deserves to be noticed, for want of a better place, in this very connection. Notwithstanding the great difficulty of convincing a person who habitually uses extra stimulants, narcotics, or any medicinal agents, all the way from rum, opium, and tobacco, down to tea, coffee, and saleratus, that they are injuring him at all, as long as he does not feel very ill, yet it ought to be clearly and fully known that every one who is thus addicted to unnatural habits, and *being* thus addicted is seized with disease of any kind and from any cause whatever, is certain to have that disease with greater severity than if his habits had been, from the first, perfectly correct or normal. Nor is this all. Medical aid, whenever invoked under these circumstances, is more questionable as to its good tendencies. No medical man of any skill or observation but must feel, in such a case, most painfully, the terrible uncertainty of that treatment of the living machine which is quite enough so when the habits have been most favorable, by being most correct.

One caution of quite another kind may be interposed here. My patient above had neglected to call on me for several days in the beginning of his disease, under the very general

impression of ignorant people, that if he called a physician he should certainly be severely sick; for if he was not already very sick, any efforts to prevent disease would only serve to make him so.

Now this is, as a general rule, a very great mistake. It would be much more safe to call a physician very early, than to wait till Nature is so much embarrassed and even crippled that we can place very little reliance on her efforts. Worse still is it for the physician, when called late, to load down the enfeebled system with medicine by way of atoning for past neglects. Thousands have made the mistake here alluded to, and have thus been a means of hastening on a fatal termination of the disease. It is not by any means improbable that such was the result in the foregoing instance.

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CHAPTER XLV.

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THE INDIAN DOCTOR.

A little child about two years of age, severely afflicted with bowel complaint, came under my care during the first year of my medical practice, and proved the source of much difficulty.

She was the child of a mother who had been trained to delicacies, in the usual fashionable way, and who had begun to carry out the same wretched course of education in her own family. In addition to a generally wrong treatment, the child had been indulged, for many weeks before I was called, with a large amount of green, or at least very unripe, fruit.

It was at a season of the year when both children and adults were suffering from bowel complaints much more than at any other; but as the hot days and nights were expected soon to give way to the cooler and longer nights of October, I fastened my hopes of the child's final recovery, very largely, on the natural recuperative effects of the autumnal season. I did not attempt to give much medicine. My reliance was almost wholly on keeping up what I was wont to call a good centrifugal force, or in keeping the skin—the great safety valve of the system—in proper and healthful activity. Much that I ordered was in the way of bathing, local and general, especially warm bathing.

The parents of the child were among my most confidential, not to say influential, friends. If there was a family within the whole of my medical circuit with whom my word was law, it was this. Yet after all they were ignorant, especially of themselves; and such people always were and always will be credulous. They would open their ears, not only to the thousand and one insinuations of malice and envy, which at times are ventured against a young physician,—especially if he is going ahead, and as they say "getting rich" too fast, and thus securing more than they believe to be his share of public popularity;—but to the still larger number, if possible, of weak criticisers in his practice.

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My friend's residence, moreover, was in a neighborhood contiguous to quacks and quackery, in the pretensions to which there were many believers. These dupes of ignorance and assurance were ever and anon filling the heads of my "patrons" with their stories of wonderful cures, in cases almost *exactly like that of my own little patient*, and urging the poor half-distracted parents to try something new—either medicine or physician. They would appeal to their feelings by asking them how they could be willing, as parents,—however great might be their confidence in me as a physician,—to let a darling child lie, day after day, and yet make no extra effort to save it.

Their appeals were not wholly ineffective; indeed, what else could have been expected? My first suspicion of any thing radically wrong, arose from a decidedly unexpected effect from a little medicine I had previously ordered. It seemed quite clear to my mind that a neutralizing agent had been at work somehow, by design or otherwise. And yet I shrunk from making an inquiry. In the end, however, I found myself morally compelled to do so. The results were very nearly what I had feared, and what might have been expected.

One of the *reliabilities* of the wise ones of the neighborhood went by the name of the "Indian" doctor. Whether in addition to a very little Indian blood he was half or three-fourths Spanish, Portuguese, or Canadian, I never knew, for I never took pains to inquire. But he had Indian habits. He was at times intemperate and vicious. No one who knew him would have trusted him with a sixpence of his own honest earnings, at least any longer than he was within his sight or reach. Yet many people would and did trust him with their own lives and the lives of their children.

There was one redeeming circumstance in connection with the history of this Indian doctor. He would never prescribe for the sick when in a state of intoxication. He knew, in this respect, his own weakness. But then it must be confessed he was not often free from intoxication. He was almost always steeped in cider or spirits. He was seldom, if ever, properly a sane or even a steady man.

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On pressing the parents of the sick child more closely than usual, they frankly owned that though they had not of themselves called in the Indian doctor, they had permitted Mrs. A. B. to invite him in, and had permitted the child to take a little of his medicine.

The secret was now fully revealed, and it was no longer a matter of wonder with me, why poison did not work well against poison. The wonder was why, together, we had not killed the poor child. And yet it was by no means certain that the Indian's prescription was of much force, save the few drops of alcohol which it contained, for all his medicine was to be taken in alcohol.

I stated to the parents the probable issues—that unless the child possessed more than ordinary tenacity of life, it must ultimately sink under the load it was compelled to sustain. But to our great surprise—certainly my own—it survived; and, though it was suspended for weeks between life and death, it finally recovered.

The most mortifying circumstance of all was, that this miserable mongrel of a man had the credit of curing a child that only survived because it was tough and strong enough to resist the destructive tendency of two broadside fires—mine and his own. But medical men are compelled to put up with a great many things which, of course, they would not prefer. They must take the world as it is—as the world does the corps of physicians. They must calculate for deductions and drawbacks; and what they calculate on, they are pretty sure to experience. But, like other men with other severe trials, they have their reward.

CHAPTER XLVI.

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DYING OF OLD AGE, AT FIFTY-EIGHT.

Within the usual limits assigned me in the daily routine of my profession, but on its very verge, there resided an individual of much general reputation for worth of character, but of feeble constitution and cachetic or deranged habits, for whom as well as for his numerous family I had frequently prescribed.

He was at length, one autumn, unusually reduced in health and strength, and I was again sent for. There was evidently very little of real disease about him, and yet there was very great debility. All his bodily senses were greatly deranged, and all his intellectual faculties benumbed. His internal machinery—his breathing, circulation, and digestion—was all affected; but it seemed more the result of debility than any thing else. There was no violence or excess of action anywhere, except a slight increase of the circulation.

The man was about fifty-eight years of age. Had he been ninety-eight or even eighty-eight, I should have had no difficulty in understanding his case. I should have said to myself, "Nature, nearly exhausted by the wear and tear of life, is about to give way;" or in other words, "The man is about to die of mere old age." But could he have been thus worn out at the age of fifty-eight?

I gave him gentle, tonic medicine, but it did not work well. Without increasing his strength, it increased his tendencies to fever. Yet, as I well knew, depletion would not answer in a case like this, whether of bleeding, blistering, or cathartics. In these circumstances, I contrived to while away the time in a routine of that negative character which, in true medical language, means laboriously doing nothing.

He was visited about twice a week. I heard patiently all his complaints, and endeavored to be patient under all my disappointments, for disappointments I had to encounter at nearly every step. No active treatment whatever would have the general effect I desired and intended. If I gave him but a single dose of elixir paregoric for his nervousness, it only added, nine times in ten, to the very woes it was intended to relieve. My policy—and I fully believe it was the only true policy—was to leave him to himself and to Nature, as much as possible. [Pg 164]

Though I have spoken here of what I regarded as the true policy in the case then under my care, yet, after all, the truest course would have been to call for consultation some wiser head than my own. Another individual, even though he were no wiser than I, might have aided me most essentially, in compliance with, and in confirmation of, the good old adage—"Two eyes see more than one."

Why, then, did I not call on some inquiring and highly experienced physician? It was not that I was too proud to do so, nor that I was too jealous of my reputation. It was not that I feared any evil result to myself. It was rather because I did not, at first, think it really necessary; and then, subsequently, when I supposed it to be really needful, I feared my patient would grudge the expense. This fear, by the way, was grounded in something more than mere conjecture. The proposal had been practically made, and had been rejected.

In this general way things went on for some time. The friends grew uneasy, as they should have done; and one or two of them, now that it was almost too late, spoke of another physician as counsel. My own readiness and more than readiness for this seemed to have the effect to quiet the patient, though it had the contrary effect on his friends. They appeared to construe my own liberality and the admixture of modesty and conscientiousness, which were conspicuous in my general behavior, into self-distrust, and hence began themselves to distrust me.

The patient's state of mind—for he was a man whose habits of thinking and feeling approximated very closely to those of the miser—more than once reminded me of some doggerel verses I have seen, perhaps in an old almanac, which are so pertinent in illustration of the point in my patient's character which these remarks are intended to expose, that I have ventured to insert them:— [Pg 165]

"The miser Sherdi, on
his sick-bed

lying,
 Affrighted, groaning,
 fainting,
 wheezing,
 dying,
 Expecting every hour to lose his breath,
 Enters a Dervise: 'Holy
 Father, say,
 As life seems parting
 from this sinful
 clay,
 What can preserve me from the jaws of death?'
 "'Sacrifice, dear son,
 good joints of
 meat,—
 Of lamb and mutton for the priest and poor.
 Nay, shouldst thou
 from the Koran
 lines repeat,
 Those lines might possibly thy health restore,'
 "'Thank you, good
 father, you have
 said enough;
 Your counsels have already given me ease.
 Now as my sheep are
 all a great way
 off,
 I'll quote holy our Koran, if you please.'"

At length my patient began, most evidently, to decline. There were various marks on him and in him, of approaching dissolution. When pressed, as I frequently was, to say definitely what the disease was—that is, to give it a name—under which Mr. —— labored, I only replied that he was suffering from premature old age. This always awakened surprise, and led to much and frequent inquiry how it was that a man of fifty-eight years could be dying of mere old age. My explanations, whenever attempted,—for sometimes in my pride of profession I wholly evaded them,—were usually, in substance like the following:—

"Mr. —— was feeble by inheritance. He never had that firmness of constitution which several of his brothers now possess. Then, too, he was precocious. His body and mind, both of them, came to maturity very early; which, as you know, always betokens premature decay. Men live about four times as long, when not cut short by disease, as they are in reaching maturity. As he was apparently mature at fourteen or fifteen, he might very naturally be expected to wear out at or before sixty.

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"But then, in addition to this, he has all his lifetime labored too hard, not only from necessity, but from habit and choice. His ambition, it is well known, has been unlimited, except by his want of strength to accomplish. He has only ceased to labor hard when he had strength to labor no longer, or when it was so dark or so cold or so stormy as to prevent him.

"Then of late years he has had the care and anxiety which are almost inseparable from the work of bringing up a numerous family. It is indeed true that he has not been called to that severest of all possible trials pertaining to the family, the pain of seeing that family or any of

its members go materially wrong. Still he has had a world of care; of its effects none are aware who have not been called to the same forms of experience.

"There is one thing more; Mr. —— has, at times, taken a good deal of medicine: not alcohol, in any of its forms, I admit, but substances which for the time were, in their effects, almost equally bad for him. He has used tea immoderately, and even tobacco. His constant smoking has been very injurious to his nervous system, and along with other things has, doubtless, greatly hurried on the wheels of life."

Remarks like these had their intended effect on a few individuals, especially such of them as were couched in language with which they were already familiar. On most, however, they fell lifeless and hopeless. What knew they about precocity and its effects on the after life? In short, it was quite doubtful then, and is still more doubtful with me now, whether, on the whole, any thing was gained by attempts at explanation. For example, when I spoke of my patient being worn out, prematurely, by overworking, it was asked by one man, "But how is this? Other men as well as Mr. —— have worked too hard, and brought up large families, and perhaps taken a great deal of medicine, and smoked a vast amount of tobacco? Why are they not affected in this way as well as Mr. ——?"

It was not easy to make current the idea that Mr. —— was about to die of old age; although partly from conviction, but partly, also, to conceal my ignorance, I still endeavored to promulgate it. It was the only apology I could make for suffering a man to run down and die, without appearing to those around him to be very sick.

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But he died, after some time, to my infinite mortification and great regret. I was invited to his funeral, as I was usually to the funerals of my patients. In this case, however, I contrived to be absent. So great was my consciousness of ignorance and so much ashamed was I of my ill success, that I felt as if the veriest ignoramus would be disposed to point at me, and to charge me with having been, practically, the murderer of the much-beloved head of a family, and a worthy and highly respected member of society. But, whether others would deem me culpable for my ignorance or not, I could not avoid the pangs of habitual condemnation.

There were, I grant, a few extenuating circumstances in the case. One or two causes existed, of premature decline, on which, in a work like this, I cannot stop to expatiate. It was also very unfortunate for him that he was accustomed to look on the dark side of things, and to forebode ills, where, oftentimes, none existed.

Notwithstanding my former ignorance and doubt, and numerous misgivings, in cases like the foregoing, I have of late years, on a maturer review, been obliged very frequently to confirm my earlier decisions. In the case which has been detailed in this chapter, I have, on the whole, come to a belief that my first judgment was nearly correct; and that the patient actually perished, as much as men ever do, of premature old age. It is, indeed, very possible that had I pursued a different course in several important particulars, his life might have been prolonged for a year or two. Men have a tendency to become what they are taken to be; and many a person has died much sooner for being taken to be near his end, and treated accordingly. If we would have our patients recover, we must take for granted that recovery is at least possible.

In the case above, I believe I lost reputation, in large measure. Several shrewd people insisted, at the time and long afterward, that I ought to have had medical counsel. Mr. ——, they said, was too good a man to lose without a more persevering effort to raise him. They charged me with having got my name up, and having at the same time grown careless. Had he been properly doctored, they said, from the very first, they believed he might still have been alive to ornament and bless society.

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CHAPTER XLVII.

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DAUGHTERS DESTROYING THEIR MOTHER.

There are, of course, many ways of destroying or killing people. To kill, with malice aforethought, though sometimes done, is a much less frequent occurrence than killing in the heat of passion, or by carelessness; by leading into bad habits, or by the injudicious use of medicine.

Then, again, there is such a thing as killing by omitting to keep alive. Thus we have sins of omission as well as of commission. If I leave a man in a mill-pond and suffer him to drown, or if I suffer him to take a dose of arsenic or Prussic acid, when I might, with the utmost ease, or even with considerable difficulty, prevent it,—is it not, in a practical sense, to destroy or kill him?

It is certainly within the wide range of human possibility, that a daughter may, without bludgeon or pistol, and even without poison, kill her mother. And it is quite notorious and a plain matter of fact that many a mother kills her own children. It could be demonstrated that thousands, if not tens of thousands of children are destroyed every year by their own mothers; as truly so as if they had received at their hands a quantity of arsenic. Why, then, may not children sometimes kill their parents?

I have known people, in very many instances, kill, in trying to save. I have even known the medical man do this, as may be seen by turning back to Chapter XXX. Then, too, I have known the attendants of the sick, though among their dearest friends, sometimes kill in this very way. In truth, such killing is not uncommon.

One of the most painful instances of this last kind of killing came under my own immediate observation, and was in the range of my own practice. [Pg 170]

I was visiting a sick woman, whose only property lay in three or four lovely and loving children. Two of these, who were full-grown daughters, resided in her house and took care of her. She was severely afflicted with typhoid dysentery. Her daughters in turn watched over her, both by day and night, and would not suffer her to be left in the care of anybody else for a single minute. And, in general, their faithfulness was above all praise.

One day, however, disliking the appearances of a part of my medicine, they mutually agreed to throw it into the fire; and the deed was done. They had supposed it to be calomel, as it had the color and general appearance of that drug, and to calomel they had a most inveterate and irreconcilable hatred. It was a hatred, however, which whether well or ill founded, very extensively prevails.

At first, I could not help wondering at the results of my supposed doses of medicine; and indeed it was a long time before I began to suspect the true cause. For, while I verily believed I was employing the only thing which could help her,—one which I then thought *ought* to help her,—I had the unspeakable mortification of finding her every day growing worse. What could be the possible cause, I often asked myself, of this downward tendency?

While thus perplexed and pained, I accidentally learned that the main ingredient in my plan of treatment—the main pillar in my fabric—had been habitually withdrawn by her anxious but injudicious attendants. I no longer wondered at the threatening symptoms. My only wonder was, that things had not gone wrong with her at a much more rapid rate.

The patient continued to sink from day to day, and to become more and more insensible. The daughters themselves saw her downward tendency, for it could not be concealed. I did not tell the young women of their error at first, although I did so afterwards. It was a most painful duty, but it was one from which I dared not shrink. I hoped and trusted it would be a means of saving some among the coming generations.

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I have never met with either of these daughters since that day—for one of them, at least, is still living—without blushing for their sake. They, on their part, appear to be equally affected and agitated. They almost adored their mother, and yet they inadvertently destroyed her. She might have perished, it is true, without their aid; but I rather think she would have slowly recovered.

Let him that readeth understand: It is extremely hazardous for a second or third person to change the doses of a physician's medicine, either by the omission or addition of an ingredient. It would be safer—very much safer—to omit every thing, and leave the disease wholly to nature. The true course, however, in all cases, is to follow the prescription of the physician, to the best of our abilities, or else dismiss him.

I might pause here a moment to animadvert on the unreasonableness of the vulgar prejudice which almost everywhere prevails against calomel. That this drug does great harm, in many instances, is most certain; but that it does more mischief to the human constitution when in the hands of judicious practitioners, than some half a dozen articles of the *materia medica* I could name, about which complaint is seldom made, remains to be proved. Let us, if possible, prevent the necessity of using any of these two-edged weapons, by so living that disease cannot assail us, and then we shall not, of necessity, be exposed to the danger of medicinal agents, whether calomel or any thing else.

My own principal error in relation to this interesting case, consisted in not telling the attendants of the sick woman, in the plainest language, what my medicines were and how much, in my own estimation, depended on their careful and proper exhibition; that if they should take away or suffer to be taken away, one faggot from the bundle, they would not only spoil their effect, but might, very probably, turn the edge of the sword against the very citadel of life itself. But from the extreme of explaining every thing, in sick families where I was called, I had passed over to that of explaining nothing. Truth here, as elsewhere, usually lies midway between extremes.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

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POISONING WITH STRAMONIUM.

One of my patients was subject to repeated attacks of rheumatism. He was by no means a man of good and temperate habits, and never had been so. And even his rheumatic attacks, though they were now frequently excited by taking cold, or by a sudden strain, as well as by many other causes of no considerable magnitude, often had both a foundation or predisposition in his former and later intemperance.

Let me here say, most distinctly and unequivocally, even at the risk of being charged with repetition, that a large proportion of even these casual or apparently accidental attacks of rheumatism, neuralgia, sick headache, etc., etc., with which our world—the fashionable part of it, at least—is half filled, instead of springing out of the ground, or coming upon us by the special appointment of high Heaven, have their origin in the intemperance, excess, or licentiousness of somebody. The cause may lie many years back, and may be almost

forgotten; nay, it may be found in a preceding generation rather than the present. But it lies somewhere in the range of human agency. "Almighty man," as the poet has well said, "decrees it." Solomon never uttered a more palpable truth than when he said: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

My rheumatic friend sent for me one day, to come and see him in great haste, for, as the messenger said, he could not long continue in such suffering. I found him in the greatest distress, and after making the usual temporary applications, I gave him what I had never given him before—a pretty full dose of tincture of stramonium. It had, in due time, its accustomed effect, and I left him, rather prematurely, to visit another patient in a somewhat distant part of the town, intending, however, to see him again in the evening. [Pg 173]

But I had not been absent more than an hour, before I was sent for in post-haste. As soon as possible I hastened to the spot. I found my patient in a state somewhat peculiar and not easily described. He was evidently affected by the stramonium; but how, I said to myself, can this be? I certainly did not give him an overdose. Besides, as I well knew, the effects, so long as I remained with him, had been decidedly favorable.

The mystery was soon revealed. On finding himself much better, soon after my departure, he had resorted again to the stramonium bottle, which in my haste and contrary to my usual practice, I had left within his reach. The result was a degree of delirium that had alarmed his friends and induced them to send for me.

By means of careful and persevering management, a partial recovery soon took place, though a train of incidental evils followed which it is not necessary here to enumerate. The patient was one of those ignorant and selfish individuals on whom a permanent cure can rarely be effected.

This circumstance taught me one important lesson which ought to have been impressed on my mind long before. It was, not to leave medicine of any kind within reach of my patients or their friends. In many an instance, medicine thus left has been taken by others, under the belief that since it operated favorably in the case for which it had been prescribed by the physician, it would do so in another case which was vainly supposed to be just like it, when, in truth, it was not at all similar.

To the custom of keeping medicine in the house, of any sort, I am equally opposed, and for similar reasons. There will generally be time enough to send for it when its presence is really needed. Such at least is the fact, ninety-nine times in a hundred. And as a set-off against the fact of its being thus useful once in a hundred times, we have to acknowledge the multiplied dangers to which we are exposed, of using it without prescription, and to which we are otherwise exposed by having it constantly before us in our houses. [Pg 174]

CHAPTER XLIX.

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CURING CANCER.

Theodore, a laborious young man, came to me one day, saying, "I am afraid I have a cancer on one side of my nose, and I wish you would look at it." Accordingly I made a careful examination of the sore, taking care to give him a little pain, and, at the same time, as a most indispensable ingredient, to look "wondrous wise;" after which the following conversation, in its essentials, took place between us:—

"What makes you suspect this sore to be a cancer?"

"There are various reasons. Many of the neighbors think it to be so. Then, too, it has a very strong resemblance to the cancer on Mrs. Miller's lip. And then, again, it burns and itches and smart, just as people say cancers always do."

"How long have you been troubled with it?"

"It is three months or more since I first observed it; but it has given me very little uneasiness or trouble till within a few weeks."

"What have you done for it?"

"It would take a long time to tell you of all I have done for it. Every thing I could hear of, far or near, has been applied; from plasters of clay and chalk, to plasters of vitriol and other poisonous things. But I have used most a plaster made of chalk and the white of an egg. I do not know that any thing I have done has benefited it."

"Perhaps you have not persevered in the use of any thing long enough. How long is it, pray, since you began to use the chalk and egg plaster?"

"Oh, it is three weeks, or more."

"And how long is it usual to wear it? do you know?"

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"Mrs. Lovejoy, who advised it, only said, 'Use it as long as it appears to do good.'"

"Is it a favorite remedy with her?"

"Very much so."

"Has any one been really cured by it?"

"Oh, yes. Mr. Browning, the gardener, was entirely cured by it; so, at least, people say."

"Any one else?"

"Yes, half a hundred or more have tried it."

"But how many have been cured by it? That is my main inquiry."

"That I cannot tell you. I have heard of no positive cure but that of Mr. Browning."

"It is almost incredible, my dear sir, that any thing like fifty cases can have come within such a small range of population as the village or even the town in which Mrs. Lovejoy resides. Do you mean as you say?"

"Well, then, a great many. I know of a dozen, most certainly; and I have heard of a great many more. I venture, at least, to say twenty."

"And you have no positive knowledge of but one permanent cure among them all?"

"Only one, I meant to say, that I can call by name. There must be many more, I am sure, but I have not their names."

"Have you much confidence in a method of treatment that succeeds once in fifty times, or even once in twenty?"

"Not much, I confess; but if it now and then succeed, that is something. You know that they who run in a race *all* run, though but one receives the prize."

"Are you quite sure there *is* any gain or prize, after all?"

"Do you mean to ask if I believe Mr. Browning was really cured?"

"Yes."

"How could I doubt what I have seen and known?"

"I do not expect you will doubt the existence of what you have seen and known. But the question before us is, what you *have* seen and known. Mr. Browning had something on his face, and it got well; but do we know it was a cancer? Only a very small proportion of twenty sores suspected to be cancers ever prove to be such, and many of them get well after a little time, if they are let entirely alone; or, if not let entirely alone, they would probably still get well, in spite of the treatment. It is quite a marvel with me, not that one person, Mr. Browning, recovered in spite of the treatment, but that more did not."

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"This is to me a new way of reasoning on this subject, and yet I do not know but you are correct. I confess, that on reflection, I do not find positive evidence that any good has been done to Mr. Browning. It may be so, or it may not. And yet the story of his cure is told all over the neighborhood and for many miles around, and Mrs. Lovejoy gets great credit by it."

"No doubt she does; and thousands obtain both credit and cash in a similar way. Much of the reputation of our wonderful cure-alls, advertised in the newspapers, comes in a similar way."

"Do you really think so?"

"It can be demonstrated."

"Why, then, is it not oftener done?"

"It has been done, again and again."

"Are the public, then, fully determined to act against their own interest? Do they choose to be humbugged?"

"It seems so."

"But can you do nothing with my face?"

"I can try. I will do what I can. But I must first tell you what I *cannot* do. I cannot pronounce your disease to be cancer. I cannot say positively that my method of treatment will cure it. I cannot say, moreover, that somebody else cannot cure you, even if I cannot. If, however, I prescribe for you, you must consent to follow me for the time most implicitly, and let everybody else alone."

"That I shall be both willing and glad to do."

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"You need not begin till you are fully satisfied in regard to the efficacy of Mrs. Lovejoy's plaster."

"I am pretty well satisfied already. I see that science is modest but honest, and I prefer it to humbuggery."

My prescription was an application of the common blistering ointment of the apothecary's shop. The part to which it was to be applied was quite denuded and tender; but I told the patient to stick a small piece of the plaster over it and wear it, and keep it as sore as he could for a month or more. He was, however, to call on me once a week,—or, perhaps, at first, twice,—that I might watch the effects. There was some danger of an absorption of the cantharides into the system, which might do more of general harm than would justify an attempt at local good.

No man ever followed the prescription of his physician with more pertinacity and faithfulness than young Theodore. He adhered, without wavering, to plain and unstimulating food, and to water for drink. At the end of twenty-one days, all the fiery redness of the ulcer had passed away, and it had begun to wear a healthy appearance. "Now," said I, "you may take away your plasters, and let the sore get well, if it will."

In about ten, or at most fourteen days more, the young man's nose was as well as any other part of his system. Whether the Spanish flies contained in the plaster had any thing to do with it, or whether it recovered its healthful condition in spite of them,—having just then got ready to heal,—I cannot, of course, positively determine. In any event, the case was a strong one, though not stronger, I confess, than that of dosing largely with calomel, as detailed in Chapter XXXII. And yet, as I have already told you, I should not dare to repeat that heroic treatment. Success is not always competent proof that a given course is correct;—at least, this is true with regard to the success of a particular formulary of medicine. There are very many things on earth to be known and thought of, as well as in heaven.

CHAPTER L.

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SWELLED LIMBS.

Not far from this period I was called to visit Mr. O. B., sixty-one years of age, a farmer by occupation. He had been for twenty or thirty years addicted to cider drinking very freely, according to the custom of the country; which habit, conjoined with full feeding, a diminished amount of exercise, and a lymphatic tendency by inheritance, had rendered him exceedingly corpulent. His legs had even fallen into a habit of swelling, especially at night, sometimes to a very alarming extent.

His story concerning himself was essentially as follows: In getting into a wagon, some time before, he had detached a small portion of skin from one of his legs. Although the wound was slight, and was duly attended to, according to the usual method of the family, with cabbage leaves, and with considerable care and neatness, yet, instead of healing kindly, it had put on a very unhealthy appearance, and had, at length, even become extensively ulcerated. He was also habitually a sufferer from chronic rheumatism in his back and hips, partly constitutional and partly as the result of overstraining the parts, especially in wrestling.

When I was called in to see him, it was about the last of June. His wounded leg was now evidently growing worse; and as the heat of the weather was increasing, and was for some time to come likely to increase, I could hardly help apprehending the most serious consequences. He had been in the habit of making greasy applications to it for a short time, but these at my special request were set aside immediately.

He was also encouraged to keep his leg cool; to exercise his whole system moderately; to avoid exciting, above all, stimulating, food and drink; and to keep his mind quiet. In regard to drinks, particularly, he was directed to use none but water. He was also required to abstain wholly from pork, and all long-salted meats. He had also been, for almost half a century, a chewer of tobacco—a circumstance rather unfavorable to a rapid return of healthy action; but I did not think it expedient to interdict its use entirely at the very first; for I feared the change, at his advanced age, would be more than his system could well endure.

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In fact, I found it extremely difficult to persuade him to pursue the straight and narrow path which, letting alone his tobacco, I had deemed indispensably necessary. To encourage him

to do so, I availed myself of a circumstance which, though in itself trifling, was nevertheless likely to have its influence. The thirteenth day of July was at hand, and would be the fortieth anniversary of his marriage. My proposal was that he should commence the change of habits that very day, and continue it precisely eighteen months.

Although the danger to which he would be exposed by neglecting my prescription was neither immediate nor imminent; yet it was so considerable in prospect that I pressed him very hard to comply with my requirements, notwithstanding their seeming rigidity. And as a further inducement,—for he was not above the influence of pecuniary considerations,—I offered him a certain sum of money.

I left him without much hope, after all, that he would follow out my suggestions and advice, so difficult is it, at the age of sixty, to make substantial and radical changes. But I was most happily disappointed. He began the work of reform on the very day appointed, and began it well; and though he did not adhere to the letter of my prescription entirely, he did quite as much as I had dared, even in my most sanguine moments, to expect. And though his leg did not at first improve much, it was something to find that during the very hottest weather of the season it did not grow worse.

For three months he did not use, as he said, so much as fifty cents worth of pork, nor much salted food of any kind. He abandoned entirely all drinks but water, and all condiments with his food except a little salt. He subsisted almost wholly on bread, fruits, and vegetables, with a very little flesh or fish. [Pg 181]

At the end of three months he ventured abroad more than before; and as it was now near the middle of October, he consented to put on woollen stockings. But he made one change at this time which I had not intended. He returned to the use of one of his former greasy and worse than useless ointments. In the course of the month, however, in spite of the foul external application, his leg was entirely healed; and the swelling considerably abated. In short, at the close of the year he had entirely recovered.

The friends and neighbors attributed the cure to the ointment. How very unreasonable! The ointment had been used during the spring, up to the time when he came under my direction, without any apparent benefit. What evidence then was there that it had been useful now? Why should not the change for the better be attributed to his increased exercise, the change of air and food, and the stimulus and warmth of woollen stockings? Had water, moreover, as his only drink, nothing to do with the cure?

But while standing in the position I did, it was useless to decry the ointment or exalt my own treatment, since it would have been regarded as merely special pleading. Still, I did not shrink wholly from the statement of my honest convictions, whenever I was inquired of, even though I did not manifest a disposition to carry the war into Africa.

CHAPTER LI.

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SUDDEN CHANGES IN OLD AGE.

Mrs. N. was about seventy years of age. In her early years she had possessed a sort of masculine constitution; and though embarrassed by poverty, had reared a large family of children, who were all well settled in the world. She resided with the youngest but one of them, where she did just as she pleased. In short, she had a good home, and, had she enjoyed health, might have been happy.

But a change had come over her in point of health, which it was not so easy to account for at its outset as in its progress. For her first derelictions, at least, I know of no cause. But she had, at length, become reconciled to the use of tea, and as her spirits began to flag, she added to it strong coffee. From these she proceeded to the pipe.

The more she increased her extra stimulants, the more she added to her troubles, and the greater was her necessity for additional stimulus. Laudanum was very soon on her list; at first, it is true, in very small quantities. Yet, as she grew older, she found a necessity, as she verily believed, for increasing the size of her dose from year to year, till, at the age of seventy, I found her in the full and free use of tea, coffee, tobacco, and laudanum,—the latter to the enormous extent of half an ounce a day,—and yet her complaints were more numerous than ever.

She was a reasonable woman, and therefore I attempted to set forth, in their true colors, the realities of her condition. However, as I was not acting as her physician, but only as a friend, I had little hope of making any very permanent impressions. She knew the whole story as well as I or any one else could know it. The great difficulty under which she labored was a want of resolution to change her habits. Her irresolution was sustained by the belief—a very general one—that old people cannot make sudden changes in their physical habits with safety.^[G] But she was unhappy in the condition she then was. She had no peace with conscience, nor, as I might almost venture to say,—for she was a religious woman by profession,—with God.

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I assured her that the real danger of sudden changes, at her age, had been greatly overrated; though danger there certainly was, in greater or less degree. But I pointed out to her the means of obviating what danger there was, and urged her, as a Christian, to make up her mind to meet it. Of course, I did not presume to urge her to cast every thing aside, and return to Nature's path at once; but to drop first one thing and then another. I counselled her to be thorough and determined, as far as she went; and when she abandoned a thing to make no reserve, but to be sure of not going too fast and too far at once.

When I left her one day, after a somewhat protracted conversation, it was with many feelings of discouragement. I doubted very seriously whether, on the whole, she would move at all. The power of half an ounce of laudanum and a paper of tobacco daily, in paralyzing the human will, is very great. But she was one of those persons who cannot, or think they cannot, leave off a habit gradually, in the way I proposed. She must "go the whole figure," as it is said vulgarly, or do nothing at all.

Judge then, if you can, of my surprise, when about two months afterward I learned, from a source which was perfectly reliable, that the very next day after I saw her, she abandoned the whole herd of extra stimulants, both solid and liquid, and betook herself to water. Nor had it, so far as I could learn, at all injured her.

No sooner did I hear the news of her reformation, than I took my horse and made her a visit. There she was, nearly as well as ever she had been in her life, though perhaps a little paler and thinner. And oh, what rejoicing she had in her freedom! It would have done you good to see her. She had now no fears for the result. "True," she said, "I suffered for a few days, but the agony was soon over."

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One thing should be mentioned, since it doubtless added to the dangers, real and imaginary, of her condition and trial. It took place during the middle of a very cold winter—one of the coldest which we of the North ever experienced; scarcely, if at all, behind those of 1855-6 and 1856-7.

But all persons have not Mrs. N.'s faith, nor her deep-abiding religious principles. These, it is presumed, greatly aided her in the terrible conflict. No one ought to attempt such changes,

at least in life's decline, unless most fully convinced of their importance and necessity. Yet, *with* this conviction, and strong faith in addition, all becomes comparatively easy.

Mrs. N. died a few years after her reform; but she died a free woman, and not a slave to her appetite. Some few there were of her acquaintance who appeared to think that the sudden changes to which she had subjected herself several years before, hastened her dissolution. But I do not believe there was a particle of evidence to be found that such was the fact. Reader, remember Mrs. N., and if you are in the road of error, and not more than seventy years of age, go and do likewise. If you have not *lived* free, resolve at least to have the pleasure of dying so.

FOOTNOTES:

[G] This error has been met and refuted in the happiest manner, by the late lamented Dr. John C. Warren, of Boston, in his little work, entitled, "Hints for the Preservation of Health." Also, by Dr. Alcott's new work, "The Laws of Health."

CHAPTER LII.

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AN OPIUM EATER.

Almost at the next door from me was an opium eater. He, like the female whose case was described in the preceding chapter, was not far from three score and ten, and was of industrious and, in many respects, temperate habits. And yet he was one of the most inveterate and abandoned voluntary slaves to the drug opium I have ever seen. He had used it largely thirty years.

His case is the more singular from the fact that he became enslaved to it so very early. To use opium or laudanum at the present day, I grant is no uncommon occurrence. We may often find six, eight, or ten opium takers in a single township, if not a single village, or even a single neighborhood; and the number is rapidly increasing. Opium has not that offensive appearance to many that tobacco has, and a much larger amount of stimulus may be kept in a very small space, perhaps in the very corner of the smallest pocket.

Another circumstance which rendered the case of my opium-taking neighbor somewhat striking, was his usual good health. I say, here, *usual*, for there were exceptions which will appear presently. Yet though he was nearly threescore and ten, this man had, while under the influence of his accustomed stimulus, as much elasticity and nearly as much strength as most men of thirty.

How could this happen, you will naturally ask, if opium is such a deadly narcotic as some medical men proclaim it to be? How can a person, male or female, begin its use at forty and continue it to seventy years of age, and yet be, for the most part, strong and healthy?

In the first place, we must remember the force of habit. We have seen how it is with alcoholic drinks and tobacco. I might tell you how it is with arsenic, which is beginning to be taken, it is said, by men and horses, both in the old world and the new. I might even give you the story of Mithridates, king of Pontus, who is said to have so accustomed himself to hemlock,—the most deadly poison of his time,—that in any ordinary dose, it would not affect him injuriously, or, at least, would not do so immediately.

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We must remember, in the second place, the active, industrious habits of this patient—of which, however, I have already spoken. He who is always or almost always in the open air, is less likely to suffer from the use of extra stimulants, and the penalty when it *does* fall on his head, is much more likely to be deferred, than in the case of the sedentary and inactive. He was so hardy and withal so bold, that in the summer season he sometimes slept in the open air, under a tree.

But, thirdly, he was descended from a very long-lived race or family. His father died at the age of ninety-seven. At the time of his decease he had been the progenitor of nineteen children, one hundred and five grandchildren, one hundred and fifty-five great grandchildren, and four of the fifth generation,—a posterity amounting in all, to two hundred and eighty-three. And what is most marvellous, nearly all of them were at that very moment living. In truth, he had several sons and daughters already between the ages of sixty-five and eighty. There was one of the brotherhood, whom I had seen, nearly eighty, and yet as active and elastic as the opium eater of seventy.

One thing more: The latter, as we have seen, was a man of excellent habits in respect to nearly every thing but opium. He drank no ardent spirits, nor much coffee and tea; he used very little tobacco, and he ate in great moderation. He was an early riser and was in general cheerful. In short, but for his opium taking, he would have enjoyed a green old age.

I have said he was usually healthy. When he was out of opium and could not obtain any, I have seen him sit and writhe in the most intense apparent anguish till the arrival of the accustomed stimulus, when the transformation would be as sudden as it was striking. In fifteen minutes, instead of writhing and groaning and almost dying, he might be found talking, laughing, and telling stories most merrily, to the infinite amusement of all around him.

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But he had troubles more abiding than this; at least, occasionally. After taking his opium for a long time, such a degree of costiveness would sometimes supervene, as seemed almost to defy the combined powers of both nature and art. In these circumstances, of course, the aid of the physician was usually invoked. It was on one of these occasions that I first became fully acquainted with his habits and tendencies.

