

FORBES (J.) Bot 22

REVIEW  
OF  
HYDROPATHY,  
OR THE  
WATER-CURE,

BY  
JOHN FORBES, M. D. F. R. S.,

Editor of the British and Foreign Medical Review, or Quarterly Journal of Practical  
Medicine and Surgery; Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in Lon-  
don; Honorary member of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, of  
the American Philosophical Society, &c., &c.; Physician Ex-  
traordinary to Prince Albert; Physician in Ordinary to  
HER MAJESTY'S HOUSEHOLD, &c., &c., &c.

ALSO THE OPINIONS OF

Majendie, Bichat, Forbes, Editor of the London Lancet, Pereira, Sir Gilbert Blane,  
Rush, Boerhave, Good, Waterhouse, Van Helmont, Reil, Billing, Thomas  
Jefferson, Napoleon, Finney, Le Sage, Lock, Smollet, Goldsmith,  
Swift, Hume, Temple, Adam Smith, Hazlit and Byron,  
*of the Art of Medicine.*

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PUBLISHED BY DR. W. A. HAMILTON,

OF THE

TROY HYDROPATHIC INSTITUTE,

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA; WITH A HISTORY OF THE  
PROGRESS OF THE SYSTEM, AND A CRITICAL REVIEW OF  
ITS THEORY AND PRACTICE. BY JOHN FORBES, M.D. F.R.S.  
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## TO THE PUBLIC.

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The object of publishing the opinions of Dr. Forbes and others, on hydropathy, is to counteract the mischievous influence exerted over the public mind, by physicians, on this subject. Dr. Forbes is acknowledged to be one of the most learned physicians of the age. He has dared to look the profession in the face and boldly declare his opinions. Whatever he believes calculated to benefit mankind and lessen their sufferings he declares he will "fearlessly promulgate, careless of personal consequences." It will be seen by the title page that he is Editor of the British and Foreign Medical Review or Quarterly Journal, and Honorary member of various Philosophical and Medical Societies, both in Europe and America; also Physician to her Majesty's household, Physician Extraordinary to His Royal Highness Prince Albert, &c., &c.

Standing thus high, not only with the profession, but called upon to watch over the health of the family of his sovereign, his opinions are justly entitled to have weight, and we hope the article will excite a spirit of inquiry in the public mind that will emancipate it from the dominion of drugs, and convince it that the power of nature, in assisting the body to rectify itself when diseased, is more certain and safe than the spurious art of physic.

The medical profession needs a thorough investigation by the people. They must move on this subject as they value health, happiness, and even life. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a doctor, with his life-tapping lancet, his burning moxas, his caustics and blisters, his mercury, iodine and arsenic, and his chemicals so concentrated that the least mistake in the dose is attended with speedily fatal consequences.

The water cure treatment of disease, although it has been in use more than twenty years and has been constantly gaining in public favor; although it has been acknowledged as the *true medical art*, by the very head and expositor of drug medication in England; although it has been adopted by as scientific physicians as can be found in the profession, especially in Europe; and although thousands have been cured of almost every form of disease by it, after being abandoned by their medical advisers as incurable, and these persons of education and distinction, from almost every nation on the globe; the cry of humbug assails it from most of the trade in that as well as in this country.

Primitive truth is usually at war with dominant systems. All newly discovered truths meet with opposition because they unsettle previously established views, and men usually cling to opinions which they have long regarded in the light of truth. If a thing is true, any other thing

in opposition to it cannot be true, unless a previously cherished truth was a fallacy. Self-interest, prejudice, pride, ignorance and obstinacy blind men from seeing or at least adopting newly discovered truths. It ought not to be so. Truth, plain and palpable, should be acknowledged by all men—but it can scarcely be heard except by those from whom it can serve no interest to conceal it. It may conflict with interest; it may meet with opposition from pride; it may and always does stamp error on long cherished notions; it may overturn a whole system of education and show its fallacies. Professional men, especially those who have attained the character of leaders, are the last to listen to any reform.

Physicians grown gray with years and practice seldom question a custom that has fallen in with their prejudices of the times. It is characteristic of the medical profession, if we may judge from past history and present observation, to persecute the discoverers of any new thing, certainly if it appears to produce important changes. They, mostly, obstinately persevere in following the system they have learned and condemn any innovation that may be attempted to be introduced.

Goethe, the celebrated German poet, says that “when, from time to time, a man arises who is fortunate enough to discover one of the great secrets of nature, ten others immediately start up who industriously and strenuously endeavor to conceal it again from view.”