Once, when thus called to his bedside, I began to think he was not very far from the end of his career. The wheels of life seemed so completely obstructed, that I doubted whether they would ever start again. He himself declared, most positively and I doubt not in sincerity that he must die. But he lived on many years longer. He died at about seventy-five years of age—more than twenty years younger than his venerable and more temperate father.

From this distinguished opium eater, and from his family, I learned two things: First, that Solomon was right when he spoke of the certainty of punishment, even though long deferred. Secondly, the certainty of the visitation, so to call it, of human transgression upon subsequent generations no less than on the individual transgressor. The fourth generation from the patriarch of ninety-seven was puny and feeble—exceedingly so; the fifth and sixth not only puny and feeble, but absolutely sickly, not to say dwarfish.

Did I say I learned these important truths from this source? Not at all. I mean only, that I received from it a new confirmation of what I had fully believed long before, and concerning which, till compelled, most men—even some thinking men—appear to me not a little sceptical. They seem to think it reflects dishonor on our Maker. How this is, we shall perhaps see more fully in another place. Let it suffice, for the present, to say that the fact itself is fully established, whatever may be the deductions or its consequences.

CHAPTER LIII.

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COFFEE, AND THE LAME KNEE.

Mr. W. was a distinguished minister of the gospel, and teacher of females. He could not at this time have been much less than seventy years of age. He was originally a man of iron constitution and of great mental activity.

Of late it had been observed by some of the members of his family, that his mind had seasons of great inactivity, and it was even suspected he had, either in his sleep or at some other time, suffered from a slight attack of paralysis. His face seemed a little distorted, and one of the angles of his mouth a little depressed. There appeared to be a slight change even of his speech. It was recollected, too, that he inherited a tendency of this kind.

Along with other difficulties was a lame knee. This he called rheumatism; but was it so? People are very fond of having a name for every thing; and yet names very often mislead. Prof. Ives, of the Medical College in Connecticut, was wont to say to his students, "Diseases, young gentlemen, are not creatures to whom we can give particular names, or assign particular marks of distinction. They are merely *modes of action*." My friend's over solicitude for a name to his complaint was therefore no new thing.

I explained the matter as well as I could, very cautiously. I told him it was of little consequence about the name of his disease, provided we could ascertain the cause and remove it. "However," I said, "we will conclude to call it rheumatism." For though possessed of a good natural constitution, and, in general, of comparatively temperate habits, he had nevertheless set at defiance some of nature's laws, and was suffering under a just penalty.

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One member of his family, a favorite son, was suspicious of coffee. He himself had abandoned it long before, and had thus placed himself in a position to observe its effects on others. His father used it very strong, he said; and had used it in this way for a long time. He even ventured, at length, to express his fears to his father.

"Nonsense, my son," said the father; "do you think coffee is powerful enough to give a man a lame knee? Why, the whole world—I mean the whole civilized world—use it; and do they all have stiff knees?"

"Perhaps not," said the son; "but almost every coffee-drinker has, sooner or later, some ailment about him, that may very possibly have its origin in this source. Our troubles, as you yourself are accustomed to say, do not spring out of the ground. Coffee, as the best authorities tell us, is a slow poison; and if it is so, its effects must, at some time, be manifested."

"Ay, a very slow poison this coffee must be, my son," said the half-indignant father; "for I have used it pretty freely forty years, and am not dead yet. But to be serious for a moment, Henry, do you really believe that such a small transgression as this, even if it could be proved to be a transgression at all, would be the cause of so much suffering?"

"You admit, then, that your troubles may possibly be the result of transgression, and that they did not spring out of the ground."

"Oh yes, I suppose it must be so; but there is such a strange disproportion between the transgression and the penalty, in the case you mention, that I cannot for one moment believe any thing about it. Why, what rational man in the world will believe that a little coffee, once a day, will entail upon a person severe rheumatism?"

"To what larger transgression, my dear father, will you be more ready to refer it? You do not use tobacco, or rum, or opium; and I am happy in being able to say that you never did. You are no tea-drinker. You are no worshipper of the apothecary's shop. You have not, so far as I know, strained your knee, by over exertion, either in labor or amusement. Yet, here you are a sufferer; and you have suffered for months. Now, how do you account for it?" [Pg 190]

"There is no possibility of accounting for it, my son, and why should we talk about it? If any thing can be done to cure it, I am sure I shall be glad; but though I admit that the complaint may have had a cause—and indeed *must* have had—I do not think we shall ever be able to trace it out."

The son still adhered to the opinion that the coffee was the cause of the father's sufferings; and there was reason for believing that the father was more than half convinced of it himself; only that he was too proud to confess it. He concluded by asking his father if he would like to consult me on the subject—to which he cheerfully consented.

On a careful investigation of the case, I came to a full conclusion that the son was right in his conjectures; that the coffee was the principal source of his troubles; and that troubles still more serious might befall him unless he abandoned it; and accordingly I told him so.

It was a severe trial. He was, in truth, a most inveterate coffee-drinker; and the greater his slavery to it had become, the greater his reluctance to believe it produced, on him, any injurious effects. He consented, at length, to leave off its use for two months, and see if it made any difference with him. Being, however, about half a convert to hydropathy, as was also his son, it was concluded, with my permission, to apply the cold *douche* every day to his knee, by way of an adjunct to the abstinence plan. No change was made in his diet; as, in fact, very little was needed after the coffee had been removed. "But one thing is needful," at the same meal, had long been his motto; and he was never excessive in the use of even that.

The coffee was laid aside, and resolution was put to the test. He suffered in his feelings for want of his accustomed stimulus during the first month; but during the second, very little. In about five weeks after I saw and had prescribed for him, I met him one day, by accident, and inquired about his lameness. "Very much better," said he, smiling; "but no thanks to you for it. It is the *douche* which is curing me." I replied that I was not very solicitous to know the cause, provided he was cured. [Pg 191]

On a more particular inquiry I found that his lameness had nearly disappeared already; and what is more remarkable still, it never returned. As long as he lived he could walk up and down stairs nearly as well as I. He continued to be a water-drinker about ten years, when he died, as he had lived, rejoicing in his emancipation from slavery to coffee. He believed, most fully, in its evil effects and tendencies, and did not hesitate, for many years before he died, to acknowledge that belief. Neither his son nor myself had firmer faith in the connection of law with penalty, in these matters, than he. And his only regret, in this particular, seemed to be that he had suffered himself to remain, almost all his lifetime, in what he now regarded as utter ignorance. And yet, compared with most men of his day, he was quite enlightened.

The case of Mr. W. was a pretty apt illustration of the truth of what I regard as the great or cardinal doctrine of temperance, faintly announced in Chapters XVIII., XXI., XXVIII., and elsewhere, viz., that, as a general rule, much more mischief is done to society at large by the frequent or at least habitual use of small quantities of poison, than by an equal aggregate quantity in much larger doses. I mean just this: The poisonous effects of Mr. W.'s coffee, though the amount daily taken was trifling, produced a greater aggregate of mischief, in the end, than if the same amount of poison had been applied in a very short time. A pint of rum drunk in a single day will do much less mischief to the human constitution, than if divided into twenty *small* doses and two of them are taken every day for ten days. In the first case

the effect will be severe, but temporary; in the second, it will seem to be trifling, but there will be an accumulation of ill effects, a heaping up, as it were, of combustible matter in the system, till by and by when an igniting spark comes to be applied to the pile, lo! we have an explosion.

Some of the hydropathists who knew the facts concerning Mr. W.,—for the case did not occur in a corner,—tried to make it appear, perhaps in all honesty, that he was cured by the cold *douche*. Now I have no disposition to deny, wholly, its good effects. I have given you the facts just as they were. Yet I have not a doubt that had he returned to his coffee, the same troubles or others of equal magnitude would have fallen to his lot again, despite the influences of the *douche*. In truth, I know of no sensible hydropathist who, in such a case, would rely upon the *douche* alone; which is to concede, practically, all that I desire to claim.

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CHAPTER LIV.

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THE OPIUM PILL BOX.

The statements of the following chapter will include a confession of one of the principal faults of my life,—a fault, moreover, which, as a physician, I ought to have guarded against with the most assiduous and unwearied care. For no man more than the medical man, is bound to let his light shine—especially in the matter of general temperance, in such a manner that others may be benefited by it.

When, in the beginning of my medical career, I attempted to establish a temperance society, though I was exceedingly free from the charge of using distilled liquors, according to the tenor and spirit of the pledge, yet exposed, as I was, to colds, and delicate in constitution, and above all, particularly liable, in the daily routine of business, to temptation, I was yet one of those who lay aside one stimulus and retain or resort to another. I did not, indeed, use my substitute with much freedom, at first. The example daily before me, which was alluded to in Chapter LII, was sufficient, one would think, to deter me from excess; and so it proved. All I did for some time, whenever I had been peculiarly exposed and feared I had taken cold, was to go and swallow a small pill—say about a grain—of opium.

But as usually happens in such cases, though the pill seemed to remove all tendency to cold, or in other words to cure me for the time, the necessity for recurring to it became more and more frequent and imperious, till I was, at length, a confirmed opium taker. And yet—strange to say it—all the while I regarded myself as a rigid temperance man; nay, I was a violent opposer of the use even of opium as a daily stimulus, in the case of everybody but myself. My apology was—and here was the ground of self-deception—that I only used it as a medicine, or rather as a medical means of prevention.

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It is, however, quite obvious to my own apprehension now, that a substance is hardly entitled to the name of medicine, in any ordinary sense of the term, which is used nearly or quite every day. Yet to this stage of opium taking I soon arrived. Nay, I went even much farther than this, and was, at length, pretty well established in the wretched habit of using this poisonous drug three times a day.

In the summer of 1830, while under the full habitual influence of opium, I had a slight attack of dysentery. It even went so far as to derange all my habits, and to break in, among the rest, upon my opium taking. Opium or laudanum was, indeed, included in the prescription of my physician,—for I did not wholly rely on my own judgment in the case,—but as a habitual daily stimulus, at certain fixed hours, it was, of course, omitted. As I began

to recover, however, my old desire for the opium pill began to recur, at the accustomed former hours, and with all its wonted imperiousness.

In a moment of reflection, reason resumed her throne, and the inquiry came up, whether I should ever again wear the chain which had been temporarily loosened. After a short debate, it was decided in the negative. But a second question soon came up, whether I could keep my resolution. This was a matter of serious inquiry, and it caused a somewhat lengthy mental discussion.

During the discussion a new thought struck me. It was a child's thought, perhaps; and yet it was interesting, and not to be despised for its simplicity and childishness. It was that I would take my opium, what I had in the house, and after carefully enclosing it in my pill box, would make use of the box as a nucleus for the twine I was daily using. "When I am inclined to break my resolution," thought I, "nothing shall be done till I have unwound the ball of twine. I shall thus gain a little time for reflection; and perhaps before I come to the opium, I may permit reason to return and to mount the throne. The trial shall, at all events, be made."

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My resolution was carried into effect, and steadily adhered to. The opium was fairly entombed in the twine, where, for aught I know, it still remains. Most certainly I never saw it more; nor have I ever tasted any of the opium or laudanum family, from that day to the present, whether in sickness or in health.

CHAPTER LV.

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BLEEDING AT THE LUNGS.

Having occasion to go to the metropolis, one day, I took the most expeditious public conveyance which the times and the season afforded. It was January, 1832. Railroad cars were not so much in vogue that I could step into one of them, and, unless in case of accident, be there in four or five hours, as I now could. It required something like twenty-four hours to perform the journey I proposed, especially in the winter.

We started at three o'clock in the morning. It had recently snowed, the snow was deep, and the path was not well broken. Of course it was not daylight when we set out, and as it was cloudy, it proved, as is not unfrequent in such cases, to be the darkest time in the whole twenty-four hours. However, we did as well as we could—driver, horses, passengers, and all.

Our company consisted of seven males and two females. The coach was small, and we filled it to the brim. The weather was by no means very cold for the season; at least, it was not extreme. There was a sound of rain,—the January thaw, perhaps, as we are wont to call it,—but as yet, fortunately for us, the storm had not begun.

We had proceeded about ten miles, and the day had not yet dawned, when, in passing around the point of a hill and winding our way among the deep drifts, our driver and his charge missed the path, and we were precipitated down a steep bank. The horses stopped immediately. Every effort was made to rescue us from the stage-coach, which was lying on its side, deeply embedded in the snow. I was so situated at the first moment after the overturn, that most of the affrighted passengers made use of me as a stepping-stone in their endeavors to reach the door above, which was either opened or broken. At last we were all fairly outside of the coach; no one appeared to be seriously injured.

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As we were at a considerable distance from any dwelling-house, and as the stage-coach was somewhat broken, and the harnesses torn, it required a full hour to put things to rights, so as to enable us to proceed. Meanwhile, though the weather was not very cold, it was quite chilly. Some of the passengers stood still or sat still; others walked about. The day had broken when we renewed our journey.

The sleighing here was better than at the place where we started. At the next stage-office we exchanged our coach for a huge sleigh, which was not only more commodious than the coach, but more easily drawn over the ground, especially for a short time.

About noon it began to rain. Soon the travelling became worse again, and our progress was slow and tedious. To me, the tediousness of the journey was increased by a lame shoulder—the effect either of the overturn, or of being used as a stair when the passengers made their sudden exit, or of both. No bones were broken, nor joints dislocated; though there were several considerable bruises.

Our other troubles were not yet over. In the midst of a violent rain, and at a considerable distance from any public house, our sleigh broke down, and we were obliged to send for a wagon. In making the exchange, moreover, we were more or less exposed to the storm. I for one became considerably wet, and did not get perfectly dry till we reached the metropolis.

We arrived at evening at a large thoroughfare, forty miles or more from our point of destination, when, after procuring a comfortable supper and a good sleigh, with a new relay of horses, we set out to perform the remainder of our journey. This was fortunate and very expeditious. We reached our place of destination just before midnight, having travelled the last forty-two miles in little more than four hours. This was almost equal to railroad speed; but it was good sleighing, and we had with us, in the sleigh, the United States mail, which imposed on the driver a necessity of being as expeditious as the nature of the case would admit. For even then, we had been twenty-one hours in making our passage. [Pg 198]

I soon discovered that I had taken a severe cold during the journey; nor do I believe my opium itself would have saved me. My only medicine was a warm bed, into which I threw myself as soon as possible. In the morning I repaired as early as I could to a boarding-house, in which a friend to whom I had previously written, had made ready a place for me.

I was at first quite ill; but in the hope that a few days of rest would restore me, I was not particularly anxious about myself, though some of my friends were so. Several individuals called to inquire after my health—nearly every one of whom pressed me to take medicine.

The second day after my arrival I began to expectorate a little blood. Those who were familiarly acquainted with my consumptive tendencies became greatly alarmed. They thought me not only presumptuous, because I took nothing, but absolutely and carelessly ungrateful. And as I refused to dose myself, they pressed me to send for a physician.

Yielding, at length, to their importunity, they called one of the oldest and best physicians in the metropolis. He was an eccentric man, but he had the full confidence of the better sort of people, and richly deserved it; and I knew I should not be advised by him hastily. He was acquainted with my peculiar views, at least in part. Besides, I should not be obliged to follow his counsel implicitly. I should still be my own physician. My disease had not, at least thus far, impaired my intellect or taken out of my hands my free agency.

The doctor remained with me half an hour or so, during which time I made him acquainted, as perfectly as I could, with my whole case. My good friends, many of them, sat around waiting almost with impatience, to hear him bid them or me to do some great thing—for great men though some of them were, they were not great in matters pertaining to health and disease. They were born, several of them, in the eighteenth century. [Pg 199]

At length the time for prescription and departure had arrived, and my good brother and father of the lancet rose very deliberately, and said with great gravity, "You will be obliged to stay in your room a few days, and keep both your body and mind as quiet as possible. For the most part, it will be well to maintain a recumbent position. For food, use a little water gruel. In following this course, I think you will very soon find yourself convalescent." Then, with a sort of stiff bow, that every one who knew him could pardon in so excellent a man, he said, "Good-morning, sir,—Good-morning, gentlemen;" and was making the best of his way to the door of the chamber. "Will it not be needful for you to call again?" I said to him. "I shall be most happy to call," said he, "should it be necessary; but I doubt very much whether my advice will be any farther required."

My friends were very much astonished that he did not prescribe active medicine. "What can it mean?" they asked again and again. For myself, too, I must confess that I was not a little disappointed. Not that I had any considerable attachment to pills and pill boxes,—such a confidence had gone by long before, as you know,—but I verily thought my particular tendencies to pulmonary consumption demanded a little tincture of digitalis, or something in the shape of strong medicine.

But the physician knew my theories, better than he knew the power of that habit whose chains, in this respect, he had long ago escaped. For I learned afterwards, much better than I then knew, that so feeble was his faith in medicine, at least in all ordinary cases, that whenever the intelligence of his patients would at all warrant it, he prescribed, as he had for me, just nothing at all, but left every thing to be done by Nature and good common-sense attendants. This was, in fact, just what he attempted to do here. He doubtless supposed my friends were nearly as well informed in the matter as I was; and that I was as fully emancipated in practice as I was in theory.

"How much drugging and dosing might be saved," I said to myself, when I came to reflect properly on the subject, "if mankind were duly trained to place a proper reliance on Nature and Nature's laws, instead of fastening all their faith on the mere exhibition of some mystic powder or pill or tincture—or, at best, a few drops of some irritant or poison. It is their ignorance that makes their physicians' and apothecaries' bills so heavy, and the grave-digger's calling so good and so certain." [Pg 200]

It is hardly necessary for me to say that I followed the advice which had been so wisely given, and which, after all, was but the echo of my own judgment, when that judgment was freely exercised. My friends were not satisfied at first; but when they saw that I was slowly recovering, they submitted with as good a grace as they could. The fact was that they had no court of appeal. They had selected a man who was at the head of his profession, and whose voice, in the medical world, and as a medical man, wherever he was known, was law. Had some young man given such "old woman's" advice, as they would most certainly have regarded it, they would have appealed to a higher court.

No man ever did better, when placed in similar circumstances, with the aid of medicine, than I did without it. In two weeks, at farthest, I was as well as I had been at any time in ten years or even twenty. What more or greater could I have asked? What more could my friends have expected? What more could have been possible? Could Hippocrates or Galen have done more?

CHAPTER LVI.

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BUTTER EATERS.

About the year 1833, I became somewhat intimately acquainted with the dietetic and general physical habits of a young woman in a family where I was a boarder, whose case will be instructive.

She was about twenty-five years of age, and resided in a family that had adopted her as their own, her parents being unknown. She possessed a good natural constitution; and was, for the most part, of good habits. If there was any considerable defect of constitution, it consisted in a predominance of the biliary and lymphatic over the nervous and sanguine temperaments. Yet she was not wholly wanting in that susceptibility, not to say activity, which the sanguine temperament is wont to impart. But the same necessity which is so often the mother of invention, is also sometimes the progenitor of a good share of activity; and this was, in a remarkable degree, the lot of Miss Powell.

Although her skin was not by any means fair, it was not a bad skin. It was firm in its structure, and very little susceptible of those slight but ever recurring diseased conditions in which persons of a sanguine temperament so often find themselves involved. Such I mean to say was her natural physical condition, when uninfluenced by any considerable practical errors.

And yet I had not been many months one of her more intimate acquaintances, ere her face—hitherto so smooth and transparent—became as rough and congested as any drunkard's face ever was, only the eruption was more minute. It was what the common opinion of that region would have called a rash. It came on suddenly, was visible for a short time, and then gradually disappeared, leaving, in some instances, a branny substance, consisting of a desquamation of the cuticle. [Pg 202]

When the eruption had once fairly disappeared, her skin was as smooth as ever. Then again, however, in a little time, its roughness would return, to an extent which, to young ladies, is usually quite annoying. Young men, in general, are not so much disturbed by a little roughness of the skin, as the young of the other sex.

My particular acquaintance with her habits and annoyances continued as many as four or five years. During this period there were several ebbings and flowings of this tide of eruptive disease. My curiosity, towards the end of this period, was so much excited that I sought and obtained of her an opportunity for conversation on the subject. The result was as curious as it was, to me, unexpected. It appeared, in the sequel, that she understood, perfectly well, the whole matter, and held the control of her cutaneous system in her own hands, nearly as much as if she had been a mere piece of mechanism. She had not sought for medical advice, because she knew the true method of cure for her complaints as well as anybody could have told her.

In truth, she cured it about once a year, simply by omitting the cause which produced it. This she had found out was butter, salted butter, of course, eaten with her meals. She had somehow discovered that this article of food was the real cause of her disease, and that entire abstemiousness in this particular, would, in a reasonable time, remove it.

I inquired why, after a long period of abstinence from butter, she ever returned to its use. Her reply was that she was too fond of it to omit it entirely and forever. She preferred to use it till the eruption began to be quite troublesome, which was sometimes many weeks; then abstain from it till she recovered, and then return to it. This gave her an opportunity to use it from one-third to one-half of the time; and this she thought greatly preferable to entire abstinence.

At this time I did not press her to abandon wholly an article of food, which, though partially rejected, was yet slowly producing derangement of her digestive system, and might, in time, result in internal disease, which would be serious and irremediable. I did not do it; first, because I knew my advice would not be very acceptable; secondly, for want of that full [Pg 203]

measure of gospel benevolence which leads us to try to do good, even in places where we have no right to expect it will be received; and, lastly, no doubt for want of moral courage.

Were I to live my life over again, particularly my medical life, I would pray and labor for a little more of what I am accustomed to call holy boldness. By this term I do not mean *meddlesomeness*,—for this is by no means to be commended,—but true Christian or apostolic boldness.

Of late years the young woman above referred to has been in circumstances which, I have reason to believe, practically precluded the use of the offending article. I meet her occasionally, but always with a smooth face, which greatly confirms my prepossessions.^[H] Happy would it be for a multitude of our race if their circumstances were such as to exclude this and many other articles of food and drink which are well known to injure them.

One instance occurred in the very neighborhood of the foregoing, which, though I received it at second hand, is not a little striking, and is wholly reliable. A certain young mother—the wife of a merchant in easy circumstances, was so excessively fond of butter, that, though she was a dyspeptic, and knew it increased her dyspepsia, she used to eat it in a manner the most objectionable which could possibly have been devised.

For example: she would take a ball of this article,—say half or three-quarters of a pound,—pierce it with the point of a firm stick, and having heated it, on all sides, over the fire, till the whole surface was softened, would then plunge it into a vessel of flour, in such a manner that the latter would adhere to it on all sides, till a great deal was absorbed by the butter. Having done this, she would again heat the surface of the ball and again dip or roll it in the flour. This alternate melting the surface of the ball and rolling it in flour, was continued till the whole became a mass of heated or scorched flour, entirely full of the melted butter, and as completely indigestible as it possibly could be, when she would leisurely sit down at a table and eat the whole of it.

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Did it make her sick?—you will ask. It did, indeed, and she expected it would. She would go immediately to bed, as soon as the huge bolus was swallowed, and lie there a day or two, perhaps two or three days. Occasionally such a surfeit cost her the confinement of a whole week.

It is truly surprising that any Christian woman should thus make a beast of herself, for the sake of the momentary indulgence of the appetite; but so it is. I have met with a few such. Happily, however, conduct so low and bestial is not so frequent among females as males, though quite too frequent among the former so long as a single case is found, which could be prevented by reasoning or even by authority.

There is one thing concerning butter which deserves notice, and which it may not be amiss to mention in this place. What we call butter, in this country,—what is used, I mean, at our tables,—is properly pickled or salted butter. Now, I suppose it is pretty well understood, that in some of the countries of Europe no such thing as salted or pickled butter is used or known. They make use of milk, cream, and a little fresh butter; but that is all. In the kingdom of Brazil, among the native population, at least, no such thing as butter, in any shape, has ever yet been known.

Fresh butter is sufficiently difficult of digestion; but salted butter is much more so; and this is the main point to which I wish to call your attention. Why, what is our object in salting down butter? Is it not to prevent change? Would it not otherwise soon become acid and disagreeable? And does not salting it so harden or toughen it, or, as it were, fix it, that it will resist the natural tendency to decomposition or putrefaction?

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But will not this same "fixation," so to call it, prepare it to resist changes within the stomach as well as outside of it; or, in other words, prevent, in a measure, the work of digestion?

Most unquestionably it will. And herein is the stronghold of objection to this article. Hence, too, the reason why it causes eruptions on the skin. The irritation begins on the lining membrane of the stomach. The latter is first coated with eruption; and, after a time, by what is called sympathy, the same tendency is manifested in the face.

These things ought to be well understood. There is great ignorance on this subject, and what is known is generally the *ipse dixit* of somebody. Reasons there are none for using salted butter. Or, if any, they are few, and frequently very flimsy and weak. Let us have hygiene taught us, were it only that we may know for ourselves the right and wrong of these matters.

FOOTNOTES:

- [H] Since this was penned, the young woman has died of erysipelas. Can it be that she has been compelled, in this form, to pay a fearful penalty for her former abuses? One might think that twenty years of reformation would have worn out the diseased tendencies. Perhaps she recurred, in later years, unknown to the writer, to her former favorite article.

CHAPTER LVII.

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HOT HOUSES AND CONSUMPTION.

If any individual in the wide world needs to breathe the pure atmospheric mixture of the Most High,—I mean a compound of gases, consisting, essentially, of about twenty parts of oxygen and eighty of nitrogen,—it is the consumptive person. Mr. Thackrah, a foreign writer on health, says, "That though we are eating animals, we are breathing animals much more; for we subsist more on air than we do on food and drink."

And yet I know of no class of people, who, as a class, breathe other mixtures, and all sorts of impurities, more than our consumptive people. First, their employments are very apt to be sedentary. Under the impression that their constitutions are not equal to the servitude of out-of-door work, agricultural or mechanical, they are employed, more generally, within doors. They are very often students; for they usually have active, not to say brilliant minds. And persons who stay in the house, whether for the sake of study or anything else, are exceedingly apt to breathe more or less of impure air.

Secondly, it is thought by many that since consumptive people are feeble, they ought to be kept very warm. Now I have no disposition to defend the custom of going permanently chilly, in the case of any individual, however strong and healthy he may be; for it is most certainly, in the end, greatly debilitating. It would be worse than idle—it would be wicked—for consumptive people to go about shivering, day after day, since it would most rapidly and unequivocally accelerate their destruction.

And yet, every degree of atmospheric heat, whether it is applied to the internal surface of the lungs through the medium of atmospheric air, or externally to the skin, is quite as injurious as habitual cold; and this in two ways: First, it weakens the internal power to generate heat, which, no doubt, resides very largely in the lungs. Secondly, it takes from them a part of that oxygen or vital air which they would otherwise inhale, and gives them in return a proportional quantity of carbonic acid gas, which, except in the very small

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proportion in which the Author of nature has commingled it with the oxygen and nitrogen of the atmosphere, is, to every individual, in effect, a rank poison.

Hence it is that those who have feeble lungs, or whose ancestors had, should pay much attention to the quality of the air they breathe, especially its temperature. And this they should do, not only for the *sake* of its temperature, but also for the sake of its purity. Such a caution is always needful; but its necessity is increased in proportion to the feebleness of the lungs and their tendency to suppuration, bleeding, etc.

I was once called to see a young woman (in the absence of her regular physician) who was bleeding at the lungs. She had bled occasionally before, and was under the general care of two physicians; but a sudden and more severe hemorrhage than usual had alarmed her friends, and, *in the absence of better counsel*, they sought, temporarily, the advice of a stranger.

It was a cold, spring day, and in order to keep up a proper temperature in her room, I had no doubt that a little fire was needful. But instead of a heat of 65° in the morning and something more in the afternoon, I found her sitting in a temperature, at ten o'clock in the forenoon, of not less than 75° or 80°. On inquiry, I was surprised to find that the temperature of her room was seldom much lower than this, and that sometimes it was much higher. I was still more surprised when I ascertained that she slept at night in a small room adjoining her sitting-room, and that a fire was kept all night in the latter, for her special benefit.

No wonder her cough was habitually severe! No wonder she was subject to hemorrhage, from the irritated vessels of the lungs! The wonder was that she was not worse. The greatest wonder of all was, however, that two sensible physicians should, for weeks if not for months, have overlooked this circumstance. For I could not learn, on inquiry, that a single word had been said by either of them on the subject. [Pg 208]

If you should be inclined to ask whether she had no exercise in the more open and pure air, either on horseback or in a carriage, the reply would be, none at all. Horseback exercise was even regarded as hazardous, and other forms of exertion had not been urged, or, that I could learn, so much as recommended.

I was anxious to meet her physicians, that I might communicate my views and feelings directly to them; but as this was not convenient I gave such directions as the nature of the case seemed to require, requesting them to follow my advice till the arrival of her physicians, and then to lay the whole case before them. My advice was, to reduce the temperature of the sitting-room as low as possible, and yet not produce a sensation of chilliness, and to have her sleeping-room absolutely cold, taking care to protect her body, however, by proper covering. I also recommended exercise in the open air, such as she could best endure; and withal, a plain, unstimulating diet.

What was done, I never knew for many months. At last, however, I met with a neighbor of the family, one day, who told me that the young woman's physicians entirely approved of my suggestions, and that by following them out for some time, she partially recovered her wonted measure of health.

Whether she recovered entirely, I never knew. The far greater probability is, that she remained more comfortable through the summer and autumn, but that the injudicious management of the next winter and spring reduced her to her former condition, or to a condition much worse. People are exceedingly forgetful even of their dearest rights and interests. They may, perhaps, exert themselves in the moment of great and pressing danger; but as soon as the danger appears to be somewhat over they relapse into their former stupidity.

There is, however, much reason for believing that consumptive people might often live on many years beyond their present scanty limit, could they be made to feel that their recovery depends, almost wholly, on a strict obedience to the laws of health, and not on taking medicine. If Miss H., by strict obedience, could recover from a dangerous condition, and enjoy six or eight months of tolerable health, is it not highly probable, to say the least, that a rigid pursuance of the same course would have kept her from a relapse into her former low and dangerous condition?

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It is in this way, as I suppose, that consumption is to be cured, if cured at all. It is to be *postponed*. In some cases it can be postponed one year; in some, five years; in some, ten, fifteen, or twenty; in a few, forty or fifty. It is in this respect with consumption, however, as it is with other diseases. In a strictly pathological sense, no disease is ever entirely cured. In one way or another its effects are apt to be permanent. The only important difference, in this particular, between consumption and other diseases, is, that since the lungs are vital organs, more essential to life and health than some other organs or parts, the injury inflicted on them is apt to be deeper, and more likely to shorten, with certainty, the whole period of our existence.

Connected with this subject, viz., the treatment of consumption, there is probably much more of quackery than in any other department of disease which could possibly be mentioned. One individual who makes pretensions to cure, in this formidable disease, and who has written and spoken very largely on the subject, heralds his own practice with the following proclamation: "Five thousand persons cured of consumption in one year, by following the directions of this work." Another declares he has cured some sixty or seventy out of about one hundred and twenty patients of this description, for whom he has been called to prescribe.

Now, if by curing this disease is meant the production of such changes in the system, that it is no more likely to recur than to attack any other person who has not yet been afflicted with it, then such statements or insinuations as the foregoing are not merely groundless, but absolutely and unqualifiedly false, and their authors ought to know it. For I have had ample opportunity of watching their practice, and following it up to the end, and hence speak what I know, and testify what I have seen. But if they only mean by cure, the *postponement* of disease for a period of greater or less duration, then the case is altered; though, in that case, what becomes of their skill? No book worthy of the name can be consulted by a consumptive person without his deriving from it many valuable hints, which if duly attended to may assist him in greatly prolonging his days; and the same may be said of the prescriptions of the physician. Yet, I repeat, it is a misnomer, in either case, to call the improvement a cure.

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Consumptive people continue to live, whenever their lives are prolonged, as the consequence of what they do to promote their general health. One is roused to a little exercise, which somewhat improves his condition, and prolongs his days. Another is induced to pay an increased regard to temperature, and he lives on. Another abandons all medicine, and throws himself into the open arms of Nature, and thus prolongs, for a few months or a few years, his existence. If this is *cure*, then we may have all or nearly all of our consumptives cured, some of them a great many times over. Some few aged practitioners may be found to have cured, during the long years of their medical practice, more than five thousand persons of this description.

There is no higher or larger sense than this in which any individual has cured five thousand, or five hundred, or even fifty persons a year, of consumption. On this, a misguided, misinformed public may reply: Many, indeed, revive a little, as the lamp sometimes brightens up in its last moments; but this very revival or flickering only betokens a more speedy and certain dissolution.

On the other hand, predisposition to consumption no more renders it necessary that we should die of this disease in early life, at an average longevity of less than thirty years, than the loading and priming of a musket or piece of artillery renders it necessary that there should be an immediate or early explosion. Without an igniting spark there will be no discharge in a thousand years. In like manner, a person may be "loaded and primed" for consumption fifty years, if not even a hundred, without the least necessity of "going off," provided that the igniting spark can be kept away. Our power to protect life, both in the case of consumption and many more diseases, is in proportion to our power to withhold the igniting spark. [Pg 211]

And herein it is that medical skill is needful in this dreadful disease, and ought to be frequently and largely invoked. If the estimate which has been made by Prof. Hooker, of Yale College, that one in five of the population of the northern United States die of consumption, is correct, then not less than two millions of the present inhabitants of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, are destined, as things now are, to die of this disease. What a thought! Can it be so?

Can it be that two millions of the ten millions now on the stage of action in the northern United States, are not only *predisposed* to droop and die, but are laid under a constitutional necessity of so doing? Must the igniting spark be applied? Must the disease be "touched off" with hot or impure air, by hard colds, by excitements of body and mind, and in a thousand and one other ways? People are not wholly ignorant on this great subject. Would they but *do* as well as they *know*, the fatal igniting spark would be much oftener and longer withheld; and, indeed, in many instances, would never prove the immediate cause of dissolution. The lamp of life would burn on—*sometimes, it may be, rather feebly*—till its oil was wholly exhausted, as it always ought. Man has no more occasion, as a matter of necessity, to die of consumption, than the lamp or the candle.

This, if true,—and is it not?—should be most welcome intelligence in a country where, at some seasons and in particular localities, one-fourth of all who die, perish of this disease. In March, 1856, twenty-one persons out of eighty who died in Boston in a single week, were reported as having died of consumption; and in June of the same year, the proportion was nearly as great. In Newton, a few miles from Boston, the proportion for the last ten years has been also about one in four. [Pg 212]

But place the proportion for the whole northern United States, at one in five only, or even one in six. Yet even at this rate, the annual mortality for New York or New England, must be about twelve or fourteen thousand. Yet it seems to excite little if any surprise. But when or where has the cholera, the yellow fever, or the plague depopulated a country of three millions of people, for each succeeding year, at the rate of twelve thousand annually, or one hundred and twenty thousand every ten years?

One reason why the statements I have made, of the possible postponement of consumptive disease, should be most welcome intelligence, is found in the fact that they inspire with the hope of *living*. The ordinary expectation that those who inherit a consumptive tendency must die prematurely, has been fatal to thousands. Mankind, in more respects than one, tend to become what they are taken to be. If we take them to be early destined to the tomb, they go there almost inevitably. There is, I grant, one most fortunate drawback upon this tendency. Most people who have the truly consumptive character, are disposed to disbelieve it. They are generally "buoyant and hopeful," which, in some degree, neutralizes the effect of sombre faces, and grave and prognosticating jeremiades.

It will not be out of place to present the patient reader with an anecdote, which may or may not be true, but which I received as truth from the people of the neighborhood where the facts which it discloses are said to have occurred.

In the eastern part of Connecticut, not many years since, a young man lay on his bed, very feeble and greatly emaciated, almost gone, as everybody supposed but himself, with pulmonary consumption. And yet, up to that very hour, the thought that his disease was consumption, had never obtained a lodgment in his own mind for a moment. On the contrary, he was still fondly hoping that sooner or later he should recover.

It was fortunately about the middle of the forenoon one day,—an hour when his body and mind were in the best condition to endure it,—that his listening ear first caught from those around him the word *consumption*. Starting up, he said, "Do you think my disease is consumption?" They frankly told him their fears. "And do you think," he added, "that I must die?" They did not conceal longer their real sentiments. [Pg 213]

He was for a few moments greatly distressed, and seemed almost overpowered. At length, however, a reaction came, when, raising his head a little, he deliberately but firmly exclaimed, "I can't die, and I won't die." After a few moments' pause and reflection, he said, "I must be got up." His attendants protested against the effort, but it was to no purpose. Nothing would satisfy him but the attempt. He was bolstered up in his bed, but the effort brought on a severe fit of coughing, and he was obliged to lie down again.

The next forenoon, at about the same hour, he renewed the request to be got up. The result was nearly as before. The process, however, was repeated from day to day, till at length, to the great joy and surprise of his friends, he could sit in his bed fifteen or twenty minutes. It is true that it always slightly increased the severity of his cough; but the paroxysm was no worse at the twentieth trial than at the first, while he evidently gained, during the effort, a little muscular strength. It was not many weeks before he could sit up in bed for an hour or more, with a good degree of comfort.

"Now," said he, "I must be taken out of bed and placed in a chair." At first his friends remonstrated, but they at length yielded and made the attempt. It was too much for him; but he persevered, and after a few repeated daily efforts, as before, at length succeeded. Continuing to do what he could, from day to day, he was, ere long, able to sit up a considerable time twice a day.

He now made a third advance. He begged to be placed in an open carriage. As I must be brief, I will only say that, after many efforts and some failures, he at length succeeded, and was able to ride abroad several miles a day, whenever the weather was at all favorable. Nor was his cough at all aggravated by it. On the contrary, as his strength increased, it became rather less harassing and exhausting.

One more advance was made. He must be helped, as he said, upon a horse. It was doubtful, even to himself, whether he had strength enough to endure exercise in this form; but he was determined to try it. The attempt was completely successful, and it was scarcely a week before he could ride a mile or two without very much fatigue. [Pg 214]

The final result was such a degree of recovery as enabled him to ride about on horseback several miles a day for six years. He was never quite well, it is true, but he was comfortable, and, to some extent, useful. He could do errands. He could perform many little services at home and abroad. He could, at least, take care of himself. At the end of this period, however, his strength gave way, and he sank peacefully to the tomb. He was completely worn out.

Now the principal lesson to be learned from this story is obvious. *Determination* to live is almost equivalent to *power* to live. A strong will, in other words, is almost omnipotent. Of the good effects of this strong determination, in case of protracted and dangerous disease of this sort, I have had no small share of experience, as the reader has already seen in Chapter XXIII.

Another fact may be stated under this head. A young man in southern Massachusetts, a teacher, was bleeding at the lungs, and was yielding at length to the conviction—for he had studied the subjects of health and disease—that he must ere long perish from consumption. I told him there was no necessity of such a result, and directed him to the appropriate means of escape. He followed my directions, and after some time regained his health. Ten or twelve years have now passed away, and few young men have done more hard work during that time than he; and, indeed, few are able, at the present moment, to do more. It is to be observed, however, that he made an entire change in his dietetic habits, to which he still adheres. He avoids all stimulating food—particularly all animal food—and uses no drink but water.

I did not advise him, while bleeding, to mount a hard-trotting horse, and trot away as hard as he could, and let the blood gush forth as it pleased. It is a prescription which I have not yet hazarded. I might do so in some circumstances, when I was sure of being aided by that almost omnipotent determination of which I have elsewhere spoken. I might do it occasionally; but it would be a rare combination of circumstances that would compel me. I might do it in the case of a resolute sea captain, who insisted on it, would not take *no* for an answer, and would assume the whole responsibility. I might and would do it for such a man as Dr. Kane. [Pg 215]

I have, myself, bled slightly at the lungs; but while I did not, on the one hand, allow myself to be half frightened to death, I did not, on the other hand, dare to meet the hemorrhagic tendency by any violent measures; not even by the motion of a trotting horse. I preferred the alternative of moderate exercise in the open air, with a recumbent position in a cool room, having my body well protected by needful additional clothing, with deep breathing to expand gently my chest, and general cheerfulness. But I have treated on this subject—my own general experience—at sufficient length elsewhere.

CHAPTER LVIII.

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POISONING BY A PAINTED PAIL.

A child about a week old, but naturally very sensitive and irritable, became, one night, unusually restless and rather feverish, with derangement of the bowels. The condition of the latter was somewhat peculiar, and I was not a little puzzled to account for it. There was nothing in the condition of the mother which seemed to me adequate to the production of such effects. She was as healthy as delicate females usually are in similar circumstances.

The derangement of the child's bowels continued and increased, and I was more and more puzzled. Was it any thing, I said to myself, which was imbibed or received from the mother? Just at the time, I happened to be reading what Dr. Whitlaw, a foreign medical writer, says of the effects which sometimes follow when cows that are suckling calves feed on buttercup. The poison of the latter, as he says, instead of injuring the cow herself, affects, most seriously, the calf, and, in some few instances, destroys it. This led me to search more perseveringly than I had before done, for a cause of so much bowel-disturbance in my young patient.

At length I found that a wooden pail, in which water was kept for family use, had been but recently painted inside; and that the paint used was prepared in part, from the oxyde of lead, usually called white lead. On this I immediately fastened the charge of poisoning.

My suspicions were confirmed by the fact that the mother had been more thirsty and feverish than usual, during a few hours previous to the child's first manifestation of disease, and had allowed herself to drink very freely of water, which was taken from the very pail on which our suspicions now rested. Another fact of kindred aspect was, that the child recovered just in proportion as the mother left off drinking from the painted pail, and used water which was procured in vessels of whose integrity we had no doubt. [Pg 217]

Most people who had any knowledge of the facts in the case, said that the cause I assigned could not have been the true one, since it was inadequate to the production of such an effect. But the truth is, we know very little about poisons, in their action on the living body, whether immediate or remote. Till this time, although I had read on it as much as most medical men, yet I knew—practically knew—almost as little as the most illiterate. Yet the subject was one with which professional physicians should be familiarly acquainted, if nobody else is. Many an individual, as we have the most abundant reason for believing, loses his health, if not his life, from causes which appear to be equally slight. A Mr. Earle, of Massachusetts, cannot swallow a tumbler of water containing a few particles of lead, without being made quite sick by it. Nor is he alone in this particular. Such sensitiveness to the presence of a poisonous agency is by no means uncommon. It may be found to exist in some few individuals in every country, and almost every neighborhood.

CHAPTER LIX.

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ONE DROP OF LAUDANUM.

A babe, not yet a day old, came under my care for treatment. What the symptoms were, except those of nervous irritation, I have now forgotten; but there was ample evidence of much disturbance in the system, and the parents and friends were exceedingly anxious about the results.

Now it was one of those cases in which a large proportion of our medical men are exceedingly ignorant, and only guess out the cause or causes as well as they can. I was thus ignorant, and would not—and as an honest man, *could* not—attempt to divine the cause or give a name to the disease. Yet I must needs, as I verily thought, prescribe something and somehow. So I took a single drop of laudanum, and diluted it well, and made the child swallow it.

He soon became easy, quite too easy, and fell into a profound sleep. So deep and profound, in fact, was its sleep, or rather its *stupor*, that I began to be afraid it never would awake. How strange, I thought within myself, that a single drop of this liquid should produce so much effect! Yet it taught me wisdom. It taught me to let medicine alone—strong medicine, at least—in the diseases of very young children. It also taught me not to give too large doses to anybody, especially to those who had never taken any before. The first dose, for unperverted nature, must be very small indeed!

How much my little patient was injured, permanently, by this act of unpardonable carelessness, I never knew. It may have laid the foundation for many ills which he has since experienced, some of which have been severe and trying. Or, if otherwise, it may have aggravated such ills as had their origin in other causes. Or, if nothing more, it may have contributed to a delicacy and sensitiveness and feebleness of structure, which can never, in all probability, be fully overcome, and which have more to do, even with our moral tendencies and character, than most of us are fully aware. [Pg 219]

How much would I give to be able to blot from my history such errors and defects of character as this! For, though I confess to nothing worse than haste and carelessness, in the present instance, yet a medical man, like the commander in the battle field or elsewhere, has no right to be careless. My aged, honored father gravely insisted, all his life long, that no accidents, as they are termed, in human life, ever take place, unless there is in the first place, carelessness, somewhere. Much more is it true that many an individual who sickens and loses his life, is the victim of carelessness; or, what is the same thing, want of attention, when great care and attention were necessary, and the issues of life and death were suspended, as it were, on a thread!

CHAPTER LX.

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MRS. KIDDER'S CORDIAL.

Should you ever go to Boston, and pass along a certain street called Court Street, almost to its western extremity, you may probably see at your left hand, in large letters of various fantastical shapes, the words which I have placed at the head of this chapter; viz., "MRS. KIDDER'S CORDIAL." Sometimes, I believe, it is called her cholera cordial; but it is sufficiently well known, as I suppose, by the former name.

But how is it known? Not merely by the sign I have mentioned, fastened up at the door of that aforesaid shop in Court Street, but by a host of advertisements in the public papers; and in other cities as well as Boston. You may find them in almost every public house, post-office, railroad depot, and grocery in New England; or, as I might perhaps say, in the whole Union.

I once had a child severely sick, at a season of the year when not only the Asiatic cholera prevailed, but also the cholera morbus. She was teething at the time, which was doubtless one cause of her illness,—to which however, as I suppose, other causes may have been added. In any event, she was in a very bad condition, and required the wisest and most careful medical attention. There was also a young woman in the house who was ill in the same way, but not so ill as the child.

At that time my residence was very near the metropolis, though, as I have already told you, Mrs. Kidder's cordial could be had almost everywhere. Having occasion to go to town, I fell in with an old friend who kindly inquired after the health of my family. When I had told him, he boldly and with true Yankee impertinence, asked what I had done for my family patients; to which I replied, with a frankness and simplicity which was fully equal to his boldness, "Nothing, as yet." "Do you mean to do nothing?" said he, with some surprise. I told him that I did not know what I might do in future, but that I saw no necessity of using any active medication at present. "Are you not aware," I added, "that physicians seldom take their own medicines or give them to their families?"

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"I know very well," said he, "that physicians theorize a good deal about these matters; but after all, experience is the best school-master. Should you lose that little girl of yours, simply because you are anxious to carry out a theory, will you not be likely to regret it? As yet you have lost no children, and therefore, though much older than myself, you have not had all the experience which has fallen to my lot; and experience is the best school-master."

"True," I answered, "I am not too old to learn from that experience, which, in a certain sense, is the basis of all just knowledge, especially in medicine. What you call my theory, or

at least all the theory I have, is grounded on this same experience; not, indeed, that of one man in one neighborhood, nor, indeed, in one nation. I have looked the world over."

"And you have come to the very wise conclusion, it would seem," said he, "that medicine never does any good, and that you will never give it more, except to those who are determined to have it, or will not fasten their faith on any thing else."

"Not exactly that," I replied. "I can think of a great number of cases in which I would give medicine. For example: suppose one of my children had by the merest accident taken a dose of poison, which, if retained, must inevitably destroy it, I would much sooner give that child an active emetic—which, of course, is medicine—than stand still and see it die."

"Very well," said he, "your child and Miss L., are, in one point of view, poisoned. They will probably die, if you stand still and do nothing; at least I have not a doubt that the little girl will. Now take my advice, and do something before it is too late. Give up all your theories and fine-spun reasonings, and do as others do, and save your child." [Pg 222]

As I had but little time for conversation with him, even on a highly important and deeply interesting subject, above all to point out the difference between the two cases he mentioned. I was now about ready to say "Good-morning," and leave him. "Stop a moment," said he, "and go with me to the second shop beyond that corner, and get a bottle of Mrs. Kidder's cordial for your sick folks."

Here I smiled. "Well," said he, "you may continue to smile; but you will mourn in the end. I have used Mrs. Kidder's cordial in my family a good deal, and I assure you it is no humbug. It is all it promises. Now just go with me, for once, and get a bottle of it. Depend upon it, you will never regret it."

Although my good friend had not succeeded in changing my views by his many affirmations, nor by his strong appeal to his experience of the good effects of the cordial in his own family (for I well knew he had lost almost all his children), I consented to go with him to the shop, partly to get rid of him. When we arrived I bought a bottle of the cordial,—I believe for fifty cents,—put it in my pocket, and carried it home with me.

When I reached home I put away the bottle, on a shelf in our family closet which was quite unoccupied, and inquired about the patients. The little girl was rather better, it was thought, but Miss L. was still weak and low. I told them about the adventure with the bookseller, but omitted to state that I had purchased the cordial.

In a very few days, by dint of good care and attention, and the blessing of a kind Providence, the sick were both of them much better, and I could leave them for a whole day at a time. My business in town demanded my presence, and I repaired thither again. And who should I meet, on getting out of the omnibus, but my old friend, who had reasoned with me so patiently and perseveringly, in defence of Mrs. Kidder's cordial? [Pg 223]

He inquired, almost immediately, about my family; to which I joyfully replied, "Better, all better. They were better in less than two days after I last saw you;—yes, they were a little better that very evening."

"I told you it would be so," said he. "I never knew the cordial to fail when taken in season. I have lost several children, it is true; but they did not take it soon enough. I am profoundly glad you were in season. Does it not operate like a charm?"

"Exactly so," said I, "if it operates at all; exactly like a charm, or like magic. Shall I tell you the whole story?"

"By all means," he replied; "let us have the whole of it; keep nothing back."

"Well, then, I went home, and placed the bottle of cordial on a high and obscure shelf, where nobody would be likely to see it, and proceeded with our sick folks just as before. The bottle of cordial remained unknown, except to myself, and untouched, and is probably untouched to the present hour. So you see—do you not?—how like a charm it operates."

"Just *like* you, doctor. Well, as long as they recovered I do not care. But I shall always have full faith in the medicine. I know what I know; and if all the world were of your opinion I could not resist a full belief in the efficacy of Mrs. Kidder's Cholera Cordial."

My friend was not offended with me, for he was, in the main, a sensible, rational man. He pitied me; but, I believe from that time forth, gave up all hopes of my conversion. I come to this conclusion because he has never uttered a syllable on the subject, in my hearing, from that day to this hour, though I have met with him probably fifty times.

There can be no doubt that were we to place full faith in the recuperative efforts of nature, three-fourths of our medicine—perhaps I may just as well say nine-tenths—would be quite as useful were it disposed of in the way I disposed of Mrs. Kidder's cordial, as when swallowed. Nay, it is possible it might be much more useful. If a sick person can recover without it just as well as *with* it, he certainly will get well more easily, even if it should not be more quickly, than if he had a load of foreign substance at his stomach to be disposed of. In other words, to get well in spite of medicine seems to me much less agreeable, after all that is said in its favor, than to get well in Nature's own way.

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CHAPTER LXI.

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ALMOST RAISING THE DEAD.

So many people regarded it, and therefore I use the phrase as a title for my chapter. I have heard of families of children so large that it was not easy to find names for them all. My chapters of confession are short, but very numerous, and I already begin to find it difficult to procure titles that are *apropos*.

Mary Benham was the second daughter, in an obscure and indigent family that resided only a little distance from my house, just beyond the limits of what might properly be called the village. I do not know much of her early history, except that she was precocious in mind, and scrofulous and feeble in body.

The first time I ever heard any thing about her, was one night at a prayer-meeting. Mr. Brown, the minister, took occasion to observe, at the close of the meeting, in my hearing, that he must go to Mr. Benham's and see Mary, for she was very ill, and it was thought would not live through the night.

She survived, however, as she had done many times before, and as she did many times afterward, in similar circumstances. More than once Mr. Brown had been sent for—though sometimes other friends were called, as Mr. Brown lived more than a mile distant—to be with her and pray with her, in what were supposed to be her last moments. But there was still a good deal of tenacity of life; and she continued to live, notwithstanding all her expectations and those of her friends.

It appeared, on inquiry, that her nervous system was very much disordered, and also her digestive machinery. She was also taking, from day to day, a large amount of active medicine. Still no one appeared to doubt the propriety of such a course of treatment, in the case of a person so very sick as she was; for how, it was asked, could she live without it?

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In one or two instances I was sent for; not, indeed, as her physician, but as a substitute for the more distant or the absent minister. At these visits I learned something, incidentally, of her true physical condition. I found her case a very bad one, and yet, as I believed, made much worse by an injudicious use of medicine.

Yet what could I do in the premises? I had not been asked to prescribe for her, nor even to give counsel as a supernumerary or consulting physician. Dr. M. paid her his weekly and semi-weekly visits, and doubtless supposed all the wisdom of the world added to his own would hardly improve her condition. I was, of course, by all the rules of medical etiquette, and even by the common law of politeness, obliged to bite my lips in silence. One thing, indeed, I ventured to do, which was to send her a small tract or two, in some of the departments of hygiene or health.

Soon after this her physician died; and died, too, by his own confession, publicly made, of stomach disease,—at least, in part. He was a man of gigantic body and great natural physical force. His digestive apparatus was particularly powerful, and it had been both unwisely cultivated and developed in early life, and unwisely and wickedly managed afterward. For an example of the latter, he would, while abroad among his patients, sometimes go without his dinner, and then, on his return to his family and just as he was going to bed, atone for past neglect by eating enough for a whole day, and of the most solid and perhaps indigestible food. In this and other abusive ways he had been suicidal.

But he was now gone to his final account, and on whose arm could Mary lean for medical advice? Her parents were too poor to pay a physician's bill. What had been paid to her former medical attendant—which, indeed was but a mere pittance—was by authority of the town. Mary felt all the delicacy she should have felt, in her circumstances, and perhaps more, for she refused for some time to ask for farther aid, preferring to groan her way alone.

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One evening, when I was present on a moral errand, she spoke of the great benefit she had derived from the perusal of the little books I had sent her, and modestly observed that, deprived as she was by the wise dispensation of Providence, of her old friend and physician, she had sometimes dared to wish she could occasionally consult me. I told her I hoped she would not hesitate a moment to send for me, whenever she desired, for if in a situation to comply with her requests, I would always do so immediately. She was about to speak of her poverty, when I begged her not to think of that. The only condition I should impose, I told her, was that she should do her very best to follow, implicitly, my directions. With this condition she did not hesitate to promise a full and joyful compliance.

From that time forth I saw her frequently, since I well knew that even voluntary visits would be welcome. I found she had become convinced of the necessity of breathing pure air, and of ventilating her room every day. Nor did she neglect, as much as formerly, the great laws of cleanliness. Yet, alas! in this respect, the hard hand of necessity was upon her. She could not do all she wished. However, she could apply water to her person daily, if she could not to her clothing and bedding; so that, on the whole, she did not greatly suffer. Her mother did what she could, but she was old and decrepit.

She had also made another advance. She had contrived to obtain, I hardly know from what source, but probably from the hands of kind friends, a small amount of good fruit to use daily, with one or more of her meals. This excluded a part or portion of that kind of food which was more stimulating and doubtful.

But the greatest difficulty we had to encounter was to shake off the enormous load of narcotic medicine which had been so long prescribed for her that she seemed unable to live without it. Morphine, in particular, she had come to use in quantities which would have destroyed a person who was unaccustomed to its influence, and in frequently repeated doses. I told her she might as well die in one way as another; that the morphine, though it

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afforded a little temporary relief, was wearing out her vital energies at a most rapid rate, and that the safest, and, in the end, the easiest way for her was, to abandon it entirely. She followed my advice, and made the attempt.

I have forgotten how long a time it required to effect a complete emancipation from her slavery to drugs; but the process was a gradual one, and occupied at least several months. In the end, however, though not without considerable suffering, she was perfectly free, not only from her slavery to morphine, but to all other drugs. All this time, moreover, she was as *well*, to say the least, as before; perhaps, on the whole, a little better.

I now set myself, in good earnest, to the work of improving her physical habits. The laws of ventilation and cleanliness, to which her attention, as I have already intimated, had become directed, were still more carefully heeded. She was required to retire early and rise early, and to keep her mind occupied, though never to the point of fatigue, while awake. Her habits with regard to food and drink were changed very materially. The influence of the mind on the condition of the body was also explained to her, and the influence of temperature. In short, she was brought, as fast as possible, to the knowledge of physical law in its application to her circumstances, and encouraged to obey it.

The recuperative powers of nature, even in unfavorable circumstances, were soon apparent. This greatly increased her docility and inspired her with faith and hope. The greatest trouble was in regard to muscular exercise. Much of this was needed; and yet how could it be obtained? She could not walk, and yet, in her indigence, she had no means of conveyance, except at the occasional invitation of some friend.

But this even had its good tendencies. To take her up, as we would have taken a child, set her in a carriage and let her ride half a mile or a mile, was obviously of great service to her. She was far less fatigued by it than was expected; her subsequent sleep was far better; nor did any remote evil effects follow. This greatly increased her courage, and raised the hopes of her friends. [Pg 229]

She was at length able to be placed in the railroad cars, and with the aid of coaches, at embarking and disembarking, to travel about a good deal, to the distance of ten, twelve, or twenty miles; and all this with favorable effects. Her recovery, at no distant day, began to be regarded, by the most sceptical, as quite probable.

My removal, a hundred miles or so from the village, just at this time, was, however, a misfortune to her. In one of her excursions, she received and accepted an invitation to spend a few months with a distant relative, where she came under the influence of one of the phases of modern quackery, by means of which her progress to the promised land of health was very considerably retarded. She even sickened, but afterward recovered.

Sometime after this, as I subsequently learned, she partially regained her good condition of steady progress, and returned to her father's house. Finding herself, at length, able to do something for her support, she entered into the service of a neighboring family, at first with little compensation except her board, but subsequently at half pay or more. Her domestic duties were such as only taxed her system to a degree which she was able to endure without any injury.

It was in this condition, that, after two or three years of absence, I found her and rejoiced with her. For, though she could no more be said to be restored to perfect health, than a vessel could be considered perfectly sound that is full of shot holes, yet her condition was far enough from being desperate, and was even comparatively excellent. I left her once more with the tear of gratitude to God on her cheek, and again, for many long years, neither saw her nor heard from her.

At our next interview she brought with her a gentleman whom she introduced to me as her husband. The meeting was to me wholly unexpected, but most happy. She lived in this relation, but without progeny, a few years more, and then sank in a decline, to rise no more till the sound of the last trumpet. [Pg 230]

Of the particulars of her decline and death, I have never heard a word. Her scrofulous temperament and tendencies rendered her liable to numerous diseases of greater or less severity and danger, to some of which she probably fell a victim. It is, however, by no means impossible that her numerous cares and anxieties—for she was naturally very sensitive—may have hastened her exit.

If I have any misgivings in connection with this protracted, but very interesting case, and consequently any confessions to make, it is with reference to the point faintly alluded to in a preceding paragraph. While I honor, as much as any man, the marriage relation,—for it is in accordance with God's own intention, and is the first institution of high Heaven for human benefit and happiness,—I must freely confess that in the present fallen condition of our race, it occasionally happens that an individual is found unfit for the discharge of its various duties, as well as for the endurance of some of its peculiar responsibilities. Such, as I believe, among others, was Mary Benham.

CHAPTER LXII.

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FEMALE HEALTH, AND INSANE HOSPITALS.

A female, about thirty-five years of age, and naturally of a melancholic temperament, was very frequently at my room for the purpose of conversing with me in regard to her health. Most of her complaints—for they were numerous—were grafted upon a strongly bilious habit, and were such as required in the possessor and sufferer, more than an ordinary measure of attention to the digestive organs and the skin. And yet both these departments, especially the latter, had been in her case, hitherto, utterly neglected. To speak plainly, and with some license as a physiologist, *she had no skin*. It was little more than a mere wrapper, so far as the great purposes of health were concerned. A dried and even tanned hide, could it have been fitted to her person with sufficient exactness, would have subserved nearly the same purposes.

Perhaps you will excuse the tendency in the description of this case, to exaggeration, when you are informed that the treatment of themselves, in the particular here alluded to, by females especially, is one which habitually fills one with disgust, and sometimes with indignation. Persons of good sense, of both sexes, who from month to month, perhaps from year to year, never wash their skins, nor use much muscular exercise, ought to know that they must, sooner or later, experience the dreadful penalty attached to violated physical law, and from which there is, neither on earth nor in heaven, any possible escape. Can any one suppose, for a moment, that so curious and complicated an organ as the skin, and one of such considerable extent, has nothing to do?

Nearly every living person has some idea, of greater or less intensity, of pores in the skin; at least, they use language which implies such an idea. They talk, often, of the necessity of keeping these pores open. But how is it to be done? Not certainly while they use little or no muscular exercise, by washing, once a day, their hands and faces merely, or, as some say, their fingers, their noses, and the tips of their chins. They may talk, on occasions, very boldly and flippantly, about *sweating* away a cold, as they term it; but do they vainly [Pg 232]

suppose that the sweat vessels or sweating machinery has nothing to do, from day to day, which might prevent the necessity of resorting to these sweating processes?

Miss L. appeared to be in utter ignorance of any laws of the skin, or of the digestive or muscular systems. And yet her thoughts had been turned, often and frequently, to her own feelings and sensations. She would talk, almost incessantly, if anybody would hear her, about her aches and pains, and could describe her whole train of feelings, from morning to evening, with a faithfulness and patience and minuteness that would have furnished a genius less than Defoe with material sufficient for quite a huge volume.

Now I could have visited and counselled Miss L., at least once a week, with great profit to herself, had she been as intelligent, in general, as she was familiar with her own sensations. As things were, her confidence was rather more troublesome than agreeable; but she was, practically, a standing patient; and physicians, as you know, cannot choose. They must be, among mankind, like the Great Physician, as they who "*serve*;" not as those who are *to be served*, or accommodated. And they must serve those who come to them.

Miss L. was evidently somewhat disappointed, when she found I was not disposed to give her any medicine. A little, she thought, might sometimes be useful; a great deal she did not believe in, of course. Experience had forced upon her some of the lessons of wisdom. However, she contrived to fasten a good deal of faith on the laws of health, which I continually held forth to her. In particular, I urged on her the necessity of endeavoring to keep up what I was wont to call a centrifugal tendency in her system. A good plump, healthful, ever active, and ever vigorous skin was, as I told her, our only hope in her case. As a means to this end, and also as a means of withdrawing her attention from the slavery of a constant attendance on her own sensations, I urged her to mingle with society much more, and go about doing good to others, on the great principle, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." I warned her, however, against the danger of falling into the habit of giving an account of herself—her woes and sorrows—to every one she might meet with, who should kindly inquire about her condition, since it would greatly retard her improvement, even if it did not keep up or renew her disease. [Pg 233]

Among other things, I ventured to suggest to her the importance of having something to do—something of a permanent nature. "We hear," I said, "of gentlemen at large, and you seem to be a lady at large. You have, in the usual acceptation of the phrase, nothing to do. Would it not be well for you to take charge of something or of somebody? You might, perhaps, assume the office of teacher, and take the charge of a few pupils; or even adopt a child or two as your own, where you might receive compensation. Or," as I finally added,—for I perceived she shrunk from all responsibilities of this kind,—"you might, perhaps, become the mistress of a family."

On the last mentioned topic, I was also obliged, for obvious reasons, to speak with considerable caution. She was unsocial, timid, fearful of being burdened with cares—the very stuff, though she knew it not, that human life is made of, ay, and human happiness too. But I could not hesitate to make the trial. My suggestions, however, were of little avail. She went on for some time, in the old way, and made very little progress.

I lost sight of her about this time, and never met her more. The sequel of her history I only know from report. It is painful in the extreme. It is, however, the history, in all its essential features, of thousands of selfish people, who, after all, by dint of numbers, force, and influence, contrive to rule the world. [Pg 234]

Being fully determined to have no cares or responsibilities connected with children or household, she not only refused to hearken to my advice, but also to one or more truly kind and promising offers of marriage. She pursued her selfish course undisturbed, unless by

occasional misgivings, till her brain and nervous system suffered so severely that she began to approach the confines of insanity.

It was, however, a considerable time before the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl broken, and the wheel broken at the cistern. But the terrible result at length came. The demands of violated physical law are inexorable. She was conveyed, as a last resort, in the hope of cure, to an insane hospital. Here, after many and patient attempts to restore the crippled and broken down machinery to healthful motion, she ended her days.

My female patients were not all equally unfortunate. One I had, whose case, if minutely described, would present an array of facts painful in the extreme. She, too, approached the dark regions of insanity; but she did not enter. She still lives, and is at once a useful and happy woman, and an excellent wife and housekeeper. As a means to her recovery, however, she pursued a course diametrically opposite to that pursued by Miss L. She did not shrink from care and responsibility; on the contrary, she submitted to both. First, she sought increased activity and usefulness in her father's family; and, secondly, in a family of her own.

Concerning the last mentioned case, I have few misgivings, and equally few confessions to make. I call it a remarkable case; but it must not be revealed in its details, for other reasons besides its tediousness. In the case of Miss L., however, I have one deep and lasting regret.

In the early part of my acquaintance with her, as a medical man, she probably had more confidence in my integrity and skill than in those of any other living individual. She had been early left an orphan; and I was among the first—perhaps the very first—to take the attitude towards her of a true father. Such kindness, and especially such paternal care, never fail to make their impression. [Pg 235]

"Love, and love only, is
the loan for
love."

At this early sympathizing period, had I been more faithful, I might, perhaps, have saved her. But I was remiss—disposed to delay. I waited, a thousand times, for a better opportunity. I waited till the favorable moment—ay, the *only* moment—had passed by.

Physicians often err here. God gives to many individuals the most unbounded confidence in medical men; and this remarkable provision of his has a deep meaning. It is not, however, to the intent that they should abuse the influence thus secured to them, by filling their patients' stomachs with pills and powders; but for such purposes, rather, as have been indicated by the general tenor of the foregoing remarks. It is that they may give them wise paternal counsel and sound physiological and pathological instruction.

Such counsel and such instruction were indeed given to Miss L., but not to that extent which the nature of the case required, and which a little more moral courage and Christian plainness would have secured. She was worth saving, and I might, perchance, have been the honored instrument of saving her, and of thus rendering to society a most valuable service. That vital energy of hers which was expended in watching over her own internal feelings, might have been rendered a much more profitable investment.

But the account is closed and sealed, to be agitated or questioned no more till the inquisitions of the last day. Let such considerations and reflections as this remark suggests to the human mind have their intended effect. Let us ever increase our zeal and watchfulness, that we may avoid such a course of conduct as makes confessions meet, or needful, or even salutary.

CHAPTER LXIII.

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A GIANT DYSPEPTIC.

There have been giants in the earth, in nearly every age, if not in every clime—giants mentally, and giants physically. Of course they may have been rare exhibitions, and may thus have elicited much attention; and some of them have attained to quite a memorable place in history.

There have been and still are, on the earth, giants of other descriptions. We sometimes even meet with giant dyspeptics. Dyspepsia, at best, is formidable, many-headed, but not always gigantic. If gigantic size, in this case, were the general rule, what we now call giants would, of course, cease to be regarded as such.

It may be thought that what I shall here call dyspeptic giants, or giant dyspeptics, were better designated as monsters, than giants. Be it so, for we will not quarrel about names; though a difficulty might be found in making the required distinction between giants and monsters; for is not every giant a monster?

Not far from the year 1830, perhaps a little earlier, you might have seen, in connection with a certain private seminary of education, in New England, one of these giant dyspeptics. I do not mean, of course, that he had already attained to giant size, but only that what proved in the result to be gigantic was already a giant in miniature, and was rapidly advancing to one of magnitude.

He had early been a cabin boy; and like many other cabin boys, had been gluttonous, and in some respects intemperate. Not by any means, that he had ever been guilty of downright intoxication; for of this I have no certain knowledge. My belief is, however, that he had gone very far in this direction, though he might not have—probably *had* not—been justly chargeable with going quite to the last extremity.

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But why should such a young man be found at a seminary of learning? Was he with "birds of a feather?" Do not these attract each other?

Mr. Gray, for that is the name I shall give to our young dyspeptic, had been recently subjected to the influences of one of those seasons of excitement well known in the religious world by the name of *revivals*; and what is not at all uncommon with the rude and uncultivated minds of even more hardened sailors than he, a great change had come over him. In short, he had the appearance, in every respect, of being a truly converted young man.

Why this change of character had led him to this school-house, may not at first appear. Yet such a result is by no means unusual. This waking up the mind, by awakening the soul, and causing it to hunger and thirst after knowledge, has been observed long since, by those who have had their eyes open to what was going on around them.

Young Gray was penniless, and his parents not only poor, but overburdened with the cares of a large family, so that they could give him no aid but by their prayers. He was not, however, to be discouraged by poverty. He agreed to ring the bell, sweep the hall, build fires, etc., for his board and tuition. As for clothing, he had none, or almost none. Charity, cold as her hand oftentimes is, supplied him with something. Dyspepsia had not, as yet, marred his visage or weakened his energies.

In his connection with this seminary and others of kindred character, such as he could attend and yet pay his expenses by his labor, he became, ere long, able to teach others. Here was a new means of support, of which he eagerly availed himself. In whatever he undertook,

moreover, he was singularly successful. He was in earnest. An earnest mind, in connection with an indomitable will—what may it not accomplish? It is every thing but omnipotent.

"Heaven but persuades, almighty man decrees," as I have before said, assuming our old English poets as standard authority; but this saying has more in it than mere poetry. Or, if Heaven more than persuades—somewhat more—does not man still decree? But I am inclined, I see, to press this thought, perhaps in undue proportion to its magnitude. Whether or not it abates one half the guilt, I make the confession. [Pg 238]

For several years Gray pushed his devious course, through "thick and thin," sustaining himself chiefly by his teaching. In 1835, he was the private instructor of a wealthy family in Rhode Island; but so puzzling, not to say erratic, were some of his movements, that he was not very popular. Subsequently to this, he was found in another part of New England, editing a paper, and teaching at the same time a small number of pupils.

All this while he paid great attention to physical education; but being either a charity scholar, or obliged to pay his way by his own exertions, he had not at command the needful time to render him thorough in any thing, even in his obedience, as he called it, to Nature's laws. Nearly all his studies were pursued by snatches, or, at least, with more or less irregularity.

In nothing, however, was he more irregular than in his diet. This, to a person already inclined, as he certainly was, to dyspepsia, was very unfortunate. Perhaps, as generally happens in such cases, there was *action and reaction*. Perhaps, I mean, his dyspeptic tendencies led to more or less of dietetic irregularity; while the latter, whenever yielded to, had a tendency, in its turn, to increase his load of dyspepsia.

There was, indeed, one apology to be found for his irregularity with regard to diet, in his extreme poverty. There were times when he was actually compelled to subsist on the most scanty fare; while his principles, too, restricted him to very great plainness. In one instance, for example, after he had finished his preparatory, course of study and entered college, he subsisted wholly on a certain quantity of bread daily; and as if not quite satisfied with even this restriction, while he needed his money so much more for clothing and books, he purchased stale bread—sometimes that which was imperfect—at a cheaper rate. Now a diet, exclusively of fine flour bread, and withal more or less sour or mouldy, is not very suitable for a dyspeptic, nor yet, indeed, for anybody whatever. However, he learned, at length, to improve a little upon this, by purchasing coarse, or Graham bread. [Pg 239]

Subsequently to this period, not being able, either alone or with the aid of friends, most of whom were poor, to pursue a regular academic course of instruction, he accepted the proposition that he should become an assistant teacher in the English department of a school in Europe. This, he feared, might postpone the completion of his studies, but would enable him, as he believed, to improve his mind, establish his health, and add greatly to his experience and to his knowledge of the world. It would also perfect him in teaching, so far at least as the mere inculcation of English grammar was concerned.

His health was by no means improved by a residence of three or four years in Europe, but rather impaired. He returned to America, in the autumn of 1839, and as soon as he had partially recovered from the effects of a tedious and dangerous voyage, went to reside in the family of a near relative who was a farmer, with a view to learn, for the first time, what the labors of the farm would do for him.

Here he often resorted to the same rigid economy which he had before practised, both at academy and college, and in Europe. The very best living he would allow himself was a diet exclusively of small potatoes—those, I mean, from which the larger ones had been separated for the use of others.

This, his dyspeptic stomach would not long endure. His digestive and nervous systems both became considerably deranged; and even his skin, sympathizing with the diseased lining membrane of his stomach and intestines, became the seat of very painful boils and troublesome sores. These, while they indicated still deeper if not more troublesome disease, gave one encouraging indication—that the recuperative powers of the system were not as yet irrecoverably prostrated.

He now came to me and begged to become my patient, and to reside permanently under my roof, so that he might not only receive such daily attention and counsel as the circumstances required, but also such food, air, exercise, and ablutions as were needful. He was accordingly admitted to the rights, privileges, and self-denials of the family. [Pg 240]

Here he spent a considerable time. While under my care, I made every reasonable exertion for his recovery which I would have made for a favorite child. Indeed, few children were ever more obedient or docile. He would sometimes say to me: "Doctor, I have no more power over myself than a child, and you must treat me *as you would* a child." Nor was he satisfied till I restricted his every step, both with regard to the quantity and quality of his food, and the hours and seasons of bathing, exercise, reading, etc. It was to me a painful task, and I sometimes shrunk from it, for the moment. There was, however, no escape. I had embarked in the enterprise, and must take the consequences.

At first, his improvement was scarcely perceptible, and I was almost discouraged. But at length, after much patience and perseverance, the suffering digestive organs began, in some measure, to resume their healthful condition, and the whole face of things to wear a different aspect. He left us to take charge of a public school.

For some time after the opening of this school, his health seemed to be steadily improving, and the world around him began to have its charms again. He was in his own chosen, and, I might say, native element, which was to him a far more healthful stimulus than any other which could have been devised, whether by the physician or the physiologist.

Nothing in this world is so well calculated to preserve and promote human health, as full and constant employment, of a kind which is perfectly congenial and healthful, and which we are fully assured is useful. In other words, the first great law of health is benevolence. It keeps up in the system that centrifugal tendency of the circulation of which I have already spoken, and which is so favorable for the rejection of all effete and irritating matters. It would have been next to impossible for our Saviour, with head, heart, and hands engaged as his were, to have sickened; nor was it till the most flagrant physiological transgressions had been long repeated, that even Howard the philanthropist sickened and died. Not the whole combined force of malaria and contagion could overcome him, till continual over-fatigue, persistent cold, and strong tea,—an almost matchless trio,—lent their aid to give the finishing stroke. [Pg 241]

Mr. Gray was a boarder with a gentleman who kept a grocery store, and who was glad to employ him on certain days and hours of vacation or recess, in taking care of the shop and waiting on his customers. Here the tempter again assailed him, in the form of foreign fruits, raisins, figs, prunes, oranges, dried fish, cordials, candy, etc. For some time past he had been wholly unaccustomed to these things; they had even been forbidden him, especially between his meals. As a consequence of his indulgences, and his neglect of exercise, his health again declined, and he came a second time under my care.

He was partially restored the second time, but not entirely. His labors, which were teaching still, became more exhausting than formerly. Cheerfulness, hope, sympathy, conscious usefulness, and the force of many good habits, sustained him for a time, but not always. His great labors of body and mind, with a deep sense of responsibility, and the indulgences to

which I have alluded, preyed upon him, and dyspepsia began once more her reign of tyranny.

Doubtless he attempted too much here, for he was an enthusiast on the subject of common schools and common school instruction. And yet, under almost any circumstances of school-keeping, dyspepsia, nurtured as it was by every physical habit, would most certainly have assailed him. With regard to his food and drink he was very unwise. It contributed largely to an extreme of irritability, which was unfavorable, and which at the end of a single term compelled him to resign his place and seek some other employment.

This was a grievous disappointment to Mr. Gray, and, as some of his friends believe, was the mountain weight that crushed him. The horrors of the abyss into which he believed he had plunged himself, were the more intolerable from the fact that he now, for the first time, began to despair of being able to consummate a plan by means of which both his sorrows and joys, especially the latter, would have been shared by another. [Pg 242]

Yet, even here, he did not absolutely despair. Hope revived when he found himself, a third time, my patient. I did all in my power to encourage him till I had at length, to my own surprise as well as his, the unspeakable pleasure of finding him again returning to the path of health and happiness. It is indeed true, that a capricious appetite still retained its sway, in greater or less degree, and whenever he was not awed by my presence, he would indulge himself in the use of things which he knew were injurious to him, as well as in the excessive, not to say gluttonous, use of such good things as were tolerated. He occasionally confessed his impotence, and begged us to keep every thing out of his way, even those remnants which were designed for the domestic animals!