No sooner had the Water Cure made some little noise in the neighborhood where it started than the doctors combined to put it down by persecution and prosecution. They denounced it as quackery, and complained to the authorities at Vienna, alledging that medicated sponges were used, and to this was owing the wonderful cures performed by the German peasant.

The government finally sent a commission of inquiry to Graefenberg and found that the only agents used were water, air, exercise and diet. It became satisfied that he should be sustained, and extended to him its protection. He is now the Prince of Physicians, courted by his government and considered throughout the civilized world as one of the greatest benefactors of his race and age.

“Is there in Christendom,” says Calvert, “a physician who can cool the skin and open the pores at will in a burning fever?” Not all the schools and systems of all countries, through long ages of experiment and use, have discovered the nature of fevers and the art of treating them. In spite of his diaphoretics, his lancet, his antiphlogistics and tonics, *death strides past the doctor* and seizes upon the young and robust as boldly and surely now as a thousand years ago. Let the world, then, rejoice. Glad tidings have come from Graefenberg. Some of the scourges of mankind are stayed. Inflammations and fevers, including the scarlet, small pox and measles, are perfectly manageable by Priessnitz and his pupils. What is the glory of Harvey and Jenner to that of the German peasant?

The faculty say there is nothing new in Priessnitz' pretended discoveries. Is there nothing new in putting a patient daily, for months, thro'

four or five baths, one or two of them while the skin is dripping with perspiration, produced by his own warmth, and thereby curing him of gout! Is it not new to thrust a man, delirious, into a cold, shallow bath, and there keep him with constant friction on his legs and body and pouring cold water on his head, and thus restore him in a few hours? Who, ever before, put a child with brain fever through forty wet sheets in as many successive half-hours, and by so doing completely subdued in three days a disease whose cure would have been doubtful with drugs in three weeks? This magical wet sheet, what a discovery? Is it not a stupendous novelty, to regard fevers as, in all cases, but the manifestation of the struggle going on within between the vital principle and a disease which threatens it? And is it not a new feeling in the summoned healers to approach the fever-heated patient with clearest confidence, *looking on the fever as a sign of vital activity*, which with a single agent he can uphold and helpfully direct to a rapid and safe issue, instead of going to work against the vital principle with his drugs and life-tapping lancet, inwardly trembling for the slow result, doubting of his whole procedure, coming back daily, for weeks, with the trepidation of one who is tussling in the dark with death for a human being, and often overwhelmed at the sudden victory of his foe, by the conviction that himself has opened to him the path. I refer now to the best medical guides; the few men of thought, feeling and integrity.

“The common crowd of legalized butchers walk through their daily mischievous routine, partly in ignorant thoughtlessness and partly in insensibility.”

“The whole baseless, calamitous system of drug-poisoning,” says a German writer, “which has already snatched away many millions, had its origin in the misconception of acute diseases. The symptoms of fever were mistaken for the disease itself, and finding they could be allayed by bleeding and drugging they prized the fatal discovery. Then sprung up from this poisonous seeding a whole host of terrible, deadly maladies. But because the afflictions did not show themselves immediately, within a few weeks after the medical suppression of the acute disease, no one had a thought that the drugs and bleeding were the cause of them.

Relatively the water treatment is without danger; nay, it is so absolutely. Knowledge is needed to do any thing, even to grow cabbages. But conceive knowledge with poisons for its instruments, and the same knowledge with one pure agent, and able with that one to bring out any and all the effects aimed at by the lancet and whole pharmacopœa. In the most skilful hands arsenic, mercury, iodine, copperas, prussic acid, strychnine, all medical poisons in constant use, suddenly cause death at times, confounding the practitioners.

Wedded as men are to routine, hugging custom as if life itself were intertwined with its plaits, still by degrees do they let in the light of new truths. This discovery is hailed by the thinking, intellectual portion of the community as pregnant with immeasurable good.

The condemnation of drugs is not new, nor confined to physicians of the present time. Hear what some of the great lights in the profession say of their art:

Magendie—"In the actual condition of medical science the physician mostly plays but the part of simple spectator of the sad episodes which his profession furnishes him."

Bichat—"There is not, in the history of *remedies*, any general system. The incoherent assemblage of opinions, themselves incoherent, it is of all sciences the best representation of the caprices of the human mind. It is said the practice of medicine is disheartening. I say more, it is not in any respect that of a reasoning man."