And yet, after all, strange to say, he absented himself very frequently, as if to seek places of retirement, where he could indulge his tyrannical appetite. I saw most clearly his danger, and spoke to him concerning it. I appealed to his fears, to his hopes, to his conscience. I reminded him of the love he bore to humanity, and the regard he had for Divinity.

Once more, being partly recruited, he resumed his labors as a teacher. This was doubtless a wrong measure, and yet I was not aware of the error at the time, or I should not have encouraged the movement, or assisted him as I did in procuring a situation. But I then thought he had been punished so effectually for his transgressions, that he would at length be wise. Besides he was exceedingly anxious to be at work, and to avoid dependence, a desire in which his friends participated, and in regard to which they were so unwise as to express their over anxiety in his hearing.

Three months in the school-house found him worse than ever before. He had attempted to board himself, to subsist on a very few ounces of "Graham wafers" at each meal, and to be an hour in masticating it. As an occasional compensation for this, however, a sort of *treating resolution*, he allowed himself to pick up the crusts and other fragments left about the school-house by his pupils, and when he had collected quite a pile of these, to indulge his appetite with them, *ad libitum*. Nor was this all. He erred in other particulars, perhaps in many. [Pg 243]

He came to my house a fourth time, but my situation was such that I could not well receive him. He staid only a day or two, but his residence with us was long enough to enable me to mark the progress of his case, and to deplore what I feared must be the final issue. From me he went to a friend in an adjoining State; not, however, till he had alluded to certain errors of his recent life that he had not yet devulged, even to his best friend. "Doctor," said he, "there are some things that I have not yet told you about."

To me, also, it belongs, at this point of Gray's lamentable history, to make confession of great and glaring error. To have received the young man to my house, and to have devoted myself to the work of endeavoring again to raise him, would, most undoubtedly, have been

a sacrifice to which few people in my circumstances would have thought themselves called. Yet, difficult as it was, the sacrifice might have been made. Had he been my only brother, I should, doubtless, have received him. The Saviour of mankind, in my circumstances, would probably have taken him in. Was I not his follower? And was I not bound to do what I believed he would do, in similar circumstances?

His more distant friend, but more consistent Christian brother, opened wide his doors for his reception, and did the best he could for him. It was his intention, at first, to employ him, as I now think he ought to have been employed long before; viz., on a small farm. In this point of view this friend's house was particularly favorable. Yet there were offsets to this advantage. One thing in particular, cast a shade upon our efforts in his behalf. It was about April 1st, and the house and farm had an eastern aspect, and the easterly winds, which at that season so much prevailed, were very strong and surcharged with vapor at a low temperature. For a few days after his arrival he was worse than ever.

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This was discouragement heaped upon discouragement, and he began soon to sink under it. For a short time he was the subject of medical treatment. What was the character of the medicine he took, I never knew. At length there were signs of convalescence; but no sooner did his bodily health and strength begin to improve, than his mental troubles began to press upon him, till he was driven to the very borders of insanity. Indeed, so strong was the tendency to mental derangement that his relatives actually carried him, *per force*, to an insane hospital.

But his residence at the hospital was very short. Provision having in the mean time been made for his reception in a private family, among his acquaintance, and the superintendent of the hospital having advised to such a course, he was remanded to the country, to familiar faces, and to a farm.

On reaching the place assigned him, he became extremely ill,—worse, by far, than ever before,—so that, for several weeks, his life was despaired of. But by means of careful medical treatment, and a judicious and very simple diet, which at the hospital had been exchanged for a stimulating one, nature once more rallied, and in three or four weeks he appeared to be in a fair way for recovery. His strength increased, his mind became clear; his digestive function, though still erratic, appeared about to resume its natural condition, and to perform once more its wonted office; and the other troublesome symptoms were all gradually disappearing, except one;—he had still a very frequent pulse.

But even this rapid arterial action was at length abating. From a frequency of the pulse equal to 100, 110, and sometimes 120 in a minute, it fell in two weeks to from 70 to 75; and this, too, under the influence of very mild and gentle treatment. There was no reduction of activity or power, by bleeding, or by blistering, or in any other way; on the contrary, as I have intimated, there was a general increase of strength and vigor, both of body, and mind. He did not even take digitalis or morphine. The prospect, therefore, was, on the whole, truly encouraging.

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And yet he had a set of friends—relatives, I should say, rather—who were not satisfied. It was strongly written on their minds that he was about to die; and they sternly insisted on removing him to his native home, that if he should die, he might die in the bosom of his own kindred. I was consulted; but I entered my most solemn protest against the measure, as both uncalled for and hazardous. It was to no purpose, however. In their over-kindness they determined to remove him; and the removal was effected. I ought also to say that though Mr. Gray highly appreciated their kindness, he was himself opposed to the measure, as one attended with much hazard.

On the road to his paternal home, influenced in no small degree by mental excitement, his delirium returned, and with an intensity that never afterwards abated. He was, for about

three weeks, a most inveterate and raving maniac, when, worn out prematurely with disease, he sunk to rise no more till the general resurrection.

There was no post-mortem examination of this young man, though there should have been. Not that there was any lurking suspicion of peculiarity of disease, but because such examinations may always be made serviceable to the cause of medical science, while they cannot possibly injure either the dead or the living.

I have been the more minute in my account of this man, because the case is an instructive one, both to the professional and non-professional reader, and also because it places medicine and physicians in the true light, and holds forth to the world the wonderfully recuperative power of nature, and the vast importance of giving heed to the laws of health and to the voice of physiology.

CHAPTER LXIV.

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GETTING INTO A CIRCLE.

The oddity of some of my captions may seem to require an apology; but I beg the doubtful reader to suspend any unfavorable decisions, till he has read the chapter which follows. He will not, either in the present instance or in any other, be introduced to a magic ring, or to the mysteries of modern "spiritualism." The circle into which my patient fell, was of a different description.

A young mother from the west, about the year 1840, came to consult me with regard to her health. Not being able to receive her into my own family, I made arrangements for her reception in the immediate neighborhood, where she remained for a long time. She was a dyspeptic—if not of giant magnitude, but little short of it.

I spent many an hour in endeavoring to set all right, both in mind and body. It was, however, much easier to set her head right, than her hands, feet, and stomach. She had been under the care of almost all sorts of medical men—hydropathic, homoeopathic, and allopathic. Some of them, from all these schools, had been men of good sense, while a much larger proportion of them had turned out to be fools, and had done her more harm than good. In short, like the woman in the New Testament, she had spent much on many physicians, and was nothing bettered by it, but rather made worse.

Under such circumstances what ground was there for hope? What she most needed, it was easy to see, was a little more of resolution to carry out and complete what she believed to be her duty. I told her so. I told her how many times I had repeated to her the same directions; while she, after the lapse of a very few days,—sometimes only a day or two,—had come round again, in her remarks and inquiries, to the very point whence she had first started. I told her how easy a thing this getting into a circle was, and how difficult it was to escape from it.

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Although she perfectly understood her condition, there was still a strange and almost unaccountable reaching forth for something beyond the plain path of nature, which I had faithfully and repeatedly pointed out to her. She wished for some shorter road, something mysterious or magical. She was, in short, a capital subject for humbuggery, had she not tried it already to her heart's content.

Occasionally, I must confess, I felt somewhat disposed to put her on the "starvation plan," as Dr. Johnson calls it,—on a diet of two pints only of plain gruel (thin hasty pudding,

rather) a day,—for she would have borne it much better than did Mr. Gray, of the preceding chapter. I am sorry I did not. However, I prescribed for her, in general, very well; and, except in the last-mentioned particular, have no reason for regret nor any call for confessions.

She remained under my care several weeks—all the while in a mill-horse track or circle, beginning at the same point and coming round to the same result or issue, when I frankly told her, one day, that it was a great waste, both of time and money, for her to remain longer. I saw, more and more clearly, that all her thoughts were concentrated on her own dear self. *Her* troubles, *her* health, *her* concerns, *her* prospects in life and death, were, to her, of more importance than all the world besides. No woman, as good as she was,—for she was, professedly, a disciple of him who said to his followers, "Feed my lambs,"—whom I have ever seen, was so completely wrapped up in self, and so completely beyond the pale of the world of benevolence.

My final advice to her, in addition to that general change of personal habits which, from the first, I had strongly recommended to her, was to return to her native city, and, after making her resolution and laying her plan, give herself no rest, permanently, till by personal appeal or otherwise she had brought all the females within her reach into maternal associations, moral reform societies, and the like. [Pg 248]

On her return to her husband and children, she made an attempt to carry out the spirit of my prescription, and not without a good degree of success. But the great benefit which resulted from it—that, indeed, which it was my ultimate object to secure—was that it diverted her thoughts from their inward, selfish tendency, and placed her on better ground as to health than she had occupied for some time before.

I saw her no more for ten or twelve years. Occasionally, it is true, I heard from her, that she was better. Yet she was never entirely well. She was never entirely beyond the circle in which she had so long moved. She returned, at times, to medical advice and medicine; but, so far as I could learn, with little permanent good effect. She died about twelve years after she left my "guardianship," an extreme sufferer, as she had lived; and a sufferer from causes that a correct education and just views of social life, and of health and disease, would, for the most part, have prevented.

CHAPTER LXV.

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POISONING WITH MAPLE SUGAR.

A particular friend of mine purchased one day, at a stand in the city, two small cakes of maple sugar. It was early in the spring, and very little of the article had as yet been manufactured. My friend, in his eagerness, devoured them immediately. He observed, before eating them, that they had a very dark appearance; but the taste was correct, as far as he could judge, and he did not hesitate. He was one of those individuals, moreover, who are not greatly given to self-denial in the matter of appetite.

The next day he had as sore a mouth as I ever saw. The inflammation extended not only to the back part of the mouth, but into the throat, and probably quite into the stomach, and was attended with a most distressing thirst, with loss of appetite, and occasional nausea. In short, it unfitted him for business the whole day; indeed it was many days before he recovered entirely.

My own conclusion, after a careful investigation of the facts, was, that the sugar was cooled down in vessels of iron, which were, in some way, more or less oxydated or rusted, and that a small quantity of free acid having been, by some means unknown, developed in the sugar, it entered into a chemical combination with the metallic oxyde, to form a species of copperas—perhaps the genuine sulphate of iron itself.

No medicine was given, nor was any needed. It was sufficient to let the system rest, till Nature, with the assistance of small quantities of water,—such as she was constantly demanding,—could eject the intruding foe. It required only a little patient waiting.

There is scarcely a doubt that the sufferer learned, from his experiment, one important lesson; viz., to let alone every thing which, by cooking, has been changed to a dark color. Beets are sometimes blackened by cooking in iron vessels, as well as sugar; and so are apples and apple-sauce, and sundry other fruits and vegetables. [Pg 250]

The word apple-sauce reminds me of an incident that recently occurred in my own family. A kind neighbor having sent us some apple-sauce, such of the family as partook of it freely, suffered, soon afterward, in a way that led to the suspicion of poison. This apple-sauce was quite dark-colored, but tasted well enough.

We have seen, in Chapter XXVIII., that in the use of apple-sauce, or apple butter, or, indeed, any thing containing an acid, which has been in contact with the inner surface of red earthen ware, glazed with the oxyde of lead, people are sometimes poisoned; but for common, plain, apple-sauce, recently cooked, to be poisonous, is rather unusual. However, we can hardly be too careful in these matters. Serious evils have sometimes arisen from various kinds of complicated cookery, even when the healthiness of the vessels used was quite above suspi. A powerful argument this in favor of simplicity.

It should also be remembered, with regard to sugar, that this is a substance whose use, even when known to be perfectly innoxious, is, at best, of doubtful tendency, beyond the measure which the Divine Hand has incorporated into the various substances which are prepared for our use. That sugar, in considerable quantities, leads to fulness, if not to fatness, is no proof of its healthfulness; since fatness itself is a sign of disease in man and all other animals, as has, of late, been frequently and fully demonstrated.

CHAPTER LXVI.

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PHYSICKING OFF MEASLES.

The father of a large family came to me one day, and, with unwonted politeness, inquired after my health. Of course, I did not at first understand him, but time and patience soon brought every thing to light. His family, he said, were all sick with measles, except his wife, and he wished to ask me a question or two.

The truth is, he wanted to consult me professionally, without paying a fee; and yet he felt a little delicacy about it. But I was accustomed to such things; for his was neither the first nor the hundredth application of the kind; so I was as polite as he was, in return.

Another individual stood near me just at that moment, who supposed he had a prior claim to my attention; and I was about to leave Mr. M. for a moment, when he said, in a low voice, and in a fawning manner: "I suppose, doctor, it is necessary to physic off well for the measles; is it not? The old women all say it is; but I thought that, as I saw you, it might be well to ask."

This species of robbery is so common, that few have any hesitancy about practising it. Mr. M., though passing for a pattern of honesty and good breeding, wherever he was known, was nevertheless trained to the same meanness with the rest of the neighborhood where I resided, and was quite willing—even though a faint consciousness of his meanness chanced to come over him now and then—to defraud me a little in the fashionable or usual manner.

Perhaps I may be thought fastidious on this point. But though I have been sponged,—I may as well again say robbed,—in this or a similar way, a hundred or a thousand times, I believe I never complained so loudly before. Yet it is due to the profession of medicine, and to those who resort to it, that I should give my testimony against a custom which ought never to have obtained foothold. [Pg 252]

But to return to our conversation;—for I was never mean enough to refuse to give such information as was required, to the best of my abilities, even though I never expected, directly or indirectly, to be benefited by it;—I told him, at once, that if costiveness prevailed at the beginning of convalescence, in this disease, some gentle laxative might be desirable; but that, in other circumstances, no medicine could be required, the common belief to the contrary notwithstanding.

Mr. M. seemed not a little surprised at this latter statement, and yet, on the whole, gratified. It was, to him, a new doctrine, and yet he thought it reasonable. He never could understand, he said, what need there was of taking "physic," when the body was already in a good condition.

This physicking off disease is about as foolish as taking physic to prevent it—of which I have said so much in Chapter XI. and elsewhere. I do not, indeed, mean to affirm that it is quite as fatal; though I know not but it may have been fatal in some instances. Death from measles is no very uncommon occurrence in these days. Now how do we know whether it is the disease that kills or the medicine?

And when we physic off, in the way above mentioned, how know we, that if, very fortunately, we do not kill, some other disease may not be excited or enkindled? You are aware, both from what has been said in these pages, and from your own observation, that measles are not unfrequently followed by dropsy, weak eyes, and other troubles. No individual, perhaps, is, by constitution, less inclined to dropsy than myself; yet he who has read carefully what I have noted in Chapter IV., will not be confident of his own safety in such circumstances. Yet if they are endangered who are least predisposed to this or any other disease, where is the safety of those who inherit such a predisposition?

CHAPTER LXVII.

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TIC DOULOUREUX.

Some fifty years ago, I saw in a Connecticut paper, a brief notice of the death of an individual in Wellingworth, in that State, from a disease which, as the paper proceeded to state,—and justly too,—not one in a million had then ever felt, and which not many at that time had ever heard of; viz., *tic douloureux*.

This notice, though it may have excited much curiosity,—it certainly arrested my own attention,—did not give us much light as to the nature of the disease. "What *is* tic douloureux?" I asked my friends; for at that time, of course, I knew nothing of the study of medicine. They could not tell me. "Why do medical men," I asked, "give us such strange

names? Is it to keep up the idea of mystery, as connected with the profession, in order thus to maintain an influence which modest worth cannot secure?"

It was largely believed at that time, by myself and many others, that science, like wealth,—especially medical science,—was aristocratical; that the learned world, though they saw the republican tendencies of things, were predisposed to throw dust in the people's eyes as long as they could. The fact that almost all our medicines, whether in the condition in which we see them labelled at the apothecary's shop, or as prescribed by the family physician, have Latin names,—was often quoted in proof of this aristocratic feeling and tendency.

Now there was doubtless some foundation for this opinion. Medical men did then and still very generally do believe, that it is better, on the whole, for the mass of mankind to have nothing to do with these matters, except at the prescription of those who have given the best part of their lives to the study of medicine and disease. That they are weapons of so much power, that even physicians—men who only partially understand the human constitution and their influence on it—are almost as likely to do harm with them as good, and that it is quite enough for society to bear the evils which are connected with the regular study and practice of the profession, without enduring a much larger host, inflicted by those who have other professions and employments, and must consequently be still more ignorant than their physicians. And may not this be one reason why a foreign language has been so long retained in connection with the names of diseases and medicines?

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But though physicians entertain the belief alluded to, and though it were founded in truth, it does not thence follow that mankind are to remain in ignorance of the whole subject of life and health, nor is it the intention of enlightened medical men that they shall. The latter are much more ready, as a general rule, to encourage among mankind the study of the most appropriate means of preventing disease, than they are willing to take the needful pains. In short, though physicians by their slowness to act, in this particular, are greatly faulty, the world as a mass are still more so.

I was speaking, at first, of *tic douloureux*. This is a painful affection of a nerve or a cluster of nerves. When it first began to be spoken of, it was confined chiefly to an expansion of nerve at the side of the face, called in anatomical works *pes anserina*. But, of late years, it has been found to attack various nerves and clusters of nerves in different parts of the body. In truth, under the general name of neuralgia, which means about the same thing, we now have *tic douloureux* of almost every part of the human system, and it has become so common that instead of one in a million, we have probably one or two if not more in every hundred, who have suffered from it in their own persons.

About the year 1840, I had a patient who was exceedingly afflicted with this painful disease. She was, at the same time, consumptive. The neuralgia was but a recent thing; the consumption had been of many years' standing, and was probably inherited. The physicians of her native region had exhausted their skill on her to no purpose.

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There was no hope of aid, in her case, from medicine. The only thing to be done was to invigorate her system, and thus palliate the neuralgia and postpone the consumption. She was accordingly placed under the most rigid restrictions which the code of physical law could demand. She was required to attend to exercise and bathing with great care; to avoid over anxiety and fretfulness; to drink water, and to eat the plainest food. It was not intended to interdict *nutritious* food; but only that which was *over-stimulating*.

It required considerable time to show her and her friends the practical difference between nutrition and stimulation. They thought, as thousands have thought beside them, that without a stimulating diet she could not be properly nourished. But they learned at length that good bread of all sorts, rice, peas, beans, and fruits, especially the first two, while they

were unstimulating, were even more nutritious than the more stimulating articles of flesh, fish, fowl, butter, and milk and its products.

The treatment to which she was directed was at length pretty carefully followed. The Friends—of which religious connection she was a member—are generally thorough, when we gain their full confidence. Her health was so far restored, that at one period I entertained strong hopes of her ultimate recovery; or, at least of a recovery which would permit of her continuance some twenty or twenty-five years longer. But after seven or eight years of comfortable though not very firm health, she again declined. She died at forty years of age.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

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COLD WATER IN FEVER.

My daughter, then about three years of age, was feverish; and as the lung fever was somewhat prevalent, the family became considerably alarmed.

On examination, I found a strong tendency to the head. The eye was heavy, the head hot and painful, and the tongue thickly coated. The digestive system was disordered, and the skin was collapsed, inactive, and cold. The extremities, especially the feet, were particularly cold and pale.

The days of hydropathy had now arrived; but I was not a full convert, as I have already told you, to the exclusive use of cold water in disease. However, a case was before me which obviously demanded it. So I proceeded to make frequent applications of Nature's drug to the top of her head, and to the temples, while I ordered warm and stimulating applications to the feet and ankles.

This treatment had the effect to render her condition somewhat more comfortable during the day, but at evening the fever returned, and during the night was violent. The tendency to the head was so great as to cause delirium. The anxiety of the family became very great. In the morning, however, she was rather better, so that hope again revived.

During the day the fever increased again, and towards evening and during the whole night was accompanied by restlessness and delirium. But we only persevered with the more earnestness in the use of what we believed to be the most rational treatment. She had, however, a very sick night. The next morning she was again better, though, as might have been expected, somewhat more feeble than she was twenty-four hours before.

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Most parents, I know, and not a few wise medical men among us, would have resorted to powders and pills; but we only persevered with our cold applications to the head, and our stimulating draughts to the feet. The bowels were in a very tolerable condition, otherwise a very mild cathartic might possibly have been administered. We had very strong hopes,—at least I had,—that nature would be too strong for the disease, and that the fever would, ere long, begin to abate.

In the afternoon the fever increased again, in some degree, and there was a slight delirium during the succeeding night. She slept a little, however, towards morning, after which she was evidently much better. This third day was passed away very comfortably, and she slept well during the succeeding night. The fourth morning she seemed to be quite restored.

Now a case of fever treated with emetics, diaphoretics, etc., and followed up with the usual paraphernalia of customary medical practice, which should yield so promptly and so

immediately, would be supposed to be cured by the medicine; and the cure would very probably be regarded as rather remarkable; and if there was any peculiarity in the treatment, if the diaphoretic powders, for example, had any new or strange name, the practice would, peradventure, be thought worth imitating in other apparently similar cases of disease.

For myself, however, I simply regard it as one of Nature's own cures, unobstructed and unembarrassed by medicine. As the child was young and tenacious of life, she might very probably have recovered under the more common routine of medical treatment. But would there have been any advantage in such a recovery, over one which was equally rapid and perfect without the aid of medicine? Would there, in the latter case, have been no hazard to the constitution?

CHAPTER LXIX.

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COLD-TAKING AND CONSUMPTION.

In Chapter XXIII., I have given a full account of my partial recovery from consumption. I have even spoken of the postponement as if it were complete and final. More than twenty years had now passed away, and I had begun to indulge the hope that I should never have another relapse.

As one element of this hope, I had nearly broken up the habit—once very strong—of taking cold, especially on my lungs. In truth, I believed all danger from this source to be entirely removed, and my particular susceptibility to any thing like acute pulmonary attacks forever at an end. I was confident, moreover, that the art of avoiding cold was an art which not only an individual, here and there, like myself, could acquire, but one which was within the reach of every one who would take the needful pains.

On a certain occasion of this latter kind, I was under a conventional necessity of exposing myself, in an unusual degree, for several successive evenings, to circumstances which, at an earlier period of my life, would, almost inevitably, have been followed by a cold. Was it safe, in my present condition, to run the risk? I hesitated for some time, but finally decided to comply with the request which had been made, and take the responsibility. I believed my susceptibility to cold so entirely eradicated that there was little if any danger.

But, as the event proved, I was quite mistaken; a severe cold came on, and left me in a condition not merely alarming, but immediately so. My lungs were greatly oppressed and my cough exceedingly severe and harassing; and it was followed with great debility and rapid emaciation.

Ashamed of myself, especially as I had boasted, for so many years, of an entire freedom from all tendencies of this sort, I endeavored, for a few days, to screen myself entirely from the public eye and observation. But I soon found that inaction, especially confinement to the house, would not answer the purpose,—that I should certainly die if I persisted in my seclusion.

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What now should I do? I was too feeble to work much, although the season had arrived when labor in the garden was beginning to be needed. Trees were to be pruned and washed, and other things promptly attended to. The open air was also the best remedy for my enfeebled and irritated bronchial cavities. Whether there was, at this time, any ulceration of tubercles in my lungs, is, to say the least, very doubtful. However, I greatly needed the

whole influence of out-of-door employment, or of travelling abroad; and, as it seemed to me, could not long survive without it.

Accordingly I took my pruning knife in my hand, and walked to the garden. It was about a quarter of a mile distant, and quite unconnected with the house I occupied. At first, it was quite as much as I could do to walk to the garden and return without attempting any labor. Nor could I have done even this, had I not rested several times, both on the road and in the enclosure itself.

It was a week before I was able to do more than merely walk to the garden and back, and perhaps prune a small fruit tree or shrub, and then return. But I persevered. It seemed a last if not a desperate resort; yet hope sometimes whispered that my hour had not yet come, that I had more work to perform.

At length I began to perceive a slight increase of muscular strength. I could work moderately a quarter of an hour or more, and yet walk home very comfortably. In about two months, I had strength enough to continue my labors several hours, in the course of a whole day, though not in succession—perhaps two in the forenoon and two in the afternoon. In about three months, I was, so far as I could perceive, completely restored.

It is to be remarked and remembered that, during the whole three months, I never took the smallest particle of medicine, either solid or fluid. My simple course was to obey, in the most rigid and implicit manner, all known laws, physical and moral. It was my full belief at that time,—it is still my belief,—that conformity to all the Creator's laws is indispensable to the best of health, in every condition of human life, but particularly so when we are already feeble and have a tendency to consumption. [Pg 260]

When it became known to my neighbors, who saw me day after day, reeling to my garden or staggering home, that I refused to take any medicine, there was a very general burst of surprise, and, in some cases, of indignation. "Why," said they, "what does the man mean? He must be crazy. As he is going on he will certainly die of a galloping consumption. Any one that will act so foolishly almost *deserves* to die."

As soon as I found myself fairly convalescent, I returned gradually to all those practices on which I had so long relied as a means of fortifying myself, but which, since my *fall*, had been partially omitted. Among these was bathing, especially cold bathing. To the last, however, I returned very cautiously. Not for fear I should not be able to secure a reaction, but rather for fear Nature would have to spend more *vitality* during the process than she could well afford to spare.

I have known cases of the latter kind. An aged minister in Cleveland, Ohio, who had long followed the practice of cold bathing every morning, came to me in Dec. 1851, when the cold weather was very intense, and told me that though he could, with considerable effort, get up a reaction in his system after the bath, he was afraid it *cost* too much. I advised him to suspend it a few weeks, which he did with evident advantage.

There are, however, many other things to be done besides giving due attention to cold bathing, if we would harden ourselves fully against taking cold, to which I should be glad to advert were it not foreign to the plan I had formed, and the limits which, in this work, I have prescribed to myself.

CHAPTER LXX.

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FREEZING OUT DISEASE.

I am well acquainted with one man of Yankee origin, who formerly made it a practice to freeze out his colds, as he called it. It is certainly better to prevent them, as I have all along and always taught. But this man's story is somewhat amusing, and by way of relief from our more sober subject, I will very briefly relate it.

Whenever he fancied he had taken cold, he would go, at about nine o'clock in the evening, in such diminished clothing as would render him in a very little time, quite chilly, and remain out of doors, when the weather would possibly permit, till he was almost frozen, and then come in and go immediately to bed, and procure a reaction. This he called freezing out his colds. Whether it was the cold or the heat that restored him, may be a point not yet fully settled; but it was a well-known fact to his friends, though they insisted in protesting against the practice, that every vestige of his cold would frequently, if not always, immediately disappear.

But it was a method of treatment which, as the event proved, was not without its hazards. I met with him a few years since, and on inquiring whether he continued to be as successful as formerly in freezing out his colds, he replied that for some time past he had not tried the plan, for, on a former occasion, after many successful experiments, he had failed in one, and had concluded to relinquish it. He made no farther confessions for himself, but his friends have since told me that in the case he faintly alluded to, he came very near dying under the process. He was sick with a fever, as the consequence, for a long time.

A man in one of the Middle States, who is himself about half a physician, and who has in various ways done much for his fellow-men as a philanthropist, is accustomed to pursue a course of treatment which, though slightly related to the former, is, nevertheless, founded on principle. He keeps the sick in a room whose temperature is very low,—little, if at all, above the freezing point,—in order that they may inhale a full supply of oxygen. For every one doubtless knows that the colder the air, the denser it is, and consequently, the greater the absolute quantity of oxygen inhaled at each breath. By compelling his patients, however weak and feeble, to breathe a cold atmosphere, he secured to them an increased and full supply of oxygen.

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To prevent his patients from suffering, in consequence of the external atmospheric cold, he keeps them in warm beds, and only suffers them to be out of bed a very short time, at long intervals. And while out of bed even, they are rubbed rapidly, in order to prevent any collapse of the skin from the cold. I knew him to keep a very delicate female, who was scrofulous if not consumptive, for several weeks of the coldest part of the winter, in a room whose temperature seldom exceeded 30° to 40°, scarcely permitting her to go out of it night or day, and what is still more curious, she slowly recovered under the treatment, and is now—seven or eight years afterwards—in the enjoyment of excellent health.

CHAPTER LXXI.

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THE AIR-CURE.

The individual alluded to in the preceding chapter, once sent for me to come and aid him for a time. He was the proprietor of a somewhat dilapidated water-cure establishment, which he wished to convert into what he chose to denominate an air-cure. For though half a physician

himself, he had usually employed men of education to assist him; but, not having been quite fortunate in his selection, in every instance, he was disposed to make trial of myself.

In expressing to me his desires, he said he understood, perfectly well, my position. He well knew, in the first place, that I was not a hydropathist, but a regular, old-school physician, with this modification: that I had, for the most part, lost my faith in medicine, and relied chiefly on the recuperative efforts of Nature. He thought, on some points, as he said, a little differently from me; still, he supposed that wherein we could not agree we could at least agree to differ.

The sum total of his wishes, in short, was, that I would aid him in such way and manner as might seem to me best. He believed air to be the most important and efficient remedial agent in the world. His ideas of the virtue of this ærial fluid were hardly exceeded by those of Mr. Thackrah, of Leeds, England, who believes that we subsist more on air than on food and drink.

I was with this good man about six months, when, finding it impossible to carry out his plan, I left him. But I left him with regret. His purposes were generous in the extreme—I might even say noble. He loved to cure for the pleasure of curing—not for the emolument. In short, he seemed to have no regard to the emolument—not the slightest, and to be as nearly disinterested as usually falls to the human lot. [Pg 264]

But did he cure? you will perhaps inquire. Yes, if *anybody* cures. Persons came under his care who had been discharged by other physicians—both allopathic and homœopathic—as incurable; and who yet, in a reasonable time, regained their health. They followed our directions, obeyed the laws of health, and recovered. You may call it what you please—either cure or spontaneous recovery. Miracle, I am quite sure, it was not.

What, then, were the agencies employed in the air-cure? My friend believed that the judicious application of pure air, in as concentrated, and, therefore, as cool a state as possible, particularly to the internal surface of the lungs, was more important than every other agency, and even more important than all others. But then he did not forget the skin. He had his air bath, as well as his deep breathings; it was as frequently used, and was, doubtless, as efficacious.

He also placed great reliance on good food and drink. Animal food he rejected, and condiments. I have neither known nor read of any vegetarian, of Britain or America, who carried his dietetic peculiarities to what would, by most, be regarded as an extreme, more than he. And yet his patients, with few exceptions, submitted to it with a much better grace than I had expected. Some of them, it is true, took advantage of his absence or their own, and made a little infringement upon the rigidity of his prescriptions, but these were exceptions to the general rule; and I believe the transgressors themselves regretted it in the end—fully satisfied that every indulgence was but a postponement of the hour of their discharge.

One thing was permanently regarded as ultra. He did not believe in breakfasting; and therefore kept every patient, who wished to come under his most thorough treatment, from the use of food till about the middle of the day. This permitted of but two meals a day, which, however, is one more than has sometimes been recommended by O. S. Fowler, the phrenologist, and even by a few others. [Pg 265]

The main error, however, of this air-cure practice,—if error there was in it,—consisted in the idea of its applicability to everybody, in every circumstance. For though it may be true that as large a proportion of inveterate cases of disease would disappear under such treatment as under any other, yet there are probably not a few to whom it would be utterly unadapted.

CHAPTER LXXII.

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THE CLERGYMAN.

An Ohio clergyman, just setting out in his ministerial career, consulted me, one day, about his health and future physical prospects. His nervous system and cerebral centre had been over-taxed and partially prostrated; and his digestive and muscular powers were suffering from sympathy. In short, he was a run-down student, who, in order to be resuscitated, needed rest.

It was not, however, the rest of mere inertia that he required, but rest from those studies to which his attention had been long and patiently confined. His bodily powers were, indeed, flagging with the rest; but then it was impossible for him to be restored without *some* exercise. In truth, it was not so much a *rest* of body, mind, or heart that he needed, as a *change*.

I will tell you what a course he had been, for five or six years, pursuing. Though his father was reckoned among the wealthier farmers of Ohio, yet, having a large family to sustain and educate, he did not feel at full liberty to excuse his children from such co-operation with him as would not materially interfere with their studies. Hence they were required—and this son among the rest—not only to be as economical as possible, in all things, but also to earn as much as they could, especially during their vacations. They were not, of course, expected to do any thing which was likely to impair their health, but, on the contrary, to take every possible pains to preserve the latter, and to hold labor and study and every thing else in subserviency to it.

The son for whom I was requested to prescribe, not only attended to his father's wishes and expectations, and endeavored to fulfil them, but went much farther than was intended, and did more than he ought. Besides keeping up with his class, he taught school a very considerable portion of the time, so that his mental apparatus, as I have already more than intimated, was continually over-taxed; and he had been a sufferer, more or less, for several years, when I met with him.

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My advice was that he should leave his studies, entirely, for two years, and labor moderately, in the meantime, on his father's farm. His principal objection to doing so, was, that he was already at an age so much advanced, that it seemed to him like a wrong done to society, to delay entering upon the duties of the ministry two whole years. But I reasoned the case with him as well as I could, and, among other things, pointed out to him the course pursued by his Divine Master.

I have never met with him from that day to this; nor have I ever received from him—strange as it may seem—any communication on the subject. But I have been informed from other sources, that after laboring for a time with his father, he was settled as a minister in a neighboring village with greatly improved health and highly encouraging prospects. He is at the present time one of the main pillars, theologically, of the great State of New York, and, as I have reason for believing, is in the enjoyment of good health.

It is easy to see that the time he spent on his father's farm, instead of being a loss to him, was, in the end, among the most important parts of the work of his education. How much better it was for him to recruit his wasted energies before he took upon him the full responsibilities of preacher and pastor in a large country church and congregation, than to rush into the ministry prematurely, with the prospect, amounting almost to a certainty, of breaking down in a few years, and spending the remnant of his days in a crippled condition,

—to have the full consciousness that had he been wise he might have had the felicity of a long life of usefulness, and of doing good to the souls and bodies of mankind.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

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HE MUST BE PHYSICKED, OR DIE.

Mr. S., a very aged neighbor of mine, fell into habits of such extreme inactivity of the alimentary canal, that instead of invoking the aid of Cloacinà, as Mr. Locke would say, every day, he was accustomed to weekly invocations only. There was, however, a single exception. In the month of June, of each year, he was accustomed to visit the seaside, some twenty miles or more distant, and remain there a few days, during which and for a short time afterward, his bowels would perform their wonted daily office.

And yet, despite of all this, he got along very well during summer and autumn, for a man who was over seventy years of age. It was not till winter—sometimes almost spring—that his health appeared to suffer as the consequence of his costiveness. Nor was it certain, even then, whether his inconveniences,—for they hardly deserved the name of sufferings,—arose from his costiveness, or from the croakings of friends and his own awakened fears and anxieties. Nearly every one who knew of the facts in his case was alarmed, and many did not hesitate to cry out, even in his hearing, "He must be physicked, or die!" And their fears and croakings, by leading him to turn his attention to his internal feelings, greatly added to his difficulties.

My principal aim, as his friend and physician, was to convince him that there was no necessity of anxiety on the subject, as long as none of the various functions of the system were impaired. As long as digestion, circulation, respiration, perspiration, etc., were tolerably well performed, and his general health was not on the decline, it was not very material, as I assured him, whether his alvine movements were once a day, once in two days, or once a week.

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The various emunctories or outlets of the body should, undoubtedly, be kept open and free, so that every portion of worn-out or effete matter may be effectually got rid of. In order to have this done in the very best manner, it is indispensably necessary that we should eat, drink, breathe, sleep, and exercise the muscles and all the mental and moral powers daily. And yet we are to such an extent the creatures of habit, that we can, in all these respects, bring ourselves to almost any thing we choose, and yet pass on, for a time, very comfortably. Thus we may eat once, twice, thrice, or five times a day, and if possessed of a good share of constitutional vigor, we may even accustom ourselves to considerable variation from the general rule with regard to drinking, sleeping, exercise, temperature, etc. Healthy men have been able to maintain their health, in tolerable measure, for a long time, without drink, without exercise, and even without sleep. Of the truth of this last remark, I could give you, did time and space permit, many well-attested, not to say striking facts.

I was not wholly successful in my attempts at quieting the mind and feelings of my aged patient or his friends. And yet his erratic habit was never entirely broken up. He lived to the age of fourscore without suffering much more from what are usually called the infirmities of age, than most other old men. It must not, however, be concealed that he possessed what has been sometimes denominated an iron constitution.

Mr. Locke strongly insists that children should be trained, from the very first, to diurnal habits of the kind in question; and I cannot help thinking that such habits should be secured

very early—certainly at eight or ten years of age. Some of the healthiest men and women I have ever known were those who had either been trained or had trained themselves in this way. And yet I would not be so anxious to bring nature back to this rule when there have been large digressions, as to be found administering cathartics on every trifling occasion.

An old man, who eats little and exercises still less, but has a good pulse, a good appetite, and a free perspiration, with a cheerful mind, need not take "physic" merely because his bowels do not move more than once a week; nor need those who are feverish, and who eat and exercise but little. The disturbance which will ensue, if medicine be taken, may be productive of more mischief, on the whole, than the absorption into the system of small portions of the retained excretions, or the small amount of irritation they produce—and probably will be so. [Pg 270]

It will be a solace to some to know that the alvine excretions of the system are not so much the remnants of our food, when that food is such as it should be, as a *secretion* from the internal or lining membrane of the bowels. Consequently, if this secretion is interrupted by disease, there will be a proportionally diminished necessity for alvine evacuations.

Prof. —, of Ohio, had been sick of fever, for a long time, and, on the departure of the disease, his bowels were left in such a condition that cathartics, or at least laxatives, began to be thought of; but his physician interdicted their use: His costiveness continued to the twenty-first day, without any known evil as the consequence. On this day nature rallied. Then followed a period of quiescence of fourteen days, and then another of seven days, after which he fell into his former diurnal habits. There was much croaking among the neighbors, on account of the treatment of his physician; but the results put all to silence.

The case of Judge —, in the interior of the same State (Ohio), was so much like that of Prof. —, in all its essential particulars, that I need but to state the fact, without entering at all upon the details.

J. W. G., a lawyer of Massachusetts, was sick with a lingering complaint, attended with more or less of fever, for several months. During this time there was one interval, of more than thirty days, during which his bowels did not move. And yet there was no evidence of any permanent suffering as the consequence.

The principal use I would make of these facts, so far as the mass of general readers is concerned, is the following: If, during feebleness and sickness, human nature will bear up, for a long time, under irregularities of this sort, is it needful that we should be alarmed and fly at once to medicine in cases *less* alarming—above all, in these cases, when, except in regard to costiveness, the health and habits are excellent? May we not trust much more than we have heretofore believed, in the recuperative efforts of Nature? [Pg 271]

CHAPTER LXXIV.

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WHO HATH WOE? OR, THE SICK WIDOW.

Early in the year 1852, I received a letter, of which the following, with very slight needful alterations, is an extract. It was written from the interior of Massachusetts.

"About three months ago, I took a long journey by stage-coach, which brought on, as I think, an internal inflammation. Since that time I have taken very little medicine. Please tell me whether it is right for me to bathe daily in, and drink freely of, cold water; and whether it is safe to make cold applications to the parts affected.

"I take as much exercise as I can without producing irritation. I do not, by any means, indulge in the food which my appetite craves.

"I am twenty-six years of age; was married and left a widow, while young and very ignorant, under circumstances the most deeply painful. I have a strong desire to get well if I can; though if I must give up the thought I am willing to die.

"I should be very glad to see you, if you will take the trouble to come and see me. I should have made an effort to consult you, in person, before now, if I could have safely taken the journey."

At the time of receiving this letter I was travelling in a distant State, and, as an immediate visit was wellnigh impracticable, I wrote her, requesting such farther information as might enable me to give her a few general directions, promising to see her on my return in the spring. In reply to my inquiries, I received what follows:—

"I have been, from childhood, afflicted with bunches in the throat. There is no consumptive tendency on either my father's or my mother's side; but I come, by the maternal side, from a king's evil^[1] family. I am an ardent, impulsive creature, possessing a nervous, sanguine temperament; naturally cheerful and agreeable, but rendered, by sickness, irritable, capricious, and melancholic. I fear consumption so much, that were I convinced it was fully fastened upon me, I might be tempted, unless restrained by a strong moral influence, to commit a crime which might not be forgiven. [Pg 273]

"I have great weakness in the throat, and soreness in the chest, with a dull pain between the shoulders. My appetite is extraordinary;—I think it has increased since I have dieted. My flesh is stationary. I gain a few pounds, and then commit some wild freak and lose it. I am unaccountable to myself. I think, sir, that my mental disturbances impair my health.

"I anticipate much pleasure from seeing you; for I see, by your letter, you understand me. I have always been thought inexplicable. I feel a universal languor. I am, at times, unconscious. I feel dead to all things; there seems a loss of all vitality; and sometimes there is a sense of suffocation. All these feelings are extreme, because I am, by my nature, so sensitive. I met the other day with a slight from a friend, a young lady, which caused grief so excessive that I have ever since been suffering from influenza."

These lengthy extracts may not be very interesting to the general reader, except so far as they reveal to him some of the internal cogitations of a soul borne down with a load of suffering, which almost drove her to suicide. "Who hath woe,"—as Solomon says, with respect to a very different description of human character,—if not this poor widow?

And yet it required a personal visit, and the conversation of a couple of hours, to fathom the depths of her woe, to the utmost. For there are secrets of the human heart, with which, of course, no stranger—not even the family physician—should presume to intermeddle; though to these depths, in the case of the half-insane sufferer of whom I am speaking, it was not necessary that I should go, in order to find out what I had all along suspected. Disease had been communicated several years before, of a kind which was much more communicable *then*, than it was eradicable now. [Pg 274]

Whenever, by the laws of hereditary descent, in their application to health and disease, our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren suffer, we may recognize in it the hand of the great Creator; nor do we doubt, often, the wisdom of such laws nor their ultimate tendency to work out final good. But when we find a widow suffering many long years, from a disease to which a husband's weakness and wickedness has subjected her, what shall we say, especially when we have reason to fear that the evils in question, some of them, at least, will be terminable only, in their effects, with life itself?

My patient is *patiently* wearing out her ills; and what she cannot wear out, she is learning to endure. Her case cannot be reached with medicine, at least with safety, and is only to be affected, so far as affected at all, by yielding the most unflinching obedience to the laws of God, physical and moral. She will not die of consumption; she will live on; but how much progress she may be able to make towards the land of life and health, is by no means certain. Her case is, at best, a trying one, and must compel us, whenever we reflect on the subject, to say, "Who hath woe, if not persons situated like this widow?"^[J]

FOOTNOTES:

- [I] She was not aware that king's evil, or scrofula, is oftentimes the parent of consumption.
- [J] Since this chapter was written, I have had the pleasure of learning from a reliable source that the young woman above referred to is now enjoying comparatively good health. She married a second time, a year or two afterwards; and by following out the course prescribed, and with the blessing of Heaven, she came at length to her present position of usefulness and happiness.

CHAPTER LXXV.

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THE PENALTY OF SELF-INDULGENCE.

The thought that a minister of the gospel can be gluttonous is so painful that, after selecting as the caption to the present chapter, "A gluttonous minister," I concluded to modify it. Perhaps, after all, it might be as well in the end, to call things by their proper names. However, we will proceed, as we have set out, for this once.

A minister about forty years of age came to me one day, deeply involved in all the midnight horrors of dyspepsia.

On investigating his case, I found it one of the most trying I had ever met with. It was not only trying in itself, in the particular form and shape it assumed, but it had been rendered much more troublesome and unmanageable by injudicious medical treatment.

My course was a plain one, and I proceeded cautiously to prescribe for him—not medicine, for in my judgment he needed none, but simply a return to the physical laws he had so long and so palpably violated. These laws I endeavored briefly to recall to his attention. As he was an intelligent man, I dealt with him in the most plain and direct manner.

Some two or three weeks afterward he called on me again, saying that he was no better. I repeated my prescription, only more particularly. Still I was not, as I now think, sufficiently particular and definite, for want of time. Moreover, he still clung to the off-hand customs of empiricism,—that of looking at the tongue, feeling the pulse, and seeming "wondrous wise,"—and vainly hoped I would treat him in the same direct way, instead of requiring what he regarded as a more circuitous course.

He called on me the third time. We had now ample leisure and opportunity for attempting to ferret out the causes which had operated to bring him into his present condition, some of which, it appeared, had been of long standing.

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I inquired, in the first place, concerning his exercise. This, he said, was taken very irregularly, chiefly in walking abroad on business, seldom or never in company. His mind, in all probability, was not directed, to any considerable extent, from its accustomed mill-horse track. His gait, too, when he walked, was staid and measured. It was never buoyant, lively, or playful. And as for amusement, he had none at all.

His diet was still worse than his exercise. He had a large family, and resided in the midst of a dense population; and was so situated as to render his house, practically, a kind of ministerial thoroughfare. He probably entertained, at his hospitable table, more ministers, literary men, and students than any other three clergymen in the neighborhood.

"Now," said he to me, "we have a good deal of table preparation to make, and Mrs. Y., who dearly loves to have things in pretty good order, sets a full table, with, a large variety. Well, this food must be eaten. It will never do for a minister who has a large family and lives on a moderate salary, to *waste* any thing. And, besides, as I ought to tell you, we sometimes, if not always, have a very considerable amount of rich food on the table."

"Do you mean to intimate that the bountiful provision you make for others renders it necessary for you to overeat? Or have your remarks a reference to a supposed necessity of eating rich food?"

"We are not, of course, absolutely compelled to *any* thing. My meaning is this: In order to meet the wants of those who are liable to call on us at almost any hour, *we prepare largely*. Then, to meet these varying and often very fastidious tastes, we must have *a large variety* of food, and it must be *highly seasoned*. And then, if it happens that our company is not as large as is expected, we have an extra quantity remaining, and I am tempted to aid in eating it up, the highly seasoned food among the rest."

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"And you think, do you, that this highly seasoned food is the cause of your dyspepsia?"

"Undoubtedly it is."

"And do you expect to be cured of a disease which is produced by certain definable causes, like this, and yet be permitted to go on in the same way you have long gone? Do you suppose I have any power to grant you an immunity from the evil effects of high living while that high living is persisted in? Can you get rid of an effect till you first remove the cause?"

"Why, no, sir, not exactly. Such an expectation would be very unreasonable. But is there no medicine I can take that will *partially* restore me? Perhaps, at my age, entire restoration from such a hydra disease as dyspepsia is hardly to be expected; but can you not patch me up in part?"

"What! and suffer you to go on sinning?"

"Why, yes, to some small extent. It is very hard, nay, it seems to me almost impossible, to break away from the routine of my family, at least as long as Mrs. Y. is fully determined to prepare for company according to the prevailing customs. I could submit to a different arrangement if she were ready for it."

"I wish I could encourage you to pursue this compromising course of conduct. But it is not so. You must change your habits entirely, or you must continue to suffer. For if it were possible to patch you up, for a short time, while your present habits are continued, it would not be as well for you in the end: It would only add another head and horn, perhaps several others, to the monster that annoys you. No, sir; you must change your habits or give up the contest. There is no use in attempting to do any thing, in such a case as yours, with medicine."

"Well, then, if it must be so, it must. I will try once more, and see what I can do."

He left me with a downcast look, and, I suspected, with a heavy heart. At all events, my own heart was heavy, and seemed almost ready to bleed. Here was a father in our ministerial Israel,—one to whom multitudes looked up for the bread of spiritual life,—who was a perfect slave to his appetites; or, at least, to the conventionalisms of modern house-keeping. He groaned daily and hourly under bodily disease the most aggravated and severe. His eyes were red and swelled; the sides of his nose enlarged and inflamed, till he had the appearance of being about half a sot. He knew all about it, and yet refused to take the first step in the way of reformation.

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I saw him, by accident, once more, and would have spoken with him freely; but he seemed to shun every thing beyond a merely passing compliment. I saw how it was with him; and the reflections which arose in my mind gave me the most intense pain.

Two or three weeks afterward, while in an intimate and confidential conversation with two of his very familiar friends, I ventured to predict his fall, with nearly as much particularity as if the events which were predicted had already taken place. I was asked how I dared to say such things, even in secret, of so good a man and such a father in the American Church. So I gave them, by way of reply, the principal facts in the case, as detailed above.

Not many years passed ere this very minister was tried for a crime much more high-handed than gluttony, though sometimes the sequel to it; and not only tried, but silenced. The results of the trial were as shocking to most people as they were unexpected. Every one said: "How can it be?"

Mr. Y. became a farmer, and is still so. But he is cured of his dyspepsia. Compelled, as I have reason to believe he is, to practise the most rigid economy, having very little temptation to unlawful indulgence, and having an abundance of healthful exercise in the open air, he has every appearance, externally, of a reformed man. His old friends would, I think, hardly know him. His skin is as clear, and his eyes and nose as physiologically correct in their appearance, as yours or mine. True, he is an old man, but he is not a gluttonous old man. He is a fallen man, but a healthy, and, I hope, a penitent one. He has experienced a species of first resurrection, and has, I trust, the hope of a better one still.

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Now, had this man believed, in the first place, that the fault of his dyspepsia was not wholly chargeable on Mrs. Y., but also on himself,—had he clearly seen that he loved high living, and would not relinquish it,—he might have been reformed without a dreadful and scathing ordeal, and without disgracing the cause of his Divine Master. But alas! "the woman that thou gavest to be with me," as he said, was in fault; and so he did not reform himself.

That his wife was in fault, most deeply, I do not deny. She knew her husband's weakness, and yet continued to place before him those temptations which she well knew were too strong for him. How she could do this, and persist in doing it, is, to me, a mystery. But she had her reward; at least, in part. For in the fall and retirement of her husband from public life, and in the consciousness—which was the most terrible of all—of his guilt, must not her sufferings have been terrible?

It is indeed true that she may not have been wise enough—for this wisdom has not yet been made public property, in the fullest sense—to look at the subject in one point of view, which would be calculated to add to the poignancy of her anguish. So that we may be almost ready to say, in her case, "Ignorance is bliss." I refer, here, to the infliction of scrofula and nervousness, by high living, on the next generation.

For while Mrs. Y. was bowing down to public opinion, and preparing rich viands for her guests, and practically compelling her husband and children to eat up what they had nibbled at and left, she was not only fastening dyspepsia upon the former and nervousness upon

herself, but imparting more or less of a tendency to nervousness and scrofula upon the rest of her family. Of the two thousand children born in a day, in the United States, from two hundred to three hundred—perhaps nearer four hundred—come into the world with a scrofulous tendency; and of these, it is highly probable, that at least one hundred per day are manufactured at just such tables as those which were set by Mrs. Y. for the teachers of the religion of Jesus Christ. [Pg 280]

I have quoted the old adage, that "Ignorance is bliss;" but alas! is it not to trifle with the most solemn considerations? Can that be regarded as blissful which leaves a mother, who, in general, means to love and honor the Saviour, to destroy her husband and one or two of his children? There is little doubt that, besides shutting her husband out of the sacred enclosure, after she had destroyed his health, Mrs. Y. was the means of destroying at least one or two of her children. One of them, who was scrofulous, ran at last—a very common occurrence—into consumption, and perished early, in the beginning of active usefulness.

I may be suspected of exaggeration, by some of my readers. Would to God, for humanity's sake and for Christ's sake, it were so! For though I cannot subscribe to the creed of those who profess to be willing to come into everlasting condemnation for the glory of God, yet, so long as opportunity for repentance shall last, I would willingly be convicted of untruth, if so that the falsehood might be made palpable to my mind, rather than believe what I am compelled to believe with regard to the murderous tendency on soul and body of our murderous modern cookery. Is it not true—the old adage, that while "God," in his mercy, "sends us meats, the Devil," in his malignity, "sends us cooks?"

This unnatural cookery,—this mingling medicine with viands naturally healthful, and torturing the compounds thus formed into sources of irritation, has more to do with that sensuality which has come upon us like a flood,—much of it in new forms,—than many are aware. And I am much mistaken if modern societies for moral reform, popularly so called, might not thank the over-refined cookery of a gross and highly stimulating diet, for that necessity which impels to their own field of labor.

One thing more might have been mentioned in its proper place—the tendency of high living to eruptions on the skin. These, in their various forms of pimple, carbuncle, boil, etc., are becoming quite the order of the day. Mr. Y.'s family had a full share of them, especially those of them who were scrofulous. I have already mentioned the appearance of Mr. Y.'s face, and have alluded to the change which took place after his fall. But I should have spoken of the eruptions on his face, which, at times, were such as almost made him ashamed to enter the pulpit. [Pg 281]

You will see, from the tenor of these remarks, that I have laid the guilt, in this sad affair, just where I believe it ought to rest. I have not sought to exculpate one individual or party, at the expense of another equally guilty, but rather to do justice to all.

Only one thing remains, which is to confess my *own* guilt. Have I not great reason to fear that my advice was not sufficiently pointed and thorough? I might have gone to Mr. Y. and told him the truth, the whole truth. What if it had given offence? Would not the prospect of doing good, rather than of giving offence, have been worth something? In any event, I do regret most deeply my unfaithfulness, even though it arose from delicacy and diffidence, for that very delicacy and diffidence were far enough from being grounded on the love of God. They were grounded much more on the love of human approbation. No man was ever more free from it than our Saviour. Ought I not to have used the same plainness that he would have used? Had I rebuked Mrs. Y. as kindly and as faithfully as he rebuked Martha at Bethany, how much, for ought I can ever know, might have been saved, not only to the cause of health and conjugal happiness, but also to that of piety.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

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DR. BOLUS AND MORPHINE.

A telegraphic communication was made to me one day, nearly as follows: "B. J. W. is very sick, and is not expected to live through the day. Please come on immediately."

The distance was about one hundred and fifty miles, and the mode and means of conveyance neither very direct nor rapid for these latter times. It was more than probable that Mr. B. J. W. would be dead before I could reach the place. However, as he was a particular friend, and as there was some hope, I concluded to set out.

Late in the evening,—or rather, in the night,—I arrived at the place, and found the young man still alive. He was, however, as it was easy to perceive, in a very critical condition. Glad to find him alive, but inclined to fall in with the general opinion that his case was a hopeless one, and withal greatly fatigued, I yielded to the demands of exhausted Nature, and slept a short time, when his physician arrived.

Now I had been sent for, in part, as a special friend, and in part, as a medical counsellor. And yet there were difficulties. Dr. Bolus, the family physician, was just such a man—for reasons that might be given—as I dreaded to advise with, should my advice be needed. He was one who would be likely to think any important suggestion an impeachment of his own superior wisdom. Science, true science, is always modest, and does not fear any thing; because she loves, most of all things, *to be right*. But Dr. Bolus had not, as I think, enough of true science to make him feel or perceive the want of it. The ignorant are always self-confident in proportion to their ignorance.

We examined the patient, as soon as possible, and retired for consultation. Dr. Bolus gave a full history of the progress of the case, with a particular account of the treatment. I saw at once, both from the existing symptoms and Dr. Bolus's statement, that the tendency to the brain—so great as to keep up an almost constant delirium—was quite as likely to be caused by the enormous quantities of morphine and quinine, and other active medicines which had been administered, as to belong properly to the disease. I therefore advised a gradual reduction and ultimate discontinuance of the extra stimulants. [Pg 283]

Dr. Bolus was opposed to the reduction I proposed, but finally consented to it, at least in part, and the patient evidently derived almost immediate benefit from it. When I had pushed my views with regard to the stimuli as far as I could, we separated, and as the distance at which the doctor resided was considerable, and as I was on the spot to watch the patient, he proposed not to call again till early in the morning of the following day.

I was by no means satisfied with the compromise we had made. It had not accomplished its intended object. Dr. Bolus had, indeed, yielded a little, but not enough to satisfy me. I believed the amount of stimulus still given vastly too great, and was unwilling to continue it. In truth, I persuaded one of the attendants to omit the principal articles, whenever the hour came for administering them, assuring him that I would take all the responsibility.

Of the other attendant I would have made the same requisition, but he being exceedingly attached to Dr. Bolus, would never have tolerated the slightest concealment, or departure from the strictest letter of the law.

It was easy to see that the less stimulating treatment of each alternate two hours, during which it was entirely omitted, left behind it, on the patient's frame, a better influence than the more active treatment of the other two. And when the next medical consultation came, I pleaded for a still greater diminution of the stimulus. But, as I had unwillingly used a little duplicity,—a thing I now deeply regret,—in order to come at my conclusions against the

stimulants, I was not willing to state, in full, the grounds of my opinion, and therefore could not prevail with Dr. Bolus to consent to any farther advances in the unstimulating plan.

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I was now, at length, compelled to leave for home; and the results, for the rest of the time, were reported to me through the kindness of the young man's friends. It is sufficient, perhaps, to say that he finally recovered; but it was not till the lapse of several months. In the mean time, a severe ulcer broke out on the lower part of his back, which caused much suffering, and appeared to retard very greatly the progress of his recovery.

My errors in this case were numerous and great. Believing, as I did, in the outset, that Dr. Bolus and myself could never agree, I did wrong in consenting to a consultation with him. I ought to have been nothing but a visitor, or else to have entered fully into the spirit and duty of a counsellor. In the former case I might, indeed, have outraged every feeling of benevolence; in the latter I ought to have proposed my objections in full, and not to have compromised so as to submit to what I really believed to be radically and essentially wrong.

For I did most fully believe all this; and in spite of every effort at concealment, my scepticism finally came out, and I was weak enough to speak of it, and openly to find fault with Dr. Bolus. A practical quarrel followed between Dr. Bolus and myself, in which the friends joined, or, at least, strongly sympathized.

My own belief, then, was, and it still remains the same, that the violence of the young man's disease, especially the tendency to the brain, was chiefly, if not wholly, owing to the medicine administered; and that, from the very first, no active medicine—nothing but an exceedingly mild and cooling treatment—was required. It was even my belief that the ulcer was caused by the medicine.

But, while I lost confidence in human nature, and especially in the human nature of some of my brethren of the medical profession, by this experiment, I became more thoroughly convinced than ever before of the great need of honest and benevolent as well as scientific men in this department, and of the general impotency and worse than impotency of much that is dignified with the name of medical treatment. I became most fully convinced, that in acute diseases as well as chronic, Nature, unembarrassed, will generally accomplish her own work, when left to herself and to good and careful nursing and attendance.

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CHAPTER LXXVII.

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BLEEDING AND BLISTERING OMITTED.

One of my neighbors had fallen down-stairs, and injured himself internally, in the right side of the chest; and a degree, greater or less, of inflammation had followed. The pain was constant, though not severe; but the soreness was considerable, and did not give promise of speedy amendment.

My advice was to keep quiet, both in body and mind, and to avoid all kinds of exertion that could possibly affect the chest. I also advised the use of water, not only for drink, in small draughts, but, if the pain and soreness should be troublesome, as an external application to the part affected. The food was to be mild and unstimulating. A tendency to crowd around the fire was to be guarded against and prevented, by putting on, if necessary, an increased amount of clothing.

Two days passed away with no great variation of the symptoms, either for better or worse. I was now fully convinced that I had taken the true course, because, otherwise, my patient

must, by this time, have become worse. Accordingly, I persevered in my general let-alone plan for about two weeks, when the patient fully recovered.

He was a slender boy, in the fifteenth year of his age, strongly inclined, by inheritance, to disease of the chest and brain; and this consideration, among others, led me to be extremely cautious about his treatment. The greater the danger the greater the necessity that what is done should be done right, or we shall defeat our own purposes.

But the most remarkable fact in relation to this very interesting case is,—and it is chiefly for the sake of this fact that I have related the story,—that more than forty-eight hours had passed, after the occurrence of the accident, before it came into my mind that any thing could, by possibility, be done for the chest, in the way of bleeding, blistering, etc.,—so utterly irrational had this treatment, once so fashionable, come to be regarded, both by myself and a few others. How strange that I should not think of it in two whole days! Twenty years before, I should not have dared to pass through the first twenty-four hours, in such a case, without *thinking*, at least, of balsams and mustard poultices and the whole paraphernalia of external treatment, to say nothing of bleeding and blistering. [Pg 287]

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

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MEDICAL VIRTUES OF SLEEP.

My own child, a boy nine or ten years of age, and somewhat inclined to croup, was one evening wheezing considerably, and, as his mother thought, was threatened with an immediate attack, either from this or some other disease. Of course, there was not a little anxiety manifested in the family on his account, and we were deliberating what to do with him, when the late Dr. Shew, the hydropathist, chanced to come in.

After a little general conversation, we turned our thoughts again to our little patient, and asked Dr. Shew what he would do with him if he were his patient. "If it were my case," said he, "I would give him a tepid bath—say at about the temperature of 80° or 85°." "Would you do nothing more?" "Nothing at all, except to put him early to bed."

I was not committed to hydropathy, as I have before told you. I never have been, though I had a sort of general respect for Dr. Shew; and hence it was that, incidentally, I asked him the question which I did; and I was pleased with his reply. There was nothing suggested which was at all akin to violence. He did not propose a shower bath of any kind. He did not speak of hot bathing, which for that hour of the day might have induced too violent a perspiration. He did not propose vapor bathing or steaming. A tepid bath could, abstractly considered, do no harm. It would, at least, while away the time till nature could have opportunity to rally. And then, if the return to health should be attributed to the application of the tepid water, we had no special objection to it. We had no medical pride—most certainly I had none—that would lead me to fear lest I should add to the popularity of the cold-water system. [Pg 289]

But it was rather late in the evening,—between seven and eight o'clock,—almost time for such a child to be in bed. In order to get up a tepid bath and make the application, so much time would be required that it would keep him from sleep till nine o'clock, and perhaps later; whereas, I had a very high opinion of the healing and renovating power of natural and healthy sleep. It struck me that to put the child to bed immediately, and let him have a good night's rest, would be a much wiser measure than to bathe him even in *tepid* water. So, after

thanking Dr. Shew for his advice, I told him that, for the reasons above stated, we had concluded to omit the bath and put the child immediately to bed.

On being put in bed and suitably covered, he went to sleep immediately, and fell into a gentle perspiration, and in about two hours his breathing was much better. It continued to improve till the next morning, when he arose, at the usual time, and was nearly well. Dr. Shew himself jocosely observed that the *sleep* cure had proved quite as successful as the *water* cure.

Much, therefore, as I prize bathing of all sorts, in its proper place, it must never take the place of other and more important influences, whenever these influences can be brought to bear on the case. Indeed, no bathing of any kind can be desirable, any farther than as it serves to aid these natural processes. It has no magic or miraculous power. If we do not eat, drink, sleep, and wake, all the better for it; if the various offices of digestion, respiration, circulation, perspiration, and cerebral action are not thereby, as a whole thing, better performed, it might as well—nay, better—be omitted. Otherwise we waste time and trifle away vital energy.

If all the functions of the body and all the faculties of the mind could be kept steadily employed, and in healthful proportion, it is obvious that a person could not be sick. Or, if one of these only should be deranged, and we should fall sick, as the consequence, what else, pray tell me, is needed, but to effect a speedy return of the faltering function or part to its proper post and duty?

But sleep, more than all things else, whenever the usual hour has actually arrived, has the effect to facilitate a cure. We all know how wakeful some maniacs are, and how hurried and deranged all the movements of the muscular and nervous systems are apt to become, no less than those of the brain itself. And we all know, too, how much good it does such persons to be able to obtain good, sound, substantial, quiet sleep. It acts like a charm, and does more than charms can do, or mere medicine. [Pg 290]

Half the formality of having watchers by night in the sick room, does more harm than good. It were better, in many instances, to extinguish all the lights, except at certain set times and on particular occasions, and let the patient sleep. And yet I have as exalted an estimate of the importance of careful nursing as any other individual.

For example of my meaning, in a case of seeming contradiction, I may say that I have taken all the needful care of a young man who was very sick, for more than thirty successive nights with the exception of two, and yet maintained my health, which, as you already know, was never very firm. And I have known those who could do this for three months. But they extinguish or hide their light, and acquire a habit of waking at certain times, so as never to neglect the wants of the patient.

So true is it that sleep is the grand restorer as well as the great curer of disease, that its salutary influence in the case of various infantile complaints, has long been known and regarded. And one reason why infants should neither be nursed nor fed in the night, as many physiologists maintain, is, that it breaks in upon the soundness of the sleep, as experience has most abundantly proved. Sleep, in short, if not a "matchless" sanative, is at least a universal one.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

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CURE BY DEEP BREATHING.

A young man, fifteen or sixteen years of age, who was in the habit of suffering from protracted colds, nearly the whole winter, till they seemed to terminate almost in consumption in the spring, came under my care about March 1st, 1854, and was treated as the nature of his case seemed to require, though with a few of what may be, by some, regarded as peculiarities.

He was directed to rise in the morning at about six o'clock, which at that season of the year is about as early as any one can see well without lamp-light. At the moment of leaving his bed, he was required to wet his body all over, as quickly as possible, either with the hand or a sponge, or if preferred, with a coarse towel, and then wipe himself hastily and partially, so as to leave on the surface a little moisture, and yet not enough to cause, by evaporation, any sensations of chilliness. The water to be used was to be cold, or at such temperature as is usual at that season, when standing all night in a room without fire. This was to be followed by a rapid rubbing with *crash mittens*, a coarse towel, or the hand, as long as he could keep up a good reaction and a proper degree of vital warmth.

Or, if rubbing the body increased the cough, and an assistant was required, in this case, a healthy man well charged, so to speak, with electricity, was always to be deemed preferable. In general, however, the young man found no difficulty in keeping himself warm, in this exercise, about half an hour.

Whenever his strength began to flag, or a little before,—for I did not think it desirable to go farther than the mere borders of fatigue,—he was placed in bed and well covered, so as to be immediately warm. The room itself was kept as cool as possible, even in the coldest weather, the fire having been entirely removed at bedtime the night before, and the room well aired and ventilated. [Pg 292]

This method of placing him in a warm bed was called dry packing. In this dry pack he usually remained from half an hour to an hour. At the end of this period, he was required to get out of bed, and repeat the former course of rubbing the naked surface of the body a long time, in the cold air, though, in this case, without repeating the application of the cold water.

Thus the forenoon passed away, with a few slight but unimportant variations. At twelve o'clock, this alternation of air-bathing with friction and dry-packing, ceased, and the patient was expected to put on his clothes and come to dinner. You will, perhaps, ask when and where he had his breakfast. No breakfast was allowed him. Nothing was to be taken, except small draughts of water, till twelve o'clock.

Another operation, which had much more the appearance of peculiarity than any other part of the treatment, but which was deemed, more than all else, indispensable to his recovery, consisted in a series of deep inspirations or breathings. It may be described thus: The patient was required to draw as much air into his lungs as possible, and then immediately expel as much of it as possible. This was to be repeated and continued till a suitable degree of fatigue was induced. At first, it was only required as a species of amusement while in the dry pack; but subsequently it was demanded in other circumstances.

I have usually required a person to begin the process by ten, twenty, or thirty deep inspirations, according to his strength of lungs and their irritability; for, at first, it often makes him cough. In the present case, I began with fifty, and gradually increased the number to one hundred. Sometimes, by way of experiment, and to pass away the time while in the dry pack, he went much farther; once to six hundred. In this case, however, the face became slightly flushed, the eyes reddened, and the whole arterial action became hastened. It was evidently like "too much of a good thing," and was never repeated. [Pg 293]

The afternoon was spent in physical exercise, active amusement, reading, conversation, etc. The first consisted chiefly in sawing and splitting wood, and in walking abroad. The amusements were of various kinds. The reading was chiefly of the lighter sort, such as

newspapers and magazines. The conversation—not always controllable—was the best we could furnish him. Some of the walks were long, extending to five or six miles.

Music, both vocal and instrumental, was regarded as a most valuable amusement, and was not wholly overlooked. It had its difficulties, but most of them could be surmounted. As a devotional exercise, its soothing influence was almost always evoked.

I have said that no breakfast was taken by this young man, and no drink used but cold water. The dinner was also without drink, and so was the supper. The first consisted of a very few kinds of coarse food,—generally not more than two or three at once,—such as coarse whole-meal bread, rice, potatoes, apples, etc., and was the principal meal. The supper was a lighter meal, both as respected quantity and quality, and was taken at about six o'clock. No condiments were allowed except salt, and very little of this; and no animal food, or the products of animals, except, occasionally, a little milk. Fruits, either raw or cooked, were frequently among the staples at dinner, but never at supper.

This treatment, with slight variations, would be applicable to most persons suffering with lingering complaints, and to persons in health, as a means of invigorating their systems; but my present purpose is, chiefly, to speak of it as a remedial agency in the particular case of this young man.

I had hoped to be able to effect a cure on him in about a month. But I was happily disappointed in finding him recover so fast that he was dismissed and sent home on the twenty-fifth day. Nor has his consumptive tendency ever again appeared with much severity. Since the spring of 1856—now between two and three years—it has not appeared at all. [Pg 294]

This method of cure, by deep breathing, consists simply in using the lungs freely, without overworking them. They may be overworked as well as used too little; though the danger is generally in the latter direction. They are made, most undoubtedly, for a great amount of action, in breathing, conversation, singing, reading, etc.; and yet, in all these respects, they are sadly neglected.

Our ordinary conversation is such as hardly to exercise the lungs at all. We talk with the mouth and throat rather than the lungs. So is it, for the most part, with our singing. And, as for breathing, we only breathe a little way down, even when our dress is such as to form no impediment. Full breathing, except in making violent efforts, is hardly known.

CHAPTER LXXX.

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SPIRIT-DOCTORING.

One of the most amusing incidents of my "Forty Years among Pills and Powders," is found at full length of detail in the following chapter. The amusement it affords has, however, a tinge of sadness.

A young man came under my care in the early part of the year 1854, who, for the sake of convenience, I will call Thomas. He was about eighteen years of age, but as delicate, sensitive, and effeminate as a female directly from Broadway would have been, or as a plant reared in a hothouse. In truth, he had been reared very much like many females of the present day, in a manner entirely sedentary—the creature of over-tenderness and over-kindness.

His disease was scrofula; but, with his scrofulous tendencies were conjoined some other difficulties, more obscure and still more unmanageable. His joints were enlarged; and in particular portions of his body were various watery swellings or sacs.

As it was a scrofulous tendency that lay at the bottom or basis of his complaints, I proceeded to treat him accordingly. I was to have him under my care three months, during which time, it was believed, something might be done, if ever. At least, it was believed that a beginning might be made, if indeed the disease should prove to be at all curable.

He was subjected to the treatment, with few variations, which is mentioned in the preceding chapter. He was not permitted, however, to do much in the way of deep breathing till his general health and strength could be improved by other measures. Warm water, in his case, was preferred, also, to cold, and was used in the form of a tub-bath, at five o'clock in the afternoon. [Pg 296]

Thomas had been with me about three weeks, without much variation of condition or prospects, when I received a long letter from his friends, the purport of which was that they had been favored with a communication from the "spirit world," which was attended with the appearance of so much truth and reality, that they were not at liberty wholly to disregard it. The communication purported to be made by the late Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia.

As these friends of Thomas well knew I was not a believer in this new-fangled spiritualism, they had taken much pains to satisfy me that I was to have for my venerable counsellor not a mere pretender, but the veritable Dr. Rush himself. As one evidence in the case, they had inquired through the "medium," who were the present associates of the good doctor in his new abode; who, nothing loath, had deigned to gratify their supposed curiosity, by giving them the names of five distinguished physicians, among whom were the elder and younger Dr. Ingalls, of Massachusetts, and Dr. Sanborn, of New Hampshire.

And then, with regard to Thomas, he only said, at first, that he was very much interested in him, and that he would examine him and report. Soon after this, at another communication, he said his case was a difficult one, but he thought not incurable. He added, that he was already in very good hands, the best, perhaps, that could be found in this mundane sphere, but rather cautiously insinuated that there were symptoms in the case which I had not yet got hold of, but which would, if rightly apprehended, modify, in some of its particulars, my treatment. What it was in the case which I had not discovered, he did not say directly, but subsequently intimated that the young man's disease was not scrofula, as I had pronounced it, but dropsy of the joints.

It was not long afterward that the mother paid us a visit, and brought, well written out, the substance, as she said it was, of quite a number of communications from Dr. Rush. Much was said in them about the necessity of exercise and a plain diet. And, in general, so far as the mere treatment was concerned, the statements of the spiritual doctor accorded so well with those of the earthly one, that had I been a believer in these modern mysteries, I should have been highly gratified, not only on Thomas's account, but my own. [Pg 297]

But the spirit doctor urged a few variations in the treatment of the young man. Beside pressing a little harder than myself the use of green vegetables, and particularly of vegetable juices, he requested, with great apparent earnestness, that he might be permitted to occupy a room heated by a wood fire, rather than by coal. He also made a few other suggestions of less importance.

His mother was a very good woman, save her great credulity. And even here, perhaps, I do her injustice, for there were some curious facts and coincidences. The venerable spirit doctor appeared to have possessed himself of certain secrets which it was extremely puzzling to conjecture how an impostor could have obtained.

After spending a day or two with me, and giving me "much exhortation," the mother returned to her friends. Of her safe arrival, as well as of certain changes that had been resolved on, the husband informed me, by a letter, which, so far as the case of Thomas is concerned, I copy entire.

"Dear Sir:—By Mrs. P., in her recent visit to your place, you have been made acquainted with some of the manifestations of spirits, made to us through a young lady, a medium of our acquaintance.

"The communications purporting to come from Dr. Rush (as he says in his last communication, tell Dr. — that it is the veritable old Dr. Rush, the signer of the Declaration of Independence), and with such apparent earnestness and reality, we feel that, to us, they are something more than human or earthly, and of momentous account in this case of Thomas, and that we are not at liberty longer to disregard them. And though we have great confidence in yourself and your practice, we hope you will not think we are losing either when I say that we have decided to have Thomas return to —, and commence following the prescriptions of this invisible personage. They appear to be harmless, and may be of great virtue; and much which pertains to them appears to be in harmony with your practice.

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"Again, in closing, I must say that these communications come to us with such force and apparent reality and truth, that I think it would not be doing justly, either to Thomas or our Creator, longer to disregard them.

"With much
esteem,
yours,
etc.,
——
——."

In a somewhat extended postscript it was added: "We have witnessed other manifestations, of several of which we had ample proof of their correctness."

On another small portion of a sheet which was appended to the former, I found, in pencil, the following:—

"We have, this evening, had another conversation with Dr. Rush. His medium was in — to-day, and was brought to us in order that she might speak to us (Mrs. P. and myself). We are directed to tell you this: that he wants Thomas to be under her (Mrs. P.) care; that there are no earthly physicians that can cure him; that we could not have placed him in better hands than with you. He (Dr. Rush) says he can and *will cure him*. He says he could cure him without our help, if he could impress him, but in that he has not yet succeeded. He says he has seen Thomas with rubbers on, and that he would have taken them off if he could. Says positively, he must not wear them. Be good enough, dear sir, to see that he does not wear them in coming home." He adds, in conclusion, "Tell Dr. — to remove him from the room he now occupies, and place him in one with a wood fire, and where he will have no bed-fellow."

Thus ended the communication. Thomas went home, according to request, and was, forthwith, put under the treatment of the spiritual doctor. All appeared to be going on very well for a short time; but after the lapse of about three weeks, I heard of his death. No particulars were added, in the papers, but I afterwards learned that his death was rather sudden.

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I did not chance to fall in with Mr. P. for several months, and out of respect to his feelings and those of Mrs. P., I did not depart from my usual track to call on them or even write. At the end of the year, however, I visited them, and after the usual passing remarks, the following conversation took place.

"It seems, then, that Dr. Rush with all his wisdom and skill could not save Thomas."

"No; he said it was too late for any power of earth or heaven to cure him."

"But he was very confident he could cure him?"

"Perhaps he spoke with more confidence than he really felt, in order to encourage us and lead us to exert ourselves."

"Do I understand you? Do you mean to say that perhaps the spirit doctors, like the fleshly ones, in order to encourage the friends of the sick, will depart a little from the truth?"

"Not exactly that. Rather this: we do not consider it a departure from the truth."

"I am of a different opinion. In earth, or elsewhere, I call such a course as you intimate a species of white lying—quite common on earth, but which, till now, I did not suppose had found its way to the confines of the world spiritual."

The conversation ended here, and was not afterward resumed. I have, indeed, witnessed a good deal of spiritual doctoring since that time, but it was of a somewhat different character from the foregoing.

For example: I saw a family in the interior of Massachusetts, whose faith in spiritualism and spirit doctrine was perfect. The mistress of the house was the patient. The physician a young man who had been a mechanic, but who had very recently become convinced that it was his duty to attend the sick,—not to do anything for them, on his own responsibility, but only to suffer an old Indian physician to operate through him as a medium.

The chief thing which Dr. H. did, so far as I observed, was to lay his hands on her, and sit for some time in that position. I am not sure that he did not prescribe a few very simple things, from time to time, such as a little weak tea, or the infusion of some domestic herb, from the garden. He was counted, everywhere (for his circuit was a large one), very successful; for his patients generally recovered. Their recovery, it is true, was often very slow.

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CHAPTER LXXXI.

[Pg 301]

REMARKABLE CURE OF EPILEPSY.

When I was a lad, a man was employed by my father on his farm, who used occasionally to fall down in convulsions, lie for some time, not entirely still, but foaming at the mouth and agitated or rocked to and fro, as if in great distress; and yet, as I afterward learned, senseless. These attacks, they told me, were *falling sickness* fits. The man was weak in mind, and not vigorous in body, though, by diligence and perseverance, he could accomplish something in the progress of a whole day. He died but little beyond middle age.

Since that time I have been intimately acquainted with several individuals who were subject to these attacks of epilepsy, some of whom were affected in one way, some in another. The cause, too, was as various as the manner of attack, and in a few instances was peculiar and

remarkable. In general, their memory and intellectual faculties, as well as their bodily strength, became, ultimately, a good deal impaired. In my practice as a physician, I had very few of these cases, and none in which I could afford relief at first. The patients were, however, for the most part, of middle age, or at least beyond thirty years. Several had taken nitrate of silver or other minerals, till their skins were of a blue-black color.

In the beginning of the year 1854, a young man about seventeen years of age, of scrofulous and nervous temperament and of great delicacy, came under my care, to be treated for this disease, whose history, from beginning to end, was remarkable. I will call him Samuel.

When about twelve years of age he had difficulty with another boy,—an Irish or Scotch lad, —which ended in a personal affray, in which Samuel was worsted, and his head severely injured. It was thought by some that a portion of the skull, which, by the violence of the blow it had received, had been forced in, ought to have been elevated by the trephine; but I believe no surgeon of reputation ever saw him. Being young, the depressed portion of skull gradually resumed its place, so that the depression could scarcely be seen.

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All, however, was not right within, for he was soon afterward attacked by epilepsy. Whether, at first, any connection between the disease and the bruised skull was suspected by the friends, I was not able to learn; but probably not. The attacks having been once commenced, were frequent and severe, and every year became more so. They were particularly frequent and severe during the winter and spring.

The medical art was invoked in his behalf, especially in the region round about New Haven, Conn. He was not only treated by the regular physicians, of different kinds and schools, but by not a few empirics or quacks. By some of them he was evidently injured, and by none was he benefited. The tendency still continued to be downward, on the whole, and his friends were, at length, almost discouraged.

All this while his diet appears to have been the usual diet of that part of New England in which he resided—too stimulating, and too much refined by cookery. In general, too, his active and perverted appetite led him to excess in quantity; but, as his friends never thought of its being a morbid or diseased appetite, no strong efforts were made to control it. In truth, as he was feeble and growing, it was thought necessary that he should eat stimulating and highly seasoned food, and in large quantity. He was also accustomed to tea and coffee. All his appetites, as it afterwards appeared, were, to say the least, very active, though the gratification of *the third appetite* was wholly confined to solitude.

No restriction, nor indeed any direction, so far as I could learn, had been made at this period, with regard to his mental food. Whatever he chose to read, he was indulged in, both as regards quantity and quality. And as usually happens, in the case of epileptic, and scrofulous people, he was quite too much inclined to works of imagination, with which the age and country abound. It appears, also, that being regarded as quite unequal to the task of laboring in field or garden, he was thus, in large measure, deprived of two essentials of health and happiness, especially to epileptics; viz., air and exercise.

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In August, 1853, he went to an institution that had once been a water-cure establishment, but which had undergone many modifications, till it better deserved the name of College of Hygiene, than water cure. Here he remained several months.

The peculiar treatment he received at this institution consisted, first, in a plain and unstimulating diet. Water was his only drink, and bread and fruits, with a few well-cooked vegetables, his only food. But, in the second place, he was subjected to a course of treatment not unlike that described in Chapter LXXIX, with the exception of the deep breathing and cold-bathing. The last, however, was, I believe, used occasionally.

There was, indeed, one important addition made to the treatment above alluded to. This consisted in an exercise designed to expand and strengthen the lungs, by what was called *shaking down the air*. This exercise was practised very frequently, and was curious. I will describe it as well as I can.

He was first required to inflate his chest as much as possible, and then, while retaining the air with all his might, rise on his toes, and suddenly drop on his heels, with a sort of jerk, several times in succession, till he could hold his breath and retain the air no longer, which was now suffered gradually to escape. A new recruit was then drawn in, and treated in the same manner. The exercise, as a whole, seemed to consist of a series of jumpings up and down, without quite raising the toes from the floor, and of deep sighing. The object aimed at was to shake down a large amount of good, pure air, into the cells of the lungs, and retain it there as long as possible; and then, to let out or force out the air, so as to empty the lungs as perfectly as possible.

The warm bath was occasionally used at four o'clock in the afternoon, but with doubtful effect. Exercise, especially mechanical exercise, was of much more service, and so was the gymnasium. He was, however, required to forbear all violence, in his exercises and amusements; nor was he allowed any severe studies. His reading was to be light, though not trifling. [Pg 304]

For several months next subsequent to his arrival at the institution, he appeared to improve. Instead of weekly, or semi-weekly, or still more frequent attacks, he suffered but rarely; and, in one instance, he was exempt from an attack for several weeks. But in December and January they became, once more, rather frequent. They had, however, usually been most frequent in winter and spring.

He now began to be apprehensive of a return of his disease, in all its former violence; and the dread of February, March, and April had an influence on his system which was any thing but favorable—since fear, in these cases, is often worse than the evils which excite it. And, according to his faith, or rather according to his want of faith, so it was with him. The attacks became very frequent, sometimes daily; and, in one or two instances, twice a day.

He came under my special and almost exclusive care, Feb. 1, 1854. I soon discovered that there was a close connection between excess and irregularity, in regard to his food and his paroxysms of disease. I saw, also, that a part of his food had been too stimulating. In justice, however, I ought to say that in the government of the other appetites, he had succeeded far better than I had expected, though his power to control himself was far from being perfect.

While, therefore, I did not materially change the general treatment in other particulars, I determined to regulate his diet; and, with a view to this important end, to watch him, and even to deal out to him his daily rations, with just as much care and particularity as if he were a mere child. He ate but two meals a day, and these were taken at *twelve* and *six*; and then I always sat by him. I did not leave him, except for one single meal, for a period of fifty-five days.

During the whole of this long period—long, I mean, to the patient—he not only had no attacks of his disease, but none of the giddiness or other symptoms which had formerly accompanied or preceded them. He did not, it is true, gain in flesh or strength during the time. In all this and in many more particulars he remained nearly stationary. [Pg 305]

Towards the close of March, his friends became desirous of taking him home. I was not without apprehension; but, hoping for the best, I submitted to their wishes as cheerfully as I could. He was among them for a short time; and was then, by my particular request, as well as in conformity with his own choice, placed on a farm.

Nearly three months after his return to his friends, I received a letter from him, which I insert here, not only as a convenient nucleus around which to cluster certain suggestions I wish to make to the general reader, but also as a continuation of my patient's history. It was dated June 18, 1854.

"MY DEAR PHYSICIAN,—I am now at Mr. ——'s. Every thing seems to be in perfect accordance with the wishes of those who are concerned in the case. I can get as plain a diet as I please, and have nothing, so to say, to tempt me. I confine myself to a very small variety. I have had strawberries ever since I came here, which was June 7th. I eat sometimes nearly a pint at a meal. Sometimes I eat nothing but strawberries and dry bread. I have some sugar on the table, and sweeten the berries a little. I eat considerable potatoe—say two or three at dinner—sometimes a little more. I have had two dinners of asparagus, just boiled in a little water, and poured on to some crusts of toasted bread. It was good. I do not think I have had more than three things set on the table for me, at a time, while I have been here. I have bread, potatoes, and berries for dinner. For supper I have bread and berries, and sweetened bread, as it might be called. It is sweetened but a very little. Now don't I live plainly.

"But I have left out some things that I have had. I had Graham mush a few days, but I like the bread better, as Mrs. —— makes such good bread. Mr. —— likes it better than superfine. I have had boiled rice—a few meals. I had one meal of bag-pudding—Indian—with a few whortleberries in it.

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"I have now given you an account of how I live. I eat at ten or half-past ten, A. M., and at four, P. M. So I do not have to go to bed with a meal of victuals on my stomach.

"After I left you, and before I came here, I had, all the time, a great looseness of the bowels. It seemed to weaken me. Afterwards I thought it was caused, partly, by some very tart, dried apples, of which I ate freely at every meal. Aunt ——thought it was working at hoeing up turf around trees, for she said that working hard with her arms affected her in that way. My stomach did not seem quite right. Perhaps I strained it in coming home. The very next day after I came here, I commenced eating the ripe strawberries at meals, and have eaten them freely ever since. I sometimes eat nearly a pint at a meal. From the first they have seemed just the thing for me. They regulated my stomach and bowels, and they have strengthened them ever since.

"I eat alone, and enjoy it capitally. I would not go back to the Institution (the Hygiene establishment) for a great deal, because there are so many things there to harass one's mind, or tempt him, at every corner of the street and almost every shop. Since I came here I have not tasted of any thing between meals, and have had no inclination to do so. I think there will be no trouble on that account.

"I am busy out of doors a good deal of the time. I have hoed corn, piled cord-wood, driven team, picked strawberries, etc. At night I milk one cow. I go barefooted three or four hours in the middle of the day, use no flannels, dress very thin,—as little as I can get along with.

"Do you wish me to learn to swim, if possible? There is a pond—a natural one—about a mile from this place. Will you not answer me soon, and give me your opinion on this and other subjects?

"In love,
yours,
etc.

"SAMUEL."

About a month later, viz., July 18, he wrote thus:

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"MY DEAR DOCTOR:—Five months and a half without a symptom! I have not the slightest feeling to remind me of my old attacks. Should I not be thankful?

"A short time since, I had a very sore stomach. It got out of order, I think, in consequence of eating too much. I broke off, went a day without nothing to eat; eat less now, and feel well. When Mrs. —— was here, she told me she thought I might eat all I craved. I did so, and suffered the consequences, though I cured myself.

"There is a place here in the woods where raspberries are so thick that people get six quarts at a time. Apples are nearly ripe. Pears will soon succeed them.

"Yours truly,

"SAMUEL."

Two weeks later than the above,—a little more than six months after the discontinuance of the epileptic attacks,—I received a letter from Samuel's guardian, in which he wrote as follows:

"We have continued the same course of diet as at your house; in short, have carried out your views perfectly as possible. Notwithstanding all this, he (Samuel) has lost flesh and strength; and, for the last few weeks, has fallen off greatly, in mental and physical vigor. He has run down in flesh to eighty pounds, is pale as this paper, coughs considerably, especially at night, yet does not expectorate very much. He had a spell of spitting blood, some five or six weeks ago, raised perhaps a gill. I do not think that it debilitated him very much at the time."

Not far from this time Samuel was taken from the farm, and subjected to various changes in his habits, which were unauthorized, and which probably proved injurious. He took a large amount of cream,—an article which had not before been allowed him,—also a little fresh meat at his dinners. Instead of going without his breakfast, as before, he now appears to have taken breakfast; and in some instances, at least, to have used not only large quantities of cream at this early hour, but animal food likewise. There was a strong and increasing belief among his friends, that his food was not sufficiently nutritious, and that he was suffering for want of materials for blood; whereas the error lay in the other direction. His stomach and other digestive organs were overloaded and depressed by the large amount of nutriment he had for some time received. But more on this hereafter.

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He now appeared to be falling into what is called a galloping consumption, of which he died a few weeks afterward. There should have been a post mortem examination; but, from various causes, it was not attended to. At the time of his death he was about eighteen years of age.

The treatment of this young man on the farm, was by no means what had been intended. The experiment of having him eat alone was hazardous, and I sternly protested against it. But the hours at which he chose to take his two meals, especially the first, were such as to preclude, practically, a better arrangement. There was no one that wished to eat at ten in the

forenoon, but himself; and it was not customary for the family to convene for eating in the afternoon, till six. Now, although, abstractly considered, he selected the best hours for his meals, yet, taking society as it is, and human nature as *his* was, it would have been much better, in the result, had he eaten with the family at twelve and six. He would have eaten less, and yet would probably have been better nourished and better satisfied.

No housekeeper who has the usual feelings of a housekeeper, will be content to set before a young man of seventeen or eighteen years of age, no more, for example, than one-sixth as much food as she would prepare for six such persons. It would seem to her almost like prisoner's fare. And then, few young men or old ones will content themselves with one sixth as much food when sitting alone, entirely unrestrained, as when in company, where pride or self-respect would have influence. And of one thing we may, at least, be sure, viz., that Samuel, with his almost illimitable appetite, tempted by abundance and assured that he might, with safety, eat as much as that appetite craved, would never be the individual to stop short of fifty per cent more of carbon than his feeble machinery could appropriate; while every ounce of the surplus was burned up by his lungs, at an expense of that vital energy which should have been husbanded with the greatest care, and expended no faster than was indispensably necessary.

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His friends, no doubt, supposed—for such views greatly prevail—that he would not be likely to hurt himself on plain and simple food; and, in truth, that it was so light and unsubstantial that he needed a large amount of it to keep him alive.

One or two individuals, largely interested in him, gave this as their opinion, more than once, and vainly believe, to the present day, that he ran down and died for want of proper nourishment. Whereas, we need nothing more than Samuel's own confessions, to show us, as clearly as the sunlight could possibly show us any thing, that it is much more likely that he perished from excess of nutrition than for the want of it.

Let us look a little at particulars. It appears, most clearly, that Samuel always had before him a good supply of bread, of such excellent quality that he could make a full and agreeable meal of it. While under my special care, he could eat and enjoy a full meal of the driest bread; and he would even have proceeded beyond the limits of safety on it, had I permitted it, and this, too, without berries, sugar, or cream, to make it still more inviting, or without his "sweetened bread," as he called it, for a dessert. It is, moreover, by no means probable, that the morbid keenness of his appetite was at all diminished by being on a farm and in the open air much of the time.

Observe, now, his living. Fruit, he says, he allowed himself always, at both dinner and supper, sometimes a pint at a meal. Dried apple-sauce, very "tart," as he called it, he appears to have had at every meal. Sugar, moreover, to sweeten his berries, etc., he always had on the table. Will one who has such an appetite as he had, eat moderately, with fruit, sugar, and apple-sauce always before him,—and these regarded as a dessert, of which he may eat *ad libitum*, after having eaten a full and more than a full meal of bread? In potatoes, too, he indulged, as you will see by referring to his letter, in rather large quantity.

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Now the most healthy person in the world, would ere long have an acid stomach, as well as weakened lungs, who should undertake to live in this way; how much more a person who has long been feeble, especially in his lungs, nervous system, and even his digestive system, for that was active rather than strong.

Indeed, there are many circumstances which favor the belief that he burned himself out by excess of stimulus, or, in chemical language, by excess of carbon. His thoughts seem to have been very largely on eating. It will be seen by the extracts I have made from his letters, that after speaking on any other needful topic, he would soon get back to the subject of eating. Observe, too, he says he feels no temptation to eat between his meals; but why?

First, doubtless, because he eat to the full at his regular meals; and secondly, because the food was mostly, if not always, set away out of his reach.

Another thing deserves consideration. Not only was he, but his friends also, inclined to the opinion that he would not, and perhaps could not, hurt himself on such things as plain dry bread; but they also appeared to believe, *practically*, at least,—and the belief is very common,—that the use of bread would atone for other transgressions. Thus, suppose he were to have, for once, a rich pudding to eat, or some baked beans, or sweetened rice pudding,—which, as you know, are of themselves very pure nutriments,—set before him, and he were to eat to the full, till the question should begin to arise in his own mind, whether he had not gone too far, it was apt to be thought, or rather *felt*, that an addition of plain bread, or some fruit, or a few cold potatoes, or some other vegetable, would be a correction for the preceding excess. Such, I say, is the virtue which, by a kind of tradition, is awarded to coarse and plain food, and to fruits, and even nuts. I know, indeed, that this idea [Pg 311] would hardly be defended in so many words; still, it is practically entertained.

To make plainer a great dietetic error, I will explain my meaning. It is believed, for example, that a pound or two of greasy baked beans would not be so likely to hurt a person, if a little bread or fruit or potatoe or sauce were eaten after them, as if eaten alone,—a belief than which none can be more unfounded or dangerous.

One more proof that Samuel was constantly inclined to excess in eating, is found in the fact that there was a continual tendency, in his stomach, to acidity, which was best relieved by a day of entire abstinence; and the same might be said of a tendency to relaxation of the bowels, and its correction. In short, if there be a plain truth fairly deducible from the facts in the case, it is that he was destroyed by a carbonaceous nutriment in too great proportion for his expenditure.

It may have been feared by his friends, that he yielded, at this period, to *other propensities*. Indeed, one letter which I received after his death, more than intimated all this. The remark alluded to was as follows:—"I have had the fear that there was something unexplained about his case, as you say you once had." For various reasons, I am inclined to believe that the indulgence referred to had little to do with his comparatively sudden death. His whole soul was pivoted on that great central organ, the stomach. For this he lived, and for this, probably, he died.

My own principal error, in relation to the case, was, in suffering him to go upon the farm with such unintelligent, though well-intentioned teachers. Lord Bacon and others have said, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing;" and in nothing is the remark more applicable than to the first or pioneer knowledge of people on hygiene. From the very nature of the case it must be so. I ought either to have protested against the farm, *in toto*, or given such minute instructions that they could not have been easily mistaken. But I had my reasons, at the time, for the course I took, and I thought them quite sufficient. How easy it is, in this world, to find cause for misgivings!

CHAPTER LXXXII.

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SCARLATINA CURED BY LETTING ALONE.

At a certain season when scarlet fever was very prevalent among us, a member of my family was attacked with it slightly, and, as it was believed by almost everybody to be contagious, the case excited much alarm. The fact that in persons of my friend's age, it had,

during the season, occasionally proved fatal, no doubt increased the apprehension and alarm, and led to many anxious fears about the treatment. Those who regarded my general method of treating disease as rather too "tame," and who supposed themselves in special danger of "taking the disease," were not only curious, but curiously inquisitive to know what I would do in my own family, to meet this supposed terrible malady.

My first object was to quiet all fears, especially in the patient. It would have been easy—comparatively so—to do this, had it not been for the croakings of our neighbors. They told the sick person so many dismal stories of persons of her age—she was in middle life—who had died of scarlet fever, that it was not so easy to resist, wholly, the impressions. The most resolute and determined are apt to yield, in such circumstances.

However, we did the best we could. We endeavored not only to keep her quiet in mind, but in body. All irregularities were carefully watched and guarded against; not by giving medicine to prevent evil, real or imaginary; not by prophylactics, as they are called; but by strictly and carefully obeying all the laws pertaining to the human, physical frame, so far as they were then understood.

It was one object to keep the patient cool,—not, of course, chilly; for this would have been worse than a temperature a little too high. But excess of heat, in its application to the surface, was dreaded as one of the worst of evils; and no pains were spared in attempts to keep the sick-room not only cool, but well ventilated. Her food, also, both for the sake of the general circulatory system, and for that, also, of the sympathizing skin, was not only cool, but unstimulating.

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In addition to all this, and in pursuance of the same general plan, a warm or rather a tepid bath was administered. But in applying this the greatest care was used. The water was only warmed just enough so as not to feel uncomfortable. It had so good an effect that it was repeated.

The fever did not run so high as had been expected; and our apprehensions gradually disappeared. All went on well, and, in a few days, health was entirely restored. None of the neighbors sickened as the consequence, either of infection or of contagion.

I do not mean, by the relation of this fact, to intimate that every case of scarlatina, treated in the same way, would be attended with similar results; for the powers of life are often fed by sicklier streams than in the present case. There is often a large amount, so to speak, of combustible matter in every "nook and corner," ready to be ignited by the burning flood, as it courses its way through the system. Yet, even then, the flame would be greatly diminished by keeping quiet. Who has not observed the difference, amid a general conflagration, between a most perfect stillness and a blustering or windy moment? The difference between perfect quiet of body and mind and great agitation and fear, in their effects on health and disease, is scarcely less striking, if not, indeed, more so.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

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IGNORANCE NOT ALWAYS BLISS.

Pope says of the freethinker, that he may be "all things in an hour." So may some people in their medical creed, at least, practically. They change their opinions with almost every change in the position of the weathercock. To-day they are very orthodox, medically; to-morrow they are ready to throw physicians and medicine to the four winds, if not to the

dogs. Just as the freethinker is now very orthodox in religious matters, and in a day or an hour quite out at sea.

My troubles with patients of this description have been numerous and great. They promise well, and probably *mean* well. But just as the new wad in a boy's pop-gun drives out the old one, in order to occupy its place, so the very next medical adviser, especially if he have much self-confidence, secures their entire trust, and I, for the time, seem to lose it. At least, mine is eclipsed. The people I am describing are of too easy virtue to be virtuous.

And whence all this? It arises from ignorance—not very blissful ignorance, either. As well might Nebuchadnezzar's image, had it possessed sensation, been blissful, as such persons as these. Brass, iron, and clay may quite as easily unite to form a reliable compound, as these persons become settled in opinion with regard to a proper medical treatment.

I had one patient of this description who harassed me for many years. It is true that he finally recovered; but I hardly know how. His recovery, when I reflect on it, leads me towards the belief that people oftener get well in spite of their medicine, than as the consequence of using it.

He was originally a boot and shoe maker; and being exceedingly ambitious, he had neglected exercise, and worked too hard at the bench, as well as committed certain imprudences connected with diet, till he was almost a perfect wreck, from dyspepsia. He was about twenty-five years of age. [Pg 315]

At first, despite of his ignorance, I had hope of being able to put him upon the high road to health. He seemed unusually docile. But, as I have before said, virtue is sometimes too easy. He would believe in and follow me almost implicitly, for a little while; but when about half or perhaps two-thirds of the way to the land of health, he would become impatient, and either run to me anxiously or veer to somebody else. I have known him to start in pursuit of me when I was a full day's journey distant, and not easily found even then.

But I have also known him go, with the same earnestness and anxiety, to another adviser, and follow his directions with the same care with which he had followed my own, and perhaps about as long. While following a person, however, he was, for a very short period at the first, entirely devoted to him and his principles, which, as far as it went, was undoubtedly favorable.

Once he followed, for a time, a clairvoyant,—a female,—and took her medicine. She gave him, it is true, rather more medicine than he was willing to take, or even pay for; but as I gave him less than he desired, he thought it advisable to give her system a fair trial. I do not know whether he thought himself at all benefited by her prescriptions. Most certain it is that he did not long follow her, and that he came to me again some time afterwards, in the same condition as formerly.

In another instance, he sought relief of the hydropathists. One of the most eminent of them had him under his care for a long time. I believe he even visited, and staid a week or two, at a Water Cure Institution. Yet he never acknowledged any benefit from this treatment. He finally tried to unite allopathy and hydropathy, and to invoke their combined forces. A meeting of myself and an eminent hydropathic practitioner was appointed and held, but even this did not result in his recovery.

And yet he finally recovered, though I hardly know how. Such cases force me to the acknowledgment that human physical nature is tough, that we are machines made to live. Were it not so, this dyspeptic friend of mine must, at a comparatively early age, have sank to the grave, a victim of ignorance. He has, however, acquired wisdom in the school of experience. [Pg 316]

A brother of his, who was my patient in a similar complaint, and from similar causes, recovered in a very few months. But he was not a mere weathercock.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

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MEASLES WITHOUT SNAKEROOT AND SAFFRON.

In the early part of the year 1854, measles prevailed considerably, and was rather severe even under the most favorable circumstances. In our cities, such as New York and Boston, it destroyed a great number of valuable lives. It was by no means confined to children; it attacked adults, who had hitherto escaped it, as well as children.

One of my most intimate female friends, who was over forty years of age, had often been exposed to it without taking it, and had begun to hope she should escape through life. The family to which she belonged had it, and in the end a blow fell on her. It alarmed her most fearfully. She declared, again and again, that she should not and could not survive it, and her fears greatly aggravated the severity of her symptoms.

She was well acquainted with the most enlightened views on the subject of disease, and though her fears were great, she endeavored to pursue the proper course at first, which, as she knew, consisted mainly in supporting her strength as much as possible, in the most appropriate and healthful ways. She had no thought, it would seem, of taking medicine.

But she had neighbors,—some of them of the gossiping kind,—who called on her frequently, to convince her of the necessity of *taking something to bring out the measles*, and to relate the pitiful story of Mr. and Mrs. Such-an-one, who perished because they would do nothing to save themselves, and to entreat her to take at least a little saffron and snakeroot tea. And they had some influence with her; not indeed at first, but after she became weakened by the disease. Drowning people, it is said, catch at straws.

I was called to see her late one Saturday evening. She did not know, as she said, that any medicine was needed, but as she was considerably advanced in life, and many had sunk under the disease of late, and as she had such a continual feeling of depression and fainting, she thought it barely possible I might think it advisable to give her some little thing to make her feel more comfortable.

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There were indeed many things that required attention. Her feet were cold, unnecessarily so, and her room was not properly ventilated. Then she needed small draughts of water much oftener than she had been accustomed to receive them, or had dared to venture in their use. She needed no snakeroot and saffron, nor indeed any other form of herb tea. I gave particular orders with regard to the little things so needful in such cases, and in order to be on hand in case of alarm, I remained in the house till morning.

More than once during the night, her courage nearly failed her, and I was summoned to her bedside. In one or two instances, she ventured to complain of me as neglectful of her case, because I gave her no medicine. But I cheered and encouraged her as well as I could. Her disease had made her a child, and she needed a child's treatment. I was not, indeed, without my fears, but I did not see how her condition could be alleviated by medicinal agents, unless they become necessary as a substitute for that faith in Nature, which she was accustomed to exercise when she had more strength. This faith, as I have already told you, did indeed sometimes fall a little below the proper standard, but the depression was in general but momentary.

Early in the morning a near neighbor called, and kindly inquired how she did; and when assured that she was, as yet, no better, was unable longer to repress her feelings. "Why, in the case of *my* children," said she, "the measles never came out without giving them something, and they never would have done so to this day." Yet she had a large family. I might have asked her how she knew what Nature *could* have done unaided, since she gave her no opportunity to test her strength; but she was too ignorant to converse with on such subjects. To have asked her how she knew whether her children got well in spite of the medicine they took, or on account of it, would have been but throwing pearls before swine, and I would not do it. [Pg 319]

It was very soon reported, all over the neighborhood, that Mrs. O. was in a very dangerous condition, and if she did not have some other doctor, would soon die. And, what was worst of all, the stories got back to Mrs. O. herself. And now came the tug of war; and had not the eruption, just at this time made its appearance, I do not know what the results might have been.

Before noon, however, of this day (Sunday), every thing went right, and Mrs. O. was as blooming as she had been before pale and disconsolate. My good friend who had given me the morning homily, did not again make her appearance, and the neighbors in general who had dealt out their jeremiades so freely, kept themselves at a very respectful distance.

The recovery was as rapid as could have been expected, even in the most vigorous young person. Nor was there any after-trouble, to require physic, or eye-water, or remedies for the dropsy. And,—what added to my own surprise, if not to that of the neighbors in general,—though she was a feeble woman, constitutionally, she recovered with as much rapidity as the most healthy and robust, and as well, to say the least, as if she had taken "*snakeroot and saffron*."

CHAPTER LXXXV.

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THE CONSUMPTIVE PAIR.

A young man, recently married, called on me one day, and requested me to visit his family as soon as I could conveniently, for the purpose of having what he was pleased to call a general consultation.

I called in due time, and found the case as follows: Both the husband and wife were descended from consumptive families, and though they had got along tolerably well till very recently, there were now, in them both, many evidences of approaching disease; and though consumptive people are said to be slow in admitting they have consumption, yet this young couple formed an exception to the general rule.

In the bosom of the family, and possessed of their entire confidence, I had an ample opportunity for examining the case of this interesting couple. I found the tendency downward much more marked and rapid than I had expected, and I frankly told them so. Some of the circumstances were, indeed, rather peculiar. Consumptive people are generally sensual, while indulgence is peculiarly fatal to them. But here was a case more glaring than I had before seen. They had been married but about three months; nor were the indulgences of the table believed to be remarkable, as they were forbidden by a due regard to economy. They suffered much by excessive heat in their rooms, both by day and by night, and in several other ways, much more than by high living.

But I endeavored to put all things right, and to convince them of the necessity of keeping them so. In a long, but very familiar series of conversations,—for the most part separately,—I endeavored to show them that conjugal life was a life of duty, as well as of enjoyment; and that consumptive people, in order to live out more than half their days, must forego a great many gratifications to which they might very naturally lay claim. [Pg 321]

The results of this conversation were probably worth a hundred-fold the expense they involved. This young couple are, to this hour, for aught I know, enjoying tolerable health; and their health is improving. Their children, though not strong, reap the full benefit of thorough parental reform; and their scrofulous tendencies seem every day more and more receding.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

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HOW TO CURE CHOLERA.

While cholera was prevailing in our large towns and cities, and a few cases were occurring and proving fatal in my own neighborhood, a friend of mine, who had till recently been a sea captain, complained, one day, of cholera symptoms, and begged to know what he could do to ward off the threatened disease.

On inquiry I found he was more than half right, that cholera, surely enough, was already marking him for its victim. The rice-water discharges, so called, had actually commenced. Had he been any thing but a resolute tar, he would have gone on, most evidently, into severe if not fatal disease.

I gave him the best advice I was able, with regard to diet, exercise, etc.,—probably the same, or about the same, that any thoughtful medical man, in the same circumstances, would have given. He was to be cheerful, quiet, and abstinent. For food, he was to use nothing but a little boiled rice,—at least, till the symptoms of cholera began to abate. He was especially directed to avoid all medicine.

Several weeks passed away, during which I heard nothing from him. As I did not hear of his death, however, I concluded he must have recovered. One day, rather unexpectedly, I met him again, and inquired familiarly how he got along with his cholera? He laughed outright, but immediately added,—“Sit down, sir, and I will tell you the whole story.”

“After I left you,” said he, “the thought struck me,—Why cannot I control the muscles of my system as well as my appetites and passions? Indeed, on occasions, I have done it, at least for a short time. These little rice-water evacuations cannot, in the nature of things, do much harm by being retained. I can do what any man can. These frequent demands of nature seem to me very unreasonable. I will not yield to them. And, like a good sailor, I kept my word. For nearly a whole day I never permitted a single evacuation. Then, after yielding obedience, for once, to nature's clamorous demands, I again enforced my prohibitory law. My task, the second day, was less severe than it was the first, and on the third day I got along very comfortably. The fourth day I was well; and to-day you see me here.” [Pg 323]

Whether he told me the truth, I do not know, of course; but I give the statement, as nearly as I can recollect, just as it was given to me. I have reason, however, for believing it to be true. The man is still alive, and is as likely to live for twenty or twenty-five years to come, as you or I, or any other individual.

Mrs. Willard, of Troy, New York, under the full impression that the seat of human life is in the lungs, and not in the heart, and that even the blue color of the skin during the collapse of Asiatic cholera, is owing to an accumulation of unburnt carbon in the air cells of the lungs, made the experiment of trusting a few patients, in this disease, to the full influence of pure air, and nothing else. According to her account the experiments were most admirably successful. She cured every individual she experimented on (and it was a considerable number), and in a comparatively short period.

It was my good fortune to escape cholera patients, with the single exception mentioned above. However, I am quite confident that, but for the alarm, which more than half paralyzes our efforts, we might much more frequently recover, under its deadly influences, especially if we begin the work of preparation in good season, and duly and faithfully persevere. There is much in enduring to the end.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

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OBSTINACY AND SUICIDE.

Without examining the term suicide, in regard to its various shades of meaning, I have placed it at the head of this chapter; for I think it properly belongs there. Of this, however, I leave the reader to judge when he has heard a statement of the facts in the case to which I have applied it.

A young woman was admitted to the family where I was, to be treated for a nervous complaint so obstinate as to remind one who was not wholly insane nor strikingly imaginative, of the demoniacal possessions of eighteen hundred years ago. She would not eat; she would not drink; she would not or *could* not sleep. In short, she would not, if she could help it, do any thing which did not have an immediate bearing on her own well-being, for the moment. She was, in truth, one of the most selfish creatures in human shape I ever yet saw. If Dr. Johnson, who is said to have held that every sick person is a rascal, had seen her, I wonder what he would have said of the case.

She was one of those young women who have never been governed, and hence cannot govern themselves. If she took it into her head to do or not to do a thing, she would be sure to carry her point, if not in one way, at least in another.

How she came to consent to be placed under my care, I never knew; for all the neighbors and friends of the poor girl well understood that if she came there she would have to obey me; and yet that, if she *did* obey me, it would be the first instance in which she ever yielded to any mind or will but her own, either earthly or heavenly. Perhaps it was a last resort—a sort of desperation.

I began my directions, however, as if I expected to be obeyed, and had no fears of any disinclination on her part. Some things which pleased her, she consented to attempt; others she would tell me she *could* not do. When I was quite confident nothing was wanting but a will, I sometimes asked for a reason; but it could, in no instance, be obtained. If I pressed her for an answer, or for a reason, she would either be silent or groan most dreadfully with pain!

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At length I saw that nothing could be obtained in this way, and that she must either attend to my directions, as far as was really in her power, or I could have nothing to do with her; and I told her so. She did not appear to care. Her alienation of feeling was so rapid that in a very

few days she seemed almost to hate the very sight of me. Indeed, I believe she made statements to this effect to several of her friends.

Her report, so unfavorable and so very strange, soon reached the ears of several very respectable people, who in wonder and surprise came to me, to learn what it meant, and among the rest came her minister. They made diligent though respectful inquiry whether the facts were as she represented them to be. I believe that, for the most part, they were satisfied with the treatment.

But the girl herself was not satisfied. She could not leave the house without help; and yet it was easy to see that she was determined not to remain. She preferred, as she said, to die. Everybody seemed to pity her, despite of her unreasonableness, and the more for her unreasonableness. Her friends assured her that this treatment of mine afforded her the last chance of recovery, and begged her not to decide to leave us too hastily. It was all to no purpose, however; she said she preferred death in the street to a cure at my hands.

There had been serious difficulty about her diet. I had strenuously forbidden the use of certain condiments which I thought injurious to her, but which she was resolutely determined to have. At first, a few things prepared to her taste had been smuggled in by certain psuedo friends; but this, when discovered, was absolutely prohibited.

One evening, just at dark, some of her friends called to see her and me. They found me in the sitting-room. We had a short conversation concerning the patient, in which they were made most distinctly to understand that they must either leave her to be treated wholly according to my discretion or remove her. They were left at a loss what course was best; but at length, in compliance with her clamors, they placed her in their carriage and carried her away. [Pg 326]

This was both the first and last patient that ever ran away from me, or that ever appeared to be desirous of doing so. On the whole, though no one pitied her more than myself, I was glad when she was gone. She was hardly worth curing. I never heard from her more, except vaguely, some time afterward, that she was dead, which was probably correct. Most certainly I could not have lived long, in her circumstances.

I was very unwise in taking the charge of her, or, at least, in retaining her a moment after she refused to obey me. However, I had my reward. The public not being possessed of all the facts in the case, probably lost confidence in me. It was proper that they should. He who takes a viper to his bosom, must not be surprised if he suffers the natural consequences of his presumption.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

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HEALTH HOSPITALS.

Some of my friends, fully aware of my strong reliance on the recuperative powers of nature, and of my growing scepticism in regard to medicine, entered into combination and proposed to place me at the head of a hospital, in which I should have an opportunity, as they supposed, to test the superiority of my favorite practice.

The buildings needful for the purpose, were to be furnished by one of the company, gratuitously. For the rest, a subscription was to have been started. The salary was to have been \$1,000 a year. Matters were, in fine, carried so far that nothing remained but my own

acceptance or non-acceptance, of the proposal, as there was no doubt that the subscription would readily succeed.

But I saw, at the moment, so many difficulties, that after a careful consideration of the subject I was compelled to decline. Situated as I then was, and with very little self-confidence, perhaps the decision was right. And yet I have at times, ever since, regretted it. I was not then so fully aware as I now am, of the stern necessity of such institutions.

Still later than this, I made an effort to establish a Hospital, on my own responsibility, and on my own plan. This was, simply, to receive patients at my house, and teach them, both by precept and example, *how to live*. In other words, I was to teach the art of preventing disease by obeying the physical and moral laws. Even disease itself was to be cured by obedience to these laws,—those of hygiene.

At this time, I was residing in the country. Had I been in the crowded city, I might, perhaps, have succeeded. As it was, I found many difficulties. Just now, too, among other difficulties, my pecuniary condition became embarrassed, and I was anxious to be freed from debt before I begun a work which, at best, required a good deal of capital. Not to be able to labor wholly gratuitously would, as I thought, defeat my whole plan.

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In these circumstances, and after considerable delay, the whole thing was indefinitely postponed; and soon after, I removed to a region still less promising. I shall not, at present, if ever, repeat my attempts, at least on the plan of doing my work gratuitously. What costs little is, usually, little valued.

And yet, such institutions are needed; and the time must come when they will succeed. Some eminent medical man who already possesses wealth, will perhaps make the trial. For myself, I prefer a more radical work. I prefer to throw my own make-weight, while I live, into the scale of early and correct physical education.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

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DESTRUCTION BY SCROFULA.

Much is said in these days about scrofula, and much indeed should be said about it; for it has become a most frequent, not to say fatal, disease. For, if few die of it, immediately, it leads to, or renders more severe, numerous other diseases, which are more directly fatal. In truth, a scrofulous constitution not only prepares us for many other diseases, but renders them, when they assail us, much more severe than they otherwise would have been. Colds, fevers, and consumption, in particular, are not only more frequent in scrofulous people than in others, but also more intense or severe, as well as less manageable by medical skill.

This disease itself, though often inherited, may, on the one hand, be greatly aggravated by improper treatment; or, by a proper course of living, may, on the other hand, be postponed many years, if not indefinitely. Living much in the open air, cheerfulness of mind, plain food and drink, and a proper regard to the skin, will do a vast deal towards arresting its progress, and in some instances will wholly prevent its doing us any harm. For though five millions of the inhabitants of the United States were probably born with a tendency to this formidable disease, and the same proportion—if not a greater—of each generation to come will be likely to have the same tendency, I do not believe it to be indispensably necessary that one-half of this number should die, as now they do, of consumption. I have not a doubt

that two-thirds of them might, by proper management, be made to last many years, and some of them to what is usually called old age.

It has been my lot to have a very great number of scrofulous patients, daring the last twenty-five years, from almost every part of the United States. One of the worst cases I ever had was that of Mrs. —, of New Hampshire. Her history, prior to the period when she came to me, is very briefly as follows.

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She was born of parents, who, at the time of her birth, were very near their dotage; in consequence of which, as it was believed, she held her existence by a very feeble tenure. At two and a half years of age, she was nearly destroyed by dysentery, or by the medicine given to arrest her disease, or by both. In addition to this and almost before she recovered, she had an attack of scarlet fever, which was very severe, and which was also probably treated freely by medicine. By this time there is no doubt that scrofula, at first slightly inherited, had become pretty well riveted on a constitution already but poorly prepared to endure it.

In her seventeenth year, she was afflicted with a troublesome eruption, which was cured, or at least checked, by a wash of sugar of lead. (See Chapter XIII.) She was married at twenty-one; and though stunted in her growth, so as to be almost a dwarf, she seemed, at first, to be tolerably healthy. But in the course of a year she suffered from various complaints, to which scrofulous and otherwise debilitated females are subject in early conjugal life, for which she was treated—as I suppose very injudiciously—with active medicine, especially calomel.

And now, as if to render what was already bad enough a great deal worse, she made use of a certain patent medicine, which had been greatly lauded in the public papers. She was also persuaded to make use of a more stimulating diet than before; which was doubtless to her great disadvantage, in such a feeble condition. Her diet, though it should have been *nourishing*, should have been *less stimulating* than usual, and not more so.

Falling in with the famous Sylvester Graham, who was lecturing near her at the time, she was overpersuaded to change her habits very suddenly, especially her dietetic habits. From a highly seasoned diet, she was at once transferred to a very plain one, to which was added cold bathing and abundant exercise in the open air. This change, though it caused great emaciation, appeared to restore her health entirely. Her appetite and general strength were such that she thought it almost impossible she could ever be sick again.

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But now a heavy domestic affliction befell her, which again very much reduced her; and, as she was wont to say afterward, "killed her." What it was, however, I was never informed. Being greatly depressed, she undoubtedly confined herself to the house too much, and in one instance when she ventured out, she unluckily exposed herself to a damp east wind, which appeared to give her cold. To remove this, and for other purposes, she fasted rigidly, for several days.

It was at this time that she came, in part, under my care. But she was already so much diseased in mind and body, and so ignorant of any just principles of hygiene, as to be greatly liable to be led about by the fancy or whim of this friend or that—sometimes by Mr. Graham and others, who only relied on Nature; and at others, by those who went to the opposite extreme. I could do little for her to any valuable purpose, and was glad to send her to the elder Dr. Jackson, of Boston. Not, however, till I had given her to understand, in general, that aside from her scrofulous tendencies, I did not know what ailed her; and that, so far as I could understand her case, her safest course was to avoid medicine and depend almost wholly on a careful obedience to God's laws, physical and moral, especially to his laws of hygiene. I had not then fully learned how much she had been abused, in early life, by unnecessary dosing and drugging.

Dr. Jackson told her it was evident there was something in her case very much out of the way; but he would be honest with her, and confess that he did not know what it was. He proposed to have Dr. Putnam see her, and another physician at Lowell. He insisted, however, on a more nutritious diet.

The last suggestion was heeded for awhile, but evidently to her disadvantage. Under the impression that in order to obtain more nutriment she must do so, she suddenly returned to the free use of flesh, butter, eggs, milk, etc., which, for a long time, till now, she had refused. This course brought upon her much acidity of the stomach. She returned once more to the plain diet, and by avoiding extremes and letting alone medicine, according to the general tenor of my directions, she partly recovered, and seemed destined to still higher advance towards the land of health and life.

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But here, again, domestic trials, like a flood, came upon her, and brought her into great mental anxiety and embarrassment, as well as into that weak and vacillating condition which had once before existed, and which I have already described. To-day she would use her well-balanced, plain diet; to-morrow, perhaps, resort to the starvation system, for a few days. Then, in the fear of suffering from that, she would resort again, for a few days, to luxurious living.

Now, too, she would adhere to and follow this physician, now that, and next, none at all; or, perchance, follow some quack. I was not in a situation to exert much influence over her, or it is possible she might still have been saved. She would, indeed, adhere to my general plan, when all else that promised more seemed to fail, and perhaps would have been more persevering, but for her friends. They wanted to have the "prophet" do "some great thing," and cure her as by magic or miracle.

In saying these things, it is far enough from being my intention to be reproachful. She was not educated to a knowledge of herself; and she was by no means, at the present time, what she had been in her best days. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that she acted like a wayward child; though it is greatly to be regretted, since, in her circumstances, it probably cut off every chance of her recovery.

In the spring, two or three years after her first change of diet, a cough with which she had occasionally been troubled before, came on with renewed violence, and never after wholly left her. She remained in this condition till the opening of the next year, when her cough made still farther advances, and was attended with hectic fever. She died in the month of May following.

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A post mortem examination was made, which determined the case to have been what Dr. Jackson and myself and many others supposed, a case of scrofula or struma; though it was certainly attended with many curious and rather anomalous symptoms. Though there were no ulcers in the lungs, they were found full of tubercles; and so were the mesenteric glands, and the lining membrane of the alimentary canal. It was even said by the principal individual concerned in the examination, that her whole body was but a mass of disease. For myself, I was necessarily absent at the time, and therefore have no facts of my own to present.

I never had a case, either before or since, in which my hands were so completely tied as in this. The patient probably had as much confidence in me as in anybody; and yet she would not long follow me implicitly and strictly, without yielding to the whims of her friends or her enemies, and halving the practice with some physician or quack, either known or unknown. Under the care of some good, common-sense physician, and with full faith in him on the part of all concerned, I am still of opinion, as I always have been, that she might have recovered and lived many years, and, perhaps, been able to do a vast amount of good.

CHAPTER XC.

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STARVING OUT DISEASE.

Dr. Johnson, one of the best British writers on dyspepsia, advises his medical brethren to starve out the disease, as the surest way of getting rid of it. He says he has by far the best success with those patients who submit to this course. It is not starvation, exactly, though it savors of it. He says, keep them on just two pints of Indian-meal gruel—by which he appears to mean thin hasty pudding—a day, and no more. If they are really afraid of starving, after the trial of a few weeks, let them eat a few times of something else; but they must soon return to the starvation plan.

I have usually preferred cakes of Indian meal, or wheat meal unbolted and baked very hard, to gruel or pudding. The reason is, that I consider mastication very essential to good digestion, especially in the case of dyspeptics. I believe the small quantity of Indian meal that goes into two pints of gruel, or even of pudding, were it firmly baked, would hold out and sustain the health and strength of an individual much longer than gruel; and it will, by most persons, be preferred.

One of my dyspeptic patients, a young man of great resolution, was put upon ten ounces a day of thin Indian-meal cake, or johnny cake; and it wrought wonders. The prescription was made about twenty years ago, and no young man under forty years of age, in Massachusetts, is more efficient, at the present time, than he.

To another young man, similarly afflicted, I recommended eight ounces of the same kind of food. He was from a family that had long known me, and that appeared to confide in me. I have never heard from him since. My conjecture is that he refused to follow the directions, and hence did not wish to communicate with me any farther. He may be still a dyspeptic, as the consequence, though it is certainly possible he may have obeyed the prescription, to the saving of his health.

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Some have supposed that a quantity of food so small, is not sufficient to keep alive an ordinary adult; but they are mistaken. Much smaller quantities than eight ounces have proved sufficient for this purpose, in a great many instances. Three or four ounces have been found adequate to every want, in these circumstances.

As I regard this as a highly important point, I will endeavor to establish it by two or three facts, which have come, in part, under my own observation. The first appeared in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, for 1851, and in several other papers. The other is from a Philadelphia paper, and is as reliable as the former. It is, however, of much later date; viz., December, 1853.

Jervis Robinson,^[K] of Nantucket, was a ship-master, born in 1800. In 1832, he became a most miserable dyspeptic. For three or four years he relied on the popular remedy of beef-steak three times a day, and with the usual consequences. It made him worse rather than better.

In the year 1836, a friend of his who had heard lectures on dyspepsia, or had read on the subject, suggested a new remedy. It was three Graham crackers daily, one at each meal, without any drink at the time of eating. This, it was said, if persevered in long enough, would certainly effect a radical cure.

But I prefer to let Mr. Robinson tell his own story, which he does in the following manner:

"The novelty as well as simplicity of this prescription, greatly interested my mind, and I laid the case before my friends. But they, as with one voice, endeavored to dissuade me from a course which they said would certainly destroy me. They were particularly afraid of the sudden change from a full flesh diet to one entirely vegetable.^[L] But I told them I might as well die in one way as another, and that I was resolved on the experiment.

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"At first I had no Graham crackers; I therefore used the common soft Graham bread cut in thin slices and thoroughly dried. Twenty-one ounces a week was my allowance. Of these I made three meals a day, at the hours of six, twelve, and six. Small as the allowance was, I spent half an hour in consuming it. Occasionally at evening, I omitted one-half of even these scanty rations.

"My drink, for twenty-four hours, was one gill of water, divided into three equal parts, and one of them to be taken just two hours after each meal. I also used a cold shower-bath at rising in the morning, and walked a mile before breakfast, having retired at ten the previous evening.

"Under this course, my flesh and strength wasted fast. I was weighed every week, and for the first three or four weeks, I lost half a pound a day. The daily loss then diminished somewhat, but was not entirely discontinued till the lapse of two months. At this time I had lost, in all, twenty pounds weight.

"All this time the cry of starvation was heard from every quarter, and I must frankly own that, for a week or so, I was not myself wholly without fears. However, my head felt so much better, and my spirits so much revived, that I began to take courage. My bowels, moreover, which up to this time had rarely moved, and never to much purpose, now began to move more regularly, and in about three weeks they resumed their functions entirely, both as regarded time and quantity.

"At the end of two months, I ceased to lose flesh, and remained, in this respect, about stationary for four weeks; but after this I began to gain. At first, the increase of weight was very slow indeed, but soon it became much more rapid, so that in two months more I gained nearly what I had lost, or at the average rate of five or six ounces a day. For a part of this time, however, the gain was half a pound a day, or nearly three times as much as the whole weight of my food, and more than the whole weight of my food and drink together.

"I have said that I ate three ounces, by weight, of Graham bread, daily,—an ounce at each meal. But I afterwards procured the Graham crackers in Boston, and used them a part of the time. Of these, too, I continued frequently to omit half a cracker at evening. The water, also, —one-third of a gill,—was generally omitted at evening.

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"As to my appetite, during the experiment, I can truly say that, though I never in my life came to the table with a better appetite, I was never better satisfied with my meals when they were finished. After the first three weeks, I had little or no thirst. Nor had I, so far as I now recollect, any desire to eat between meals. In truth, food, except at my meals, was seldom thought of. But, on this subject, my mind had been made up at the outset. I will only add, on this point, that my bread, during the whole time, tasted better, far better, to me than the nicest cake formerly had.

"As regards perspiration, my skin, after the first three or four weeks (during which it was dry and hard), became soft and moist. When I used much exercise, I perspired very freely. My sleep was sound and satisfying. Indeed, the whole "machinery," so far as I could judge, worked admirably during the latter part of the experiment, and at its close I could perform a good day's work at my trade.

"I was about thirty years of age when I made the experiment. I am now above fifty. I have not always, nor indeed generally, been as rigid in my habits since that time. In one instance,

however, I worked two weeks on a ship, at "sheathing," on but five ounces of food a day, and was never better in my life, and never felt less fatigue at night. In fact, I felt much better at night than I did in those instances in which I indulged myself in eating two pounds of food a day.

"During a part of the time of my principal experiment, I kept a grocery. On leaving this, I established a Graham boarding-house, in which I continued for one year.

"About a year after the termination of my experiment, I had occasion, for about three weeks, to work in a bake-house, where the mercury in the thermometer was at 90°. While here, I ate twelve ounces of dry bread and two apples a day, and drank nothing. Yet I perspired as freely as ever, nor did I perceive any difference in the quality or the quantity of any other secretions or excretions."

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The reader will take notice that Mr. Robinson's principal or starvation experiment, lasted five months, or one hundred and fifty days. He will also observe that he left off the experiment with nearly or quite as much flesh as he had when he commenced, and with a very great increase of muscular strength.

The above statement was so remarkable, that not a few medical men and others regarded it as a hoax. "To live on three ounces of bread, and yet be in daily employment," they said, "even though such employment were of a kind likely to call for very little muscular effort, is altogether incredible. And what renders the whole so much more unlikely, is, the yet more extraordinary assertion, that, part of the time, he gained more in weight than the whole amount eaten and drank."

It was no wonder that medical and all scientific men were staggered at the account. I was in doubt myself, in regard to the functions of waste, and made a very rigid examination, in order to be certain of the facts, before I ventured to publish any thing. On one or two points, I afterward obtained Mr. Robinson's particular statement, as follows:—

"In regard to the question you propose, I shall have to guess a little. So far as the fluids are concerned, however, I think it was about half a pint a day. The solids—for I weighed them this morning, and they appear to me about equal to those voided during the experiment—are fully half a pound."

I also recently ascertained another curious fact. Mr. Robinson's eyesight, prior to the experiment, had, for many years, been very poor, but was perfectly restored during its progress. It appeared, also, that he had again resorted to the exclusive use of bread and water for food; but not in such small quantities as before. Mr. Robinson, of course, is now above sixty years old.

One medical correspondent of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, pressed Mr. Robinson, very hard, for corroborative testimony concerning the facts just stated, to which Mr. Robinson very kindly replied, by sending him the certificate of his wife, Mrs. E. D. Robinson, whose veracity is undoubted. The certificate was as follows:—

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"The most of the facts which my husband has written, I well recollect, and will give my name as a voucher for the truth of them."

A brother of Mr. Robinson, at Holmes' Hole, whom I called on, appeared to give full credence to the statements of the latter, although he was much opposed to the experiment, at the time it was made, and mortally detested all his bread and water tendencies.

I will only add, that a medical man who was sceptical in regard to the whole matter, became finally convinced that the story bore the marks of truth, and made public his conviction, in the subjoined statements and reasonings.

"It is no true philosophy to refuse credence to a statement of fact supported by competent evidence, simply on the ground that we cannot understand how it can be. That his system (Robinson's) absorbed a very considerable amount of weight from the moisture at all times existing in the atmosphere, I have no doubt—partly through the skin, but chiefly, as I apprehend, through the mucous membrane of the lungs. The fact that they are capable of transmitting such an amount of water in a very short time, as may be rendered evident by breathing on a cold, polished surface, is a pretty conclusive proof that they may, under favorable circumstances, be as active in absorption.

"That the alvine evacuations are purely and entirely a secretion, to become an excretion, I have been satisfied for a number of years; and I am glad of this new and striking—I might say incontrovertible—proof that it is so. To be sure, all matters incapable of solution and digestion, pass off through the alimentary canal, but they are purely accidental. One of the most satisfactory proofs, to my mind, of the fact, has been the discharges from the bowels of a healthy infant. The whole of the milk is so digested that there is no residuary matter to pass through the canal, and yet the discharges are abundant." [Pg 340]

The case of Mary B. Adams, of Oakham, Mass., though differing considerably from that of Mr. Robinson, is, nevertheless, remarkable. I have dwelt so long on the preceding case, however, that I must study brevity. What I shall say, was published in the papers of some years since, and is from her own pen.

"In June, 1840, I had an abscess in my throat, accompanied by slow fever, and in the fall, dysentery. In the autumn of the same year, I discontinued the use of animal food.

"In 1842, I had an attack of spinal complaint, which lasted me three months. In the spring of 1843, I had lung fever, followed, for nearly two years, by a cough, and accompanied by a very indifferent appetite. A piece of bread three inches square and one inch thick would serve me for a meal. A hard fit of coughing, however, was sure to follow every meal. I also became very much emaciated. In the fall of 1844, I took some medicine which removed my cough.

"Through the winter and spring of 1845, I had diarrhœa; and in the last of May, I was suddenly and completely prostrated. I had risen in the morning more unwell than usual, but before flight I was suffering intolerable pain through the kidneys and back; and it was not till the lapse of two weeks that I was able to walk about the house. All this while I was entirely destitute of an appetite, though my stomach continually craved acids. For six months, I lived almost wholly on fruit. Four good-sized apples a day,^[M] was all that I required. My drink was, for the most part, catnip tea. Sometimes I could take sugar and milk in my tea; at others, milk could not be borne. I drank four teacupfuls of it a day.

"While I was at one period expectorating largely, I had custards made from the white of eggs, sweetened with loaf sugar, of which I took three table-spoonfuls, every twenty-four hours. I slept but little—not more than two hours in twenty-four.... My bowels were very costive; I do not suppose there were more than two or three natural evacuations during the whole of the six months I am describing." [Pg 341]

A more particular account of her diet, in 1846, is elsewhere given. It is in the following words: "During this year I took but little food, and that of the simplest. I lived chiefly on fruit, such as apples, currants, strawberries, gooseberries, and blueberries, and other acid fruits."

Some years later than this, Miss Adams was still living very simply. "My food," she says, "is raised bread, and butter, apple or pumpkin pie, and fruit in small quantity. I do not require more than a third as much food as most females. In fact, I can eat but little of any thing. My food, even now, distresses me very much, unless I vomit it. I eat no animal food,

and roots of every kind distress me. I drink tea; I cannot drink water; it seems, in swallowing it, more like a solid than a liquid."

There would be no difficulty in adding largely to the list of cases of dyspepsia which have been cured on the starvation plan; but these must suffice for the present chapter.

FOOTNOTES:

- [K] For obvious reasons, I give real names and dates in this chapter.
- [L] Even Mr. Graham himself, whom he accidentally met, repeated to him the same caution!
- [M] Or other fruits equal to them. The reader must not forget that she had already subsisted five years without animal food, and that what she took of vegetable food was a very small quantity—little more than was taken by Mr. Robinson.

CHAPTER XCI.

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DIETING ON MINCE PIE.

A recent letter from a patient of mine, contains the following statement: "I met, yesterday, with a poor dyspeptic. He said he felt very bad indeed, and that he had been *dieting* for a long time. I asked him what his diet had been. He said 'Bread and butter, for the morning meal; beef, etc., for dinner; and nothing at all, for supper, but a piece of mince pie and one or two glasses of cider.'"

Admitting this to be dieting, it is, at least, such a kind of dieting as will not be likely, very soon, to cure dyspepsia. And yet to hundreds, if not thousands, *dieting* is little more than an increased attention to what they eat—I mean, from meal to meal. Yet no changes of food, even for the better, will compensate for this increased watchfulness over—I might perhaps say devotion *to*—the stomach. The Philippians, to whom Paul wrote so touchingly, are not the only people in the world whose god is their abdominal region. Such an anxious attention to the demands of an abnormal appetite, only tends to increase that determination of blood to the stomach, to prevent which all judicious or effective dieting is intended.

Dyspepsia only renders her devotees—her very slaves—the more enslaved. With such, every attempt to cure the disease by dieting is still stomach worship. They must have their very medicine taste agreeably and *sit* well. At all events, they must and will have their minds continually upon it, and must and will be continually inquiring whether they may safely eat this article or that or the other.

It would be almost true to affirm that the fall of man from primeval integrity, consists essentially in dyspepsia, and that every descendant of Adam and Eve is a dyspeptic. The attention of mankind generally, is directed too exclusively as well as too anxiously, to the inquiry, what they shall eat, and what they shall drink. That we must eat, and drink too, is quite obvious—nothing more so. That the Author of nature intended, also, that we should take pleasure in our eating and drinking, is scarcely less so. But does he secure to himself the most pleasure who thinks most about it? Most certainly there is pleasure—*much* pleasure in the anticipation of good. We may, by aid of imagination, then, feast upon the same dish half a dozen times. Yet, does not this—I repeat the idea—tend to determine an

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increased amount of blood and of nervous energy to the stomach, and to aggravate the disease? Let the reader ponder this question.

My own most deliberate conviction is, that the stomach, in general, is best managed, and the greatest amount of gustatory enjoyment secured, when it is subjected most fully to good habits; that this organ, being blind and deaf, is best served when directed by the wiser head; or, to express the same truth in a better way, instead of asking the stomach at any time what it will have, *we should ask the head what is right*, and follow its directions. If the stomach is pleased, why, very well; if not, let it go without being pleased. Give it what you think is right, all things considered, and think no more about it. If it rebels, give it a smaller quantity. If it still complains, lessen still more the quantity, and perhaps diminish the frequency of your meals. There is no danger of starving to death, as every one must be convinced who has read carefully the two preceding chapters. When the system is really in a suffering condition for want of nutriment, then the stomach will be able to receive more, and dispose of it. If you give it what is right for it, there will be no want of appetite—at least, very long. Nay, more; the mere animal or gustatory enjoyment of that food which the head tells us is right, and to which we conscientiously adhere, will, in the end, be far greater than in the case of continual inquiry and anxiety and anticipation and agitation about it.

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Dyspepsia, I know, has a great variety of causes—as many, almost, as it has forms. And yet I do not believe it can often be induced by other causes alone, as long as the stomach is treated correctly. Give to that organ, habitually, what is exactly right for it, both as regards quality and quantity, and I do not believe we shall hear any more, in this world, about dyspepsia.

But he who would confine his stomach to food which his head tells him is right, will not surely put mince pie into it. He must know that such a strange compound, however agreeable, will in the end be destructive, not only of health, but of gustatory enjoyment.

The mince pie dyspeptic is just the man for quackery to feed upon. He will keep his nerves in such a state as to render him liable to read about and swallow all the wonderful cures of the day—whether hunger cures, nutrition cures, clairvoyant cures, "spiritual" cures, or any other cures. Now it is great gain, when we have got beyond all these, when we simply put into our stomachs what is right, and think no more about it, leaving ourselves to the event; and this in sickness and health both.

A man in the eastern part of Massachusetts,—an asthmatic,—told me he had spent six hundred dollars in fourteen years, on quack medicines, and that he was nothing bettered by them. That man, you may depend, is the slave of his feelings. No man who has been accustomed to dictate to his stomach what it shall have, and make it submit, would ever do this. A very poor woman, on the Green Mountains, assured me she had spent, or rather wasted, four hundred dollars in the same way. We must drop all this. I do not now say we must drop or lay aside all medicine, in all cases; that is quite another question. But I do say, we must rely on obedience to the laws of God, or on doing right, not on medicine. It will be time enough to rely on medicine when our family physician urges it upon us as indispensable.

If I have a single regret with regard to the instruction I have given my patients, from time to time, it is that I have not pressed upon them more forcibly and perseveringly, such views as are comprised in the foregoing reasonings and reflections. They are all-important to the dyspeptic, and by no means less important to the healthy than to the diseased.

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CHAPTER XCII.

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GIANTS IN THE EARTH.

It is said of Job, and his friends who visited him to condole with him in his sufferings, that they sat down together and said nothing, for seven days and seven nights.

Nearly twenty years ago, a man of gigantic frame, but haggard appearance, came to me, and after the usual compliments,—which were indeed very dry ones,—sat down by my side, and said nothing; and this for the very same reason which is assigned as the cause of the long silence of Job and his friends—his grief and his sufferings were very great.

His disease, however, was very different in its nature from that of Job. It was more like insanity than small pox, or eruptive disease of any kind. But hear him tell his own story, which I solicited at his hands for the express purpose of publication:

"My business, until I was twenty years of age, was farming. Since that time, it has been mechanical, and for the most part sedentary. From my youth, I ate animal food of all kinds, prepared in the usual manner. Twice a day I partook, more or less freely, of such vegetables as are in general use. Fruits, as they came in their season, I ate whenever and wherever I could lay hands on them, more especially apples; these last at almost all hours of the day, and almost without number. I was also in the habit of eating a luncheon at nine or ten o'clock in the morning, and just before going to bed.

"My drinks, till 1830, were principally tea, coffee, cider, and beer; but sometimes I used rum, brandy, molasses and water, milk and water, etc. For twelve years previous to 1837, I used tobacco. From my youth, I have had a fondness for reading and study—have spent many hours in reading after the whole village were asleep.

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"My health I considered good, compared with that of my acquaintances, and I was able to labor hard, although I was subject to dizziness and vomiting with such intensity that I could not walk or stand without assistance; and for a number of days, the complaint seemed to bid defiance to all medical aid. Here began the day of retribution, and bitterly have I suffered for my intemperance, both in eating and drinking. At length, my dizziness in some measure wore away, so that I returned to my work; but my system had received a shock that was not to be got rid of at once. And although my dizziness and inclination to vomit were in some measure removed, yet I grew weaker by degrees, so that by spring I was unable to perform my daily labor.

"I continued to decline until summer, when I was attacked with a violent cough—from what cause I did not know. Some said it was the hooping-cough, some said it was *la grippe*. Suffice it to say, I took all the medicines prescribed by our family physician, followed all his good advice, and took all to no purpose. I was also persuaded to try the prescription of a celebrated physician in a neighboring town; but, alas! his prescription was tried in vain.

"My cough and dizziness not having left me, I tried a respectable physician of Boston, who, with an honesty of heart that does credit to his profession, bid me buy a ninepence worth of liquorice, keep my mouth and throat moist by chewing a little of that, and let my cough have its course; 'For,' said he, 'though I should like to sell you medicine and give you medical advice, for the sake of the emolument, it will do you no good. Your disease will have its course, and you cannot help it.' I now thought my days were few; but, as a last resort, I repaired to you."

He here enters into particulars which are not needful to my present purpose; and the detail, by one so intimately concerned, and withal so complimentary to me as his physician, would be fulsome. It is sufficient, perhaps, to add the following paragraphs.

"Agreeably to your advice, I now began to reform, in good earnest. With a constitution broken down, and almost rotten with disease, it was no easy matter for me to cure myself;

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but to it I went, determined to overcome or die in the attempt.

"I now began to think of eating what God created for man to eat. And now it was that my health began to return; and by the time I had practised the rules and prescriptions you laid down for me, about three months, my cough ceased, my dizziness left me, and my health and strength partly returned.

"Since that time I have lived on bread made of wheat meal, rye and Indian bread, rice boiled or stewed, rice puddings, corn puddings, apples, potatoes, etc. I sleep soundly and sweetly, on a straw bed; rise at four in summer and five in winter, refreshed both in body and mind; do as much work as it is necessary for any man to do; am cheerful, happy, contented, and thankful to God for all his mercies; go to bed at nine and go to sleep without having the night mare or any thing else to disturb my rest. I ought to add that I eat no luncheon; and but about as much in a whole day, as I used to eat at one meal."

As I have already intimated, it is about twenty years since I prescribed for this individual, at which time he had a wife and two or three children. The latter seemed to require not a little watching and dosing. Now, in 1858, he has a very large family, many of whom have either arrived at maturity or nearly so; and the whole family have, for many years, been strangers to dosing and drugging. Except the mother, they seem like a family of giants, so large are their frames, and so marked and strong are their muscles. They are pictures of health, so to speak; and if Mr. Barnum would exhibit them at his museum, or elsewhere, he might, for aught I know, retrieve his shattered fortunes.

I know another great family, in New England, whose history, so far as physical inheritance is concerned, is not unlike that of the family just described. "There were giants in the earth in those days," hence appears to be applicable to the world since the flood, as well as to that which was before it.

CHAPTER XCIII.

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THE GREEN MOUNTAIN PATIENT.

Not many years since, I received a letter from a family in a retired village of the Green Mountains, begging me to visit one of their number, a young woman about twenty-seven years of age. She was a farmer's daughter, and had been, in early life, employed as is customary in such families in that region; but, for a few years past had been employed, a considerable portion of the time, in teaching in the district or public schools. It is probable she exchanged the employments of home for the labors of the pedagogue, on account of increasing ill health (though of this I am not quite certain), since nothing is more common or more hazardous. The daughters of our agriculturalists, who inherit, as she did, a scrofulous constitution, and who appear to be tolerably healthy while they remain at home, almost always break down within a few years after leaving the broom and duster.

But whatever may have been the first cause or causes of her diseased condition, it is probable there had been both action and reaction. She was now, at the time I received her most piteous petition, quite ill, and had been so for a considerable time. However, in order to come at the case and the results, it may be as well to make a few extracts from the letters of her friends and herself. For, though they were not accustomed to such descriptions of a case as a medical man would be apt to give, yet, for popular perusal, they are, after all, the more useful.

My first extract will be made from a long letter written by her brother.

"The first attack of what we suppose to be her present disease, was a year ago last spring, and was believed to be the result of taking severe colds repeatedly, while teaching school among the mountains of New Hampshire, and which ended in what Dr. K. (their family physician) called inflammation of the lungs, and was treated accordingly. There was much cough and expectoration of mucus. Though she partially recovered, so as to be able to teach again the ensuing summer, yet her cough was somewhat troublesome till autumn, when health seemed again to smile upon her. [Pg 350]

"Late in the fall, however, she had a very severe attack of diarrhœa,—caused, perhaps, by imprudence in diet, and sundry other deviations from a straight line,—which has been her constant companion ever since. (This was a period of eight months.) During all this time her food has passed almost without being dissolved. There is much pain in the stomach and bowels, unless mitigated by opiates, morphine or something analogous. But very little cough has attended her since the last attack of diarrhœa. There has been some pain and soreness in the right side; an eruption over the region of her stomach, swelling of the feet and ankles, whenever fatigued by walking, with pain and soreness in the left ankle.

"I will now give you, briefly, her physician's views. He was called soon after the disease had taken hold of her, and made an examination of her case, which he then called dyspepsia, attended with a little inflammation of the right lung, or perhaps, said he, a slight filling up of the air passages, and he thought the lower part of her right lung might be somewhat indurated. 'Still,' said he, 'the case is not a serious one.' These were his very words. He said he could cure her; and, till very lately, he has always held out to her the language of hope. But now he speaks very differently; he says the case is a hopeless one—that of tubercular consumption; and he says he has always known it to be such!—and adds that there is, even now, a small cavity in her right lung, and that her lungs are passing off in her diarrhœa, without any inconvenience in breathing, or any disagreeable sensation in filling the lungs to fulness."

It is difficult to believe that a medical man who has any regard for his own reputation, would tell such a downright falsehood, as that above represented; and still more difficult to believe he would make the strange mistake of representing her lungs as passing off through the bowels! Why, they might almost as well pass though the moon! Probably my correspondent did not exactly and truly apprehend his meaning; at least, I would charitably hope so. [Pg 351]

The appeal for relief was so very urgent, and withal so humble, I visited and examined her, the family physician being present. I found the latter to be a timid invalid, for whom, before I left, I was requested to prescribe; which may account, in part, for his very inefficient practice. I also found him ignorant, in many particulars, of the first principles of his profession; and it was with extreme difficulty—like that of mingling oil with water—that we could unite on any thing reasonable or desirable. He still clung to medicine, as his sheet-anchor in the case, while I was for depending, mainly, on a strict conformity to the laws of health, and the restorative efforts of Nature.

There were other difficulties. A part of the family still inclined to a reliance on him and his old system, while the rest were in favor of my general views, as far as they understood them. The patient herself sometimes inclined to one, and sometimes to the other. While in health, she had been a woman of much decision of character; but, in her present condition, she was weak and vacillating.

But there was, at length, a partial blending of the inharmonious elements, and a prescription made out. It did not satisfy, however. There was so strong a leaning to nature, that, after my departure, Dr. K. gradually worked his way back to his old system of full medication, as a

letter received a few weeks afterwards plainly indicated. For, as the great change in her treatment which we made, left her no mystical props to lean upon, and as Dr. K. was a little disposed to speak to her in a way which was calculated to increase her fears, it preyed upon her mind so much that, though her diseased tendencies gradually diminished, yet the continual croakings of her would-be friends, and the faithlessness of a half-sick and wholly sombre physician, more than counteracted every favorable tendency.

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In about two weeks after I saw her, she began to have more heat and pain in the stomach, with some other threatening symptoms,—probably induced by an attempt to use food prescribed for her, but which was too stimulating. Her physician now, to gratify both his own morbid feelings, and the clamor of her friends, ordered brandy and other stimulating drinks; also morphine and camphor powders, and a new relay of stimulating food.

The sequel of the story, as related by a sister of the patient, is as follows:—

"Soon after I wrote you last (which was the letter containing an account of the strange resort to beef, brandy, morphine and camphor), she began to fail very fast, and Dr. K. informed her that she could live but a very short time. But she clung to life, and it was distressing to see her going down to the grave, while we were doing nothing to help her. We spoke to her about sending for you again; but she said you were a great way off, and if you could come at all, which was doubtful, it would be a long time before you could arrive; whereas, if she could not have help soon, she must be compelled to leave us. We asked her if she could think of any other physician that she would like to see? She replied, that she should like to see Dr. Q.,—an old physician about twenty miles distant. We sent for him immediately. He came, and with him her old physician, Dr. K.

"I wish to say that she had taken but very little medicine before Dr. Q. came, except the morphine, camphor, and brandy. But the counselling physician said that would not do, and he could not help her unless she took three opium pills, eighteen drops of laudanum, and from six to nine drops of the chloride of iron, a day; and when she hesitated about being able to bear it, he told her to drink down the white part of two eggs in cold water, which would keep the medicine from hurting her.

"We inquired if he would come again and see her: to which he replied in the affirmative. She proceeded to take his medicine for one day, but it quickly increased her diarrhoea. Instead of six movements a day, they were increased to thirty-five. Under these circumstances, her weakness increased so fast that she could help herself very little; and her feet, hands, and limbs were very much bloated. As Dr. Q. did not come, according to his agreement, we sent for her old physician. When he saw her, he said it was a wonder she had lived so long after taking Dr. Q.'s medicine."

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We are not told, in the letter from which the above is extracted, why her old physician, Dr. K., consented, in the first place, that she should take the medicine, if he regarded it as so very bad for her. But, then, he was a timid as well as a Janus-faced man, and probably said as he did because he did not know what else to say. But I will go on with the extracts, since they reveal another most astounding fact in regard to medical dishonesty.

"He also (the family physician) told us that we must not expect Dr. Q. any more, for he told him expressly that he should not come again, as he could do nothing for her, and that if he had known how she was before he came, he never would have come so far in a case so hopeless. And, true to his engagement with Dr. K., but contrary to his promise, both to my sister and my father, separately, he never came again.

"But the other doctor came again, and attended her as formerly. He gave her a powder of morphine, and some gum myrrh, and a little anise, which reduced the evacuations from thirty-three to three a day. But her distress was still very great, and her feet soon began to turn purple, and she began to bloat in her stomach and bowels. This continued till she was

as full as she could be; and you could have heard her scream and groan as far as the road (a distance of three or four rods). The physician then applied ether, to relieve her distress, and gave twenty-five drops of laudanum, and a morphine powder, upon which her distress left her for a very short time, but soon returned, not to leave her again while she lived. Almost her last breath was a scream. She died in just eight days after Dr. Q. came to see her.

"But I must close by saying that we think if our sister could have been a patient of yours, she would have been restored to health. But it is past, and we cannot recall it; and all I can now do, is to tender our thanks to you for your kindness and attention during our sister's sickness. I trust you will have life and health, long to pursue your noble vocation." [Pg 354]

I am afraid the patient reader of this long chapter, will be led to one conclusion which the writer would exceedingly regret; viz., that all medical counsel, in chronic disease, is of more than doubtful utility; and that it would be safer to leave it wholly to nature and to good nursing. There are medical men in the world who are honest as well as skilful, and who, because a case is difficult to manage, will not, chameleon-like, tell two or three different stories, and thus half ruin a profession that embraces so many noble and honorable-minded men; nor will they persist in a course of treatment which is evidently murdering their patients.

It is hardly needful to say that the patient above described was murdered; but I am obliged to say, without doubt, that there was no necessity of her coming to such an untimely end. Her sister, it seems, thought that, had she fallen into my hands from the first, she might have been saved. I think so too. And yet, it might have been otherwise. In any event, she ought not, at the first, to have been treated for consumption, but for dyspepsia. Starvation, and a little mental quietude, with daily exercise, such as she could bear, in the open air, would have greatly changed her condition, when her diarrhœa first commenced.

I never knew a case which was worse managed in my whole life. It is a wonder to me, when I think of it, that she so long survived under it. But it is a wonder, greater still, that medical men who are so unqualified for the duties of their profession as the physicians who were most concerned in the treatment of the above case appear to me to have been, do not feel compelled, by the remonstrances of their own consciences, to quit their profession, and do something for a living for which they are better prepared.

CHAPTER XCIV.

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CURE OF POISON FROM LEAD.

Cases of poisoning by lead are occurring in our country almost daily; and it becomes a matter of much importance to know how to treat them. Indeed, there are many who are so susceptible to the action of this deleterious agent, that the reception of a single tumbler of water brought through lead pipes, in a certain condition, into their stomachs, will cause serious disturbance. I have had one patient of this description—a Mr. E., of Worcester, Mass.

Some twenty years ago, much of the water used in the village of Dedham, Mass., was conveyed to the village, for half a mile or so, in lead pipes. Many who drank the water were injured by it; some of them for life. A Mr. R., a printer, is believed to have lost his life, by disease which was either induced or aggravated by this cause. I have, myself, been called to prescribe for several, who were probably led into a state of ill health by this unhealthy

water. One of the clergymen of the village suffered from it very greatly, though he is, as I believe, yet living.

There is some difference of opinion as to the circumstances which most favor the action of the lead, or, rather, which cause its dissolution in the water. But, with regard to its danger, in certain circumstances, either known or unknown, there can be no doubt. Nor can we doubt that, in view of facts which exist, it is our duty to banish lead pipes, as much as possible, from common use.

During the early part of the year 1855, Capt. J. H., near Boston, aged thirty-four years, of good natural constitution and comparatively healthy habits in general, had a slow typhoid fever, from which, however, he finally recovered, though not without a continued liability to a relapse. About this time, he began to use water brought to his kitchen in lead pipes. [Pg 356]

Late in the year 1856, he was taken down very suddenly, with fever and great debility, and in four or five days his upper and lower limbs became completely paralyzed. He was not able to stir so much as one of his hands. Indeed, the whole abdominal region seemed to be almost as inactive as his limbs; for very severe friction across the hips, and along the spine, down the legs, produced no sensation; and his bowels were so constipated, as to remain motionless from five or six days to a fortnight at a time, unless excited by medical agents.

His case was examined by several eminent medical men in the vicinity of Boston, who gave it as their unanimous opinion, that the cause of his disease was the irritation of the water. Some of them prescribed for his case, but all to no apparent purpose.

On the first day of November, he was sent to an electro-chemical bathing establishment, to be treated according to the usages of that institution. I was intimately acquainted with the establishment, and, in circumstances like his, was understood to regard it with favor. I was, therefore, from time to time, consulted in the case of Captain H. To give an impulse to the nervous and arterial systems of Capt. H., one bath was administered. The use of his limbs was restored, as if by magic. When he came out of the bath, he walked some twenty feet or more, to his bed, without assistance; and, to his great surprise, could raise his hands to his head. The second day's bath, and treatment with simple diet, not only restored sensation, but gave him a better use of his hands than he had enjoyed before for many months. His bowels, also, became immediately regular, and continued so.

It is, however, to be confessed, that his recovery was not so rapid as at first seemed probable. The baths seemed to give an impulse; but it was reserved for a proper diet, suitable exercise, and good air, to work out, slowly, a perfect cure. How much was attributable to the baths, considered by themselves, is not known. No medicine was given, from first to last, except the electricity. [Pg 357]

It should also be confessed, that no belief was entertained, by myself or my associates, of any mechanical power possessed by the electricity, of forcing the lead out of the system; though some individuals had believed in such a power. The most we claimed was, that the invisible agent had an immediate influence on the nerves, and a more remote one on the absorbent system.

As a farther proof, if more proof had been needed, that the paralysis was induced by lead, some of the water from which he had drank was analyzed by Dr. Hayes, City Assayer for Boston, who pronounced it to be strongly impregnated with lead, and "utterly unfit for culinary purposes."

CHAPTER XCV.

FAITH AND WORKS.

In the autumn of 1856, a fine young man, a clerk in a large mercantile house in Boston, came to me with complaints not unlike those of thousands of his own age and sex, and begged for relief; but was surprised when he learned that I treated all such cases as his without medicine. Added to the surprise, moreover, was a degree of mortification at the idea of attempting to cure himself by a change of habits, especially of dietetic habits, which, in a boarder in a family, might be observed. He would have been much better pleased to take medicine, so concentrated that a few drops or a few small boluses or pills could be taken a few times a day unperceived—than to run the risk of awakening suspicions of diseases to which he was unwilling to make confession.

And herein, by the way, comes out the secret of such a wonderful imposition on our young men, by what I have elsewhere called land-sharks in the shape of physicians. The fondness of young men for secret cures,—or, at least, their money, which is the thing most wanted after all,—leads them, almost directly, into the mouths of these monsters.

My young patient, however, had faith in me; and, after the first shock of surprise and the first feelings of mortification were over, resolved to follow my directions, and did so. He came to me, it is true, several times, and said he could not endure it; that he was losing flesh very fast, and that he was already so weak that he could scarcely walk to his desk. I comforted him as well as I could, told him there would be a change soon for the better, and kept him on through the tedious months of December, January, and February, when his strength began to return, and his flesh to be restored. Between March and May, he gained twenty-one pounds; and in June, he was in as good health as he ever had been before in his life. And yet he took not a particle of any thing medicinal, from first to last.

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If you desire to know, in few words, what he *did* do, I will tell you. First, he took a long walk, regularly,—sufficiently long to induce a good deal of muscular fatigue,—as the last thing before he went to bed which was at an early hour. Secondly, he used a cold hand-bath, followed by much friction, daily. Thirdly, he abandoned tea and coffee (tobacco and rum he had never used), and drank only water. Fourthly, he abandoned all animal food and all concentrated substances and condiments, and lived simply on bread (unfermented), fruits, and a few choice vegetables.

It was faith that served this young man,—not faith without works, but faith which is manifested by works. "According to your faith be it unto you," might be enjoined on every patient, under all circumstances. But the most remarkable thing connected with this case, is the fact that this young man had been brought up *in the lap of ease and indulgence*—an education which is as unfavorable to faith as it is to works.

CHAPTER XCVI.

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WORKS WITHOUT FAITH.

A female, in Worcester County, Massachusetts, nearly sixty years of age, having for many years been a sufferer from domestic afflictions, till, along with certain abuses of the digestive function, it had brought upon her a full load of dyspepsia, was at length subjected

to a trio of evils, which capped the climax of her sufferings, reduced her to a very low condition, and laid her on her bed.

While lying in this condition, a young woman who was her constant attendant, and who was acquainted with my no-medicine practice, recommended to her to send for me. She hesitated, for a time, on account of the expense; for, though by no means poor, she felt all the pangs of poverty in consequence of the hard and unworthy treatment of the individual who was to have justly executed the last will and testament of her husband.

But I was at length sent for. I found her under the general care and oversight of a homœopathic physician; but as he was ten or twelve miles distant and had not been informed of my visit, I did not see him. His practice, however, in the case, was similar to what I had usually met with in cases which had come under the care of physicians of the same school, and was, at most, as it appeared to me, negative. She had indeed been drugged by some one most fearfully, and her whole system was suffering as the consequence; but it was a physician who had preceded Dr. A., and who was of an entirely different school.

I found no great difficulty in persuading her to ask Dr. A., when he should next call, to suspend his medicine a week or two; and, after ordering a warm bath two or three times a week, and certain changes in diet, with particular care about ventilation and temperature, left her, to call again the next week. [Pg 361]

On calling, at the time appointed, I was greatly disappointed in finding her with many better symptoms. There was indeed cough, which busy rumor had converted into an indication of galloping consumption; but I found no other symptom which belonged to that disease. The homœopathic medicine had been suspended, and the warm bath had been applied with apparent success.

I left, with the promise of calling again in ten days—but not sooner, unless they sent for me. At the end of the ten days, I called and found all things ajar again. Her female attendant had left her about a week before; and the new attendants—two of them—being destitute of faith in me, had found no great difficulty in persuading her that she had a fever of the lungs, and that she would die if she did not take a *little* medicine, and that she would do well to recall Dr. A., and take his medicine.

When I arrived, at this third visit, I found her taking a small amount of homœopathic medicine, but without appetite or strength, and evidently tending downward. It was too late to do any thing, especially when there was no faith in anything but pills and powders; and I left her to her native strength of constitution, her homœopathic physician, her croaking nurses, and God, vainly mourning, all my way home, about the inefficiency of works without faith, especially in the case of the sick. This woman's case is recent, and it is possible that she may recover, in spite of pills, powders, croakings, and faithlessness. I have witnessed such things. Nature is tough.

But while I lament the inefficiency of works, where faith is wanting, I have had one case which seems an exception to the general rule, "according to your faith," etc., which I take great pleasure in recording.

In June, 18—, a young man from the interior of New England called on me while abroad on business, and desired to receive my advice concerning certain complaints, attended with great debility, and accompanied by hernia and varicocele, and, in general, by dyspepsia. On examination, I found the case a very obstinate one, of long standing. The patient was a young man of twenty-two, a clerk in a country store, a man of some principle, and yet trained to find his chief happiness in the indulgence of his appetite, especially in what is called good eating. [Pg 362]

I gave him some general directions, promising him something still more specific as soon as I got home. In July, I gave him written directions, in full, and urged him to push the treatment as fast as possible, in order to get into a beginning state of convalescence, soon enough to take advantage of the naturally recuperative effects of autumn. If he could find himself recruiting in September, the month of October, I told him, would produce on him a very decided change.

He went to work accordingly, but it was because it was a last resort, and he must do so. It was not because he had much faith in me. Some of his friends, it seems, had directed his attention this way; but when I came to talk of the starvation plan of cure, to which I so much inclined, both they and he revolted. However, he made a faint beginning.

I had foreseen most of the difficulties I had to contend with, and was prepared to meet them. Thus, knowing full well that if I laid down the laws of diet in great strictness, either as regards, quality or quantity, he would be discouraged and do nothing at all, I permitted him to use almost all kinds of food, and only insisted on a rigid adherence to the great law, and avoiding medicine. These two points I made much of, and explained them fully.

For example: I told him that all kinds of cookery or preparations which prevented the necessity of teeth labor, such as soaking in milk, forming into toast, mashing, or in any way softening, were wrong, and must be avoided. Also, that all additions to our food, whether of foreign bodies, such as pepper, mustard, vinegar, salt, etc., or of more concentrated substances, such as molasses, sugar, honey, butter, gravy, etc., should, for the same reason as well as others, be shunned as much as possible.

When, therefore, said I, the question comes before your mind, whether you may or may not eat a particular thing, consider first, whether its use would be a violation of the general laws I have laid down for you. I gave him many specific directions, at first, and yet continued to urge it upon him to reason for himself. [Pg 363]

But it seemed, for a long time, a hopeless case. He kept writing to me, to know if he might eat toast, bread and butter, soup, milk, etc., or to know why it was that he ought not to make additions of foreign or concentrated substances, as of pepper, mustard, molasses, syrup, etc. I have before me sixteen letters from him, in most of which his pleadings abound, up to the very last but one. This fifteenth letter, dated December 27, more than six months after my interview with him and first prescription, has the following inquiries:—

"Will a diet do for me that admits of any pastry?—of pies, of any kind? What *kind* of puddings, pies, and cake will answer? What kind of meats? What food shall I be obliged to avoid to keep my passions in check? What am I to eat this winter—next spring—next summer? How much at a time? Can I eat tripe—corned beef—oysters—lean pork steak? What kinds of meat and fish will do for me to eat? Any salt fish? Is milk bad in case of liver disease? Is there any objection to baked sour apples and milk, or to sour apples after using a little milk or bread? Will you allow me to eat any simple thing between meals?"

And in this same letter, after six months' instruction, as aforesaid, he undertakes to tell me what his habits of living are, which, despite of all said and done, in the way of personal counsel and nearly twenty letters, strangely reads thus:—

"I use some milk three times a day, and almost always soak my toasted bread in milk. Since I have been out in the open air, I have usually had some wild game, or a piece of beef steak, or raw eggs, twice a day. My suppers, lately, have been toasted bread, of any convenient kind (usually Graham), with milk, about a tumbler full, at a time, or three-fourths full. I usually eat two apples, with or after each breakfast and dinner. I use considerable cream soaked into my bread, when I can obtain it, and some molasses. Now, which is the best for me to use on my bread, at supper time—cream, milk, molasses, or a little butter?—or with my other meals? Is there any objection to my using all these now, in proper quantities? Will [Pg 364]

a little plain sauce do with my supper? Why do you so strongly object to cream toasts, or cream on bread? Is chewing gum from spruce trees injurious?—or birch bark? Any objections to eating two sour apples after breakfast and dinner?"

Now the great difficulty with this young man was, that he had but little faith, either in me or in principles—though if I would direct him, from step to step, like a child, he would obey me, for the moment: though, like a child, too, he would forget my directions at almost the next moment, and ask for information on the very same point.

Was not such a trial almost too great? However, he was destined to survive it, to live on in spite of it, notwithstanding my after fears. In March, 18—, he wrote me as follows:—

"As I have been getting better all the while, and have troubled you with so many little queries from time to time, I thought I would delay this letter a while. My health has been constantly improving all winter, and I think I have not enjoyed as good health before for many years. People now say, 'How well you are looking!' and 'How fleshy you are!' I mean to live according to the '*laws*.'"

In short, this young sufferer from dyspepsia in one of its worst forms, after more than half a year of works without faith, and of whining and complaining a part of the time, without either works or faith, is at last shouting victory! And a glorious victory it is! Would that the rest of our dyspeptics, with land by millions, might stand on as good a footing, with as good prospects before them, as this young man! And yet he might have come up to the same point long ago, had he used more common sense, and exercised but a little more faith and trust in just hygienic principles.

CHAPTER XCVII

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DISEASES OF LICENTIOUSNESS.

Not far from the end of July, 1857, I received the following, in a letter through the post office, as usual, and dated at Boston, but signed by a name probably fictitious.

"It was with no small degree of interest that I noticed, in a book written by yourself,—I cannot recollect its name,—some remarks upon certain diseases which you called nameless; yet, through a dread to introduce so delicate a subject, I have neglected so to do, till it has become an imperative task. And now, laying aside all feelings of modesty, allow me to be familiar with you, as with a father, and to lay my case before you, assuring you that, however unfortunate I have been, it is not my fault, but has come upon me while living with my husband, having never betrayed *his* confidence."

She then proceeded at once to describe her disease and sufferings, which were terrible. It appeared that she had not been of the number of those who, in circumstances akin to hers, so often fall into shark's mouths. She had taken but little medicine of any kind, except balsam copaiba. After the details of her symptoms and sufferings were finished, she added:

"Now, if you are able to understand me, I wish to ask you whether, from the description I have given, you cannot prescribe something that will relieve me. If so, you can be assured that you will put your humble correspondent and her erring but repentant companion under great obligation to yourself, and that you will be rewarded for all your trouble and advice."

As the result of this request, a correspondence followed, which continued several months. At first, the patient clung to the idea that she could not possibly be restored without

minerals, or at least without active medicine of some sort or other, she scarcely knew what. [Pg 366]
But she at length understood me, and followed, quite implicitly, my directions. There was indeed a little shrinking, at first, from the rigidity, or, as she would call it, the nakedness, of a diet which it was indispensable to use in order to purify her blood effectually; but she finally came bravely up to the mark, and probably reaped her reward in it.

It is true, I did not hear from her till she came to the end of a very long road; but up to the last of our correspondence, she was slowly improving. My belief is that, before this time, she has fairly recovered, and with far less injury to the vital powers than if mercurial or other strong medicines had been used.

And herein we are reminded of a crime that not only has no name, but deserves none. I allude to the act of communicating a disease so distressing to an innocent and unoffending female. We had an instance of this same crime in Chapter LXXIV. If there be such a thing as punishing too severely, I am sure it is not in cases like these. The individual in human shape, who, with eyes open, will run the risk of injuring those whom he professes to love better, if possible, than himself, deserves a punishment more condign and terrible than he to whom is so often awarded a halter or a guillotine.

CHAPTER XCVIII.

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CURIOUS AND INSTRUCTIVE FACTS.

It is morally impossible for any medical man who has kept his eyes open for forty years, not to have been struck with certain obvious and incontrovertible facts, of which I present a few specimens.

The *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, a few years since, in an obituary notice of Dr. Danforth, who had long been an eminent practitioner in Boston, makes the following remarks:—

"Though considered one of the most successful practitioners, he rarely caused a patient to be bled. Probably, for the last twenty years of his practice, he did not propose the use of this remedy in a single instance. And he maintained that the abstraction of the vital fluid diminished the power of overcoming the disease. On one occasion, he was called to visit a number of persons who had been injured by the fall of a house frame, and, on arrival, found another practitioner engaged in bleeding the men. 'Doctor,' said the latter, 'I am doing your work for you.' 'Then,' said Dr. Danforth, 'pour the blood back into the veins of those men.'"

Dr. Thomas Hubbard, of Pomfret, Conn., long a President of the Medical Society in that State, was, on the contrary, accustomed to bleed almost all his patients. Yet both of these men were considered as eminently successful in their profession. How is it that treatment so exactly opposite should be almost, if not quite, equally successful?

There was a discussion in Boston, many years ago, between Dr. Watson, one of the most successful old-school practitioners of medicine, and a Thomsonian practitioner, whose name I have forgotten, in the progress of which the former made the open and unqualified declaration, that, in the course of four years' practice, he had drawn one hundred gallons of human blood, and that he was then on the use of his thirty-ninth pound of calomel. [Pg 368]

Now both these men had full practice; and while one did little or nothing to break up disease or destroy the enemy, the other did a great deal; and yet both were deemed

successful. Can we explain this any better than we can the facts in regard to Drs. Danforth and Hubbard?

Let us look at the case of Dr. M., of Boston, a successful allopathic practitioner. In order to satisfy his curiosity, with regard to the claims of homœopathy, he suddenly substituted the usual homœopathic treatment for allopathy, and pursued it two whole years with entire success. Curiosity still awake, he again exchanged his infinitesimal doses of active medicine for similar doses, as regards size, of fine flour, and continued this, also, for two years. The latter experiment, as he affirms, was quite as successful as the former.

Do not such facts as these point, with almost unerring certainty, to the inefficiency of all medical treatment? Do they not almost, if not quite, prove that when we take medicine, properly so called, or receive active medical treatment; we recover in spite of it? Is there any other rational way of accounting for the almost equal success of all sorts of treatment,—allopathic, botanic, homœopathic, hydropathic, etc.,—when in the hands of good, sound, common sense, and conjoined with good nursing and attendance? Is it not that man is made to live, and is tough, so that it is not easy to poison him to death?

But the most remarkable fact of this kind with which I am acquainted, is the case of Isaac Jennings, M.D., now of Ohio. He was educated at Yale College, in Connecticut. During the progress of his education, he served a sort of medical apprenticeship in the family of Prof. Eli Ives, of New Haven. He took his medical degree in 1812, and soon after this commenced the practice of his profession in Trumbull, in Fairfield County. Here, for eight years, he had ample opportunity to apply the principles with which, at the schools, he had been fully indoctrinated. In the summer of 1820, he removed, by special request, to Derby, nine miles from New Haven. Up to his second year in Derby, he pursued the usual, or orthodox, course of practice. The distance from his former field of labor was not so great but that he retained a portion of his old friends in that region. He was also occasionally called to the town of Huntington, lying partly between the two. [Pg 369]

On meeting one day with Dr. Tisdale, of Bridgeport, an older physician than himself, he said to him, very familiarly, "Jennings, are you aware that we do far less good with our medicine than we have been wont to suppose?" He replied in the affirmative, and observed that he had been inclining to that opinion for some time. "Do you know," added Dr. Tisdale, "that we do a great deal more harm than good with medicine?" Dr. Jennings replied that he had not yet gone as far as that. Dr. Tisdale then proceeded to state many facts, corroborating the opinion he had thrown out concerning the impotency of medicine. These statements and facts were, to the mind of Dr. Jennings, like a nail fastened in a sure place.

From this time forth his medical scepticism increased, till he came, at length, to give his doubts the test of experiment. Accordingly, he substituted for his usual medicaments, bread pills and colored water; and for many years—I believe five or six—gave nothing else. The more rigidly he confined himself to these potions, the better he found his success, till his business was so extended, and his reputation so great, as to exclude all other medical men from his own immediate vicinity.

His great conscientiousness, as well as a desire of making known to his medical brethren what he believed to be true, and thus save them from the folly of dealing out that which he was assured was only a nuisance, especially under the shelter of what they supposed to be his example, led him, at length, to call a meeting of physicians, and reveal to them his discovery. The surprise was great; but greater or less, according to their tact for observation, and the length of their experience. [Pg 370]

But the secret was now out, and Dr. Jennings soon began to lose practice. Instead of employing a man to give them bread pills and colored water, many chose to take care of themselves, and let the physician wholly alone; while a far greater number, though they

dearly loved and highly respected Jennings, as an old friend and physician and an eminent Christian, began to seek medical counsel at other hands.

The result was, that his business became so much diminished as to leave him without a full support, except from past earnings, and he began to make preparations for a removal to the West. But this his friends were unwilling to have him do, and they accordingly raised, by subscription, \$300 a year, to induce him to remain. In a few years, however, the subscription failed to be renewed, and in 1839 or 1840 he removed to Ohio, where he still remains. He does a little business, and what he does is attended with great success; and yet, the number of those who follow him is small.

Facts of similar import, in very great numbers, some more and some less striking, might be related, to almost any extent; but can it be necessary? Suffice it to say that some of the oldest physicians in Boston and its vicinity, the oldest physician in Cleveland, and some of the most intelligent ones in New York and Philadelphia, as well as elsewhere, are coming rapidly to the same conclusions with Dr. Jennings, and a few of them have already arrived there.

It is from stumbling on such facts as these, together with my own long experience, all bearing in the same direction, that I have long since renounced dependence on medicine, properly so called, as a means of restoring the system, when out of order, to a state of health. In other words, I have ceased to employ poison to *cure* poison.

But, lest it should still be thought I make too much of my own experience, and of the facts which have been adduced in this chapter, I subjoin another of kindred character, containing the written testimony of others, especially medical men, on the subject.

CHAPTER XCIX.

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ANTI-MEDICAL TESTIMONY.

A very large amount of testimony, going to show the inefficiency and inutility of medicine, might be presented; but I have limited myself to a selection of some of the more striking and important.

Let me begin with Dr. Rush, of Philadelphia. In a published lecture of his, more than half a century ago, he made the following remark:—

"Dissections daily convince us of our ignorance of disease, and cause us to blush at our prescriptions. What mischief have we done under the belief of false facts and theories! We have assisted in multiplying diseases; we have done more; we have increased their mortality.... The art of healing is like an unroofed temple, uncovered at the top, and cracked at the foundation."

Magendie, late a distinguished French physician and physiologist, says, as follows:—

"I hesitate not to declare,—no matter how sorely I shall wound our vanity,—that so gross is our ignorance of the real nature of the physiological disorders called diseases, that it would, perhaps, be better to do nothing, and resign the complaint we are called upon to treat, to the resources of nature, than to act, as we are frequently compelled to do, without knowing the why and the wherefore of our conduct, and at the obvious risk of hastening the end of our patient."

Dr. Good, a learned and voluminous British writer, also says:—

"The science of medicine is a barbarous jargon; and the effects of our medicines upon the human system, are, in the highest degree, uncertain, except, indeed, that they have already destroyed more lives than war, pestilence, and famine combined." [Pg 372]

Professor Clark, of the Harvard Medical School, in Boston, in an address of his, recently published, insists, again and again, that medicine never cures, and that it rarely, if ever, so much as *aids* nature; while he exalts, in an unwonted degree, the remedial effects of every hygienic influence. Let him who longer doubts, read this most remarkable production; and with the more care from the fact that it is a very fair exponent of the doctrines now held at the very fountain-head of medical orthodoxy.

From a work entitled, "Memoirs of James Jackson, Jr.," late of Boston, written by his father, I have extracted the following. It is part of a letter, written from Europe, to his venerable father, the present elder Dr. James Jackson, of Boston.

"But our poor pathology and worse therapeutics—shall we ever get to a solid bottom? Shall we ever have fixed laws? Shall we ever *know*, or, must we always be doomed to *suspect*, to *presume*? Is *perhaps* to be our qualifying word forever and for aye? Must we forever be obliged to hang our heads when the chemist and natural philosopher ask us for our laws and principles?... If honest, must we not acknowledge that, even in the natural history of disease, there is very much *doubtful*, which is received as *sure*? And in therapeutics, is it better yet, or worse? Have we judged—have we deduced our results, especially in the last science—from *all*, or from a selection of facts?

"Do we know, for example, in how many instances such a treatment fails, for the one time it succeeds? Do we know how large a proportion of cases would get well without any treatment, compared with those that recover under it? Do not imagine, my dear father, that I am becoming a sceptic in medicine. It is, not quite as bad as that. I shall ever believe, *at least*, that the rules of *hygeia* must be and are useful, and that he only can understand and value them, who has studied pathology. Indeed, I may add that, to a certain extent, I have seen demonstrated the actual benefit of certain modes of treatment in acute diseases. But, is this benefit immense? When life is threatened, do we very often save it? When a disease is destined by *Nature* to be long, do we very often materially diminish it?" [Pg 373]

It is worthy of remark, that the discussions in the pages of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, for two or three years past, concerning the treatment of scarlatina, have usually resulted, practically, in favor of the no-medicine system. It clearly appears that the less our reliance on medicine, in this disease, the better. But what shall hinder or prevent our coming to similar results, in the investigation, in time to come, of other diseases?

Dr. Reynolds, one of the most aged as well as most distinguished medical men of Boston, has been heard to affirm that if one hundred patients were to call on him during the day, and he could induce them to follow such directions as would keep them from injuring themselves from eating and drinking,—no matter what the disease,—he should be surprised at a mortality of more than three per cent of their number; and he should *not* be surprised if every one who implicitly followed his direction should finally recover.

I will only add, in this place, the testimony of two or three distinguished individuals on this subject, whose opinion, though they were not medical men, will with many have weight, as it certainly ought.

Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to Dr. Caspar Wistar, of Philadelphia, thus writes: "I have lived to see the disciples of Hoffman, Boerhaave, Stahl, Cullen, and Brown succeed each other, like the shifting figures of a magic lantern.... The patient treated on the fashionable theory, sometimes recovers in spite of the medicine. The medicine, therefore, restores him (!!!), and

the doctor receives new courage to proceed in his experiment on the lives of his fellow-creatures!"

Sir Walter Scott says, of Napoleon: He never obeyed the medical injunctions of his physician, Dr. O'Meara, and obstinately refused to take medicine. "Doctor," said he, "no physicking. We are a machine made to live. We are organized for that purpose. Such is our nature. Do not counteract the living principle. Let it alone; leave it the liberty of defending itself; it will do better than your drugs. The watchmaker cannot open it, and must, on handling it, grope his way blindfold and at random. For once that he assists and relieves it, by dint of tormenting it with crooked instruments, he injures it ten times, and at last destroys it." [Pg 374]

CHAPTER C.

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AN ANTI-MEDICAL PREMIUM.

The Massachusetts Medical Society, in the year 1856, were authorized by an unknown individual to offer a premium of one hundred dollars for the best dissertation which should be presented to them, on or before April 15, 1857, on the following subject, viz.: "*We would regard every approach towards the rational and successful prevention and management of disease without the necessity of drugs, to be an advance in favor of humanity and scientific medicine.*"

A number of essays were accordingly presented, having, as is usual in such cases, various degrees of merit; but the preference was given to one written by Worthington Hooker, M. D., of New Haven, Conn. This essay is to be published in due time, and it is devoutly hoped there will be as little delay as possible in the circulation of so remarkable, and, as I have no doubt, valuable, an essay.

The facts in connection with this essay, taken as an item in the history of human progress, are truly remarkable. The very title of the essay is at once peculiar and striking; but the main idea which it suggests to the mind is much more so. That a learned society, in the literary metropolis of New England, if not of the United States, should, at the present time, in any way or shape, encourage a discussion of the question, whether, in the practice of medicine, drugs can be dispensed with, was not an event to be expected or so much as dreamed of. It is, therefore, I repeat, very remarkable, and must have a deeper meaning than at first appears.

What, then, let us inquire, is that meaning? Does it intimate that there is a belief,—a lurking belief, if you choose to call it so,—among our scientific medical men, that drugs might be entirely dispensed with? Or, does it rather imply a belief in the possibility of approximating to such a point,—with those approximations of two mathematical lines, of which we sometimes hear,—without the possibility of ever reaching it? [Pg 376]

It is by no means improbable, at least in my own view, that the essay intended by the Boston Society had its origin in a growing tendency, everywhere, among scientific medical men, to the belief that, in the most rational and successful practice of medicine, drugs are not indicated; and that they are only necessary on account of the ignorance or credulity of the community.

The family practice of many sensible physicians, perhaps I might say of most, is strongly corroborative of this main idea. I can point to more than a score of eminent individuals, in

this department, who never, or at most but seldom, give medicine in their own families; above all, they never take it themselves. It is indeed true, that some of them are hardly willing to own it, when questioned on the subject; but this does not alter the plain matter of fact.

Thus Dr. S——, ten miles from Boston, is subject to attacks of a species of neuralgia, which sometimes last two days; and yet, none of his family or friends or medical brethren have ever been able to persuade him to do any thing to mitigate his pain, except to keep quiet and abstain almost entirely from food; and a daughter of his assures me that she can scarcely recollect his giving a dose of medicine to any member of his family. Dr. H., seven miles from Boston, not only does the same, but frequently disappoints the expectations of his patients, by giving them no medicine. Yet both these individuals are exceedingly slow to be seen in company with those men of heterodoxy in medicine, who dare to advocate, everywhere and on all occasions, what they habitually practice on themselves and their families.

What, then, I repeat it, can these things mean? Is there not reason for believing that the truly wise men of the medical profession, at the present time, are beginning to see, in certain facts which in the providence of God are forced upon them, that in the general management of disease, and as the general rule of treatment, no drugs or medicines are needful? [Pg 377]

There is a wide difference between that practice of our profession which, as a general rule, excludes medicine, and that which, as a general rule, includes it. And an entire change from the latter to the former, is, perhaps, too great to be expected immediately. Yet, in the progress of society towards a more perfect millennial state of things, must it not come?

CHAPTER CI.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS.

It is a notorious fact, that while the number of physicians and the expenditure for drugs and medicines is constantly increasing, in every civilized country where they have been much employed, diseases have been multiplied in proportion. Perhaps, too, they have, in a like proportion, become more fatal; but this does not so clearly appear. Nor is it quite so certain that acute diseases have been multiplied, as chronic ones.

Another fact deserves to be placed by the side of this; viz., that in those countries, or portions of country, where no physicians have ever been in vogue, and very little medicine beyond a few herbs, and roots, and incantations, or charms, the health of the people is quite as good, and the longevity quite as great, all other things being equal, as in those countries and places where physicians and medicine have obtained a strong foothold.

There is no evidence that the want of physicians before the flood,—if such a want or deficiency there was, which appears probable,—had any influence in shortening human life, since Methuselah, who lived at the end of the series, was the oldest of all. Nor does it appear at all probable that there were more diseases, or more fatal ones, at that early period, than since.

One thought more. It is confidently expected that a better day than the present is yet to dawn upon our dark world. Not only is it predicted that the child shall die a hundred years old, by the highest authority, and that men, like the oak tree, shall live several hundred years, but

profane writers no less than prophets and sacred ones, have expected and still expect it. The better time coming is, as it were, in everybody's mouth. [Pg 379]

But, is it probable that this better day will dawn on a world which, in respect to health and longevity, is going in the other direction? While nearly half our children die under ten years of age, and the mortality is increasing, are we tending towards the point when a child shall die a hundred years old? And are our physicians and our medicines likely to bring us there?

If not, and if a radical change is desirable, when is it to be made? Shall we wait till we have run down a century or two longer, or shall we begin the work immediately? And if we are to begin it at once, on whom shall the work devolve?

These are questions, I grant, more easily asked than answered. Nevertheless, they must soon be met; they cannot much longer be shuffled off. Would it not be the part of wisdom to meet them now, rather than postpone?

Here, then, I leave the subject. Let it be pondered in the light of reason, common sense, conscience, and, above all, the truth of God. Let there be no immature or hasty decisions. Truth, in truthful hands, has nothing to fear.

CHAPTER CII.

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A LAST CHAPTER.

William A. Alcott was born in Wolcott, Conn., August 6th, 1798. His father, a farmer in the rough mountain town, employed his son, as soon as he was old enough to be useful, in laboring on the farm, so that, from childhood, he was trained to habits of industry. His early employments were, in many respects, beneficial, and his feeble constitution was probably invigorated by this out-of-door work. The only apparent drawback was being kept at work too closely, with very little time left for amusement; and, as he was too conscientious to neglect the tasks assigned him, he plodded on, thus losing, in a great measure, while young, the natural and healthy relish of boys for athletic games and sports. As a natural consequence, his mind developed too rapidly. He early showed a great fondness for books, and the love of reading came to be his chief and almost only amusement.

Till eight years of age he attended the district school, in summer and winter, but after this period his father employed him in farm labor constantly, except during the winter term. At the age of fourteen he had measles, from which he suffered greatly at the time, and in its consequences for several years. He grew rapidly, was, when a lad, tall and thin, and his strength, when young, and, indeed, through his whole life, lay chiefly in a strong will, combined with great energy and perseverance. To these qualities, doubtless, is owing the continuance of his life for many years.

When little more than eighteen years of age, he commenced teaching, which was continued, during the winter, for several years; sometimes through the entire year. But a strong desire to improve and elevate the schools, led him to overtask himself. Mr. Barnard's *Journal of Education*, speaks thus of his labors at this period: "The severity of his exertions and self-denials, joined to other causes, especially a feeble constitution, brought on him a most violent attack of erysipelas, from the effects of which, though he escaped with his life, he never entirely recovered." [Pg 381]

About this time he commenced the study of medicine, and the succeeding winter, 1825-6, attended medical lectures in New Haven, not so much with the design of making it a

profession, as with the hope that it might prove an aid in fitting him to become a more thorough teacher. The following March he received a license to practice medicine and surgery. But his health was far from being good, and he was, himself, more apprehensive of a fatal result, than consumptive people usually are.

However, he soon found an opportunity to engage in teaching again, and embraced it eagerly. But here he was destined to disappointment. His pulmonary tendencies, which had for ten years been increasing upon him, aggravated, no doubt, by hard study and improper diet of the preceding winter, now became very alarming. Beside a severe cough and great emaciation, he was followed by hectic fever, and the most exhausting and discouraging perspirations. He fought bravely to the last moment, but was finally compelled to quit the field, and endeavor to regain his health.

For a time, he followed the soundest medical advice he could obtain; kept quiet, took a little medicine, ate nutritious food, and when his strength would permit, breathed pure air. This course was at length changed, for one of greater activity and less stimulus. He abandoned medicine, adopted for a time the "starvation system," or nearly that, and threw himself, by such aids as he could obtain, into the fields and woods, and wandered among the hills and mountains.

In autumn, he was able to perform light horticultural labors, a few hours of the day, and to ride on horseback. For six months he rode almost daily in company with a physician; at the end of which period he commenced the practice of medicine, in the place where he had last labored, and where he was born. [Pg 382]

After continuing in the practice a few years, and his health seeming to be restored, he ventured to return again to the work dearer to him than any other—that of teaching. But his labors seemed again to be slowly undermining his health, and, fearful of a relapse of the pulmonary tendencies, he abandoned for a time all hope of teaching permanently.

The following year, he became connected with Rev. William C. Woodbridge, and continued to labor in the cause of education for several successive years.

In Jan. 1833, he removed to Boston, and during the winter had a severe attack of bleeding at the lungs, and other dangerous symptoms. These, however, passed away; and the great change which, in 1830, had been made in his physical habits, seemed to be working one equally great in his constitutional tendencies. For while his labors were constant and often severe, there was a steady gain in health. The strength and elasticity of youth returned, and, to use his own words it was with him, now, "morning all day." The effects of an unfavorable climate, which he had feared, were apparently held in check, and he sometimes said that "Obedience gave him command over climate, in a great degree." Yet, during all these years when his health was apparently most firm, it was kept in this condition only by a rigid obedience to the laws of life and health, as he understood and expounded them. His precepts and practice were in harmony.

In the spring of 1848, owing to some unusual exposure, a return of the cough and other symptoms of his old disease made their appearance.^[N] But, with care, and light labor in the garden, they gradually passed away, and his usual measure of health returned, and continued, with slight interruptions, till 1855. During this year he was confined to his room several months with a broken limb. The change, at his age, from exercise daily in the open air, to confinement without exercise nearly all winter, was very unfavorable, in its results, to his general health. The lungs, doubtless, suffered greatly, and were never able to resist, as before, the effects of exposure to sudden changes of temperature. [Pg 383]

Still he labored on from year to year, untiringly as ever, writing, lecturing, visiting schools, etc. During the last winter, his time was employed more exclusively in reading and writing,

and he went out less than usual. His lungs were weak and very easily affected. A difficulty of breathing after much exertion was frequent. His feet and ankles were often much swollen, and there was a loss of strength and general debility quite new to him.

These indications were not to be mistaken, and in the retirement of his own home he often spoke of the possibility and even probability, that his earthly labors were drawing to a close.

On the 18th of March, he left home to be absent a few days, partly with the hope that being more in the open air might prove beneficial. On Friday of the following week, though scarcely able to be moved, he was brought home, having been prostrated by what appeared to be a violent attack of pleurisy, which terminated his earthly existence, on Tuesday, March 28, 1859.

In many minds the question will naturally arise: What should induce such an apparently violent disease, in a person who so rigidly obeyed the laws of health? A satisfactory answer to this can be given only by supposing the acute disease to have been merely a finishing up or termination of that disease which for years had been held in check. His own views on the subject were in accordance with this conclusion, and the condition of the lungs, as shown by a post mortem examination, served to confirm it. The amount of disease found in the lungs was so great that the examination could not be as careful and satisfactory as would have been desirable.

The hand that wrote this volume, and that would have drawn important lessons from this page of life, now moulders in the dust. To the reader it is left to gather from it instruction and motive and courage, for a like battle against evil, for a like victory over self, until he, too, shall accomplish his mission upon earth.

[Pg 384]

FOOTNOTES:

[N] See Chapter LXIX.

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