Dr. Forbes, Editor of the London Medical Review, in the January number, 1846, says that "in a large proportion of cases treated by Allopathic physicians, *the disease is cured by nature and not by them*. That in a lesser, but still not a small proportion, the disease is cured by nature in spite of them; in other words, their interference opposing instead of assisting the cure. Consequently, it would fare as well, or better, with patients, if all remedies, at least all active remedies, *especially drugs*, were abandoned. We repeat our readiness to admit these inferences as just, and to abide the consequences of their adoption."

Editor of the London Lancet, vol. 1, p. 454, for 1844—"If the natural philosopher or scientific chemist turns from his own science to therapeutics, he would be led either to *abandon* his confidence in the uniformity and stability of the laws of nature, or infer that the *spirit of modern science has not yet animated the practical physician*."

Dr. Pereira says, in a lecture published in 1845 in the London Medical Gazette, "We can hardly refuse our assent to the observation of the late Sir Gilbert Blane, that, in many cases, patients get well in spite of the means employed; and sometimes when the practitioner fancies that he has made a great cure we may fairly assume the patient to have had a happy escape."

Dr. Rush, of Philadelphia, made the following honest confession in one of his Lectures: "I here owe it to the general reader to confess, that, as far as I know, the medical profession can scarcely produce a single volume in its practical department, from the works of Hippocrates down to the last made text-book, which, by the requisitions of an exact philosophy, will not be found to contain nearly as much fiction as truth. I am here incessantly led to make an apology for the instability of the theories and practice of physic; and those physicians generally become the most eminent who have the soonest emancipated themselves from the tyranny of the schools of physic. 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 false theories! We have assisted in multiplying diseases; we have done more, we have increased their mortality. I will not pause to beg pardon of the faculty for acknowledging in this public manner the weakness of our profession. I am pursuing truth and am indifferent whither I am led if she is only my leader."

Boerhave, a distinguished physician, says: "If we compare the good which half a dozen true disciples of Esculapius have done since their art began, with the evil which the immense number of doctors have inflicted upon mankind, we must be satisfied that it would have been better for mankind if medical men had never existed."

Dr. Good—"The science of medicine is a barbarous jargon, and the effects of our medicine on the human system are in the highest degree uncertain, except, indeed, that they have already destroyed more lives than war, pestilence and famine combined."

Dr. Benj. Waterhouse, after lecturing more than twenty years in Harvard University, retired, saying "I am sick of learned quackery."

Van Helmont says: A murder-loving devil has taken possession of the medical chairs for none but a devil could recommend to physicians blood-letting as a necessary means."

Reil says: "It is perfectly clear that we do not know the nature of fever, and the treatment thereof is nothing more than naked quackery."

Billing—I visited the different schools and the students of each hinted that the other sect killed their patients."

The wits and distinguished men out of the profession, in every country, have amused themselves at the expense of the doctors. They have directed the shafts of their satire against the science.

Jefferson, in a letter to Dr. Wistar, wrote: "I have lived to see the disciples of Hoffman, Boerhave, Stohl, Cullen, and Brown, succeed one another, like the shifting figures of the magic-lantern, and their fancies, like the dresses of the annual doll babies from Paris, becoming, from their novelty, the vogue of the day, and yielding to the next novelty their ephemeral powers. The patient, treated on the fashionable theory, sometimes recovers in spite of their medicine. The medicine, therefore, restores him, and the doctor receives new courage to proceed in his experiments on the *lives* of his fellow creatures."

Napoleon said to Dr. O'Mera: "Doctor, no physicing. 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."

Prof. Finney—"It certainly is an abuse of terms to call the 'Theory and Practice of Medicine' a *science*, in its present state. The whole subject of medicine needs to be *overhauled* and *must be*; for in these days of breaking loose from authority and of applying the surest tests of truth to every subject of human inquiry, it must be that minds will be found that will disturb the foundations of many generations upon the important subject of medicine. I have long been distressed with the *unintelligent* and *unintelligible jargon* of *medical practice*. Having suffered much from impaired health and medical treatment, and having conversed with numerous eminent physicians, I was struck with the fact that "clouds and darkness" rested upon their pathway; that they were agonized, (I mean the *conscientious* among them) with *uncertainty* at every step—*hating empirics* and yet *obliged to be nothing else themselves*.

I said to myself, the whole subject of medicine must need thorough revision, if not utter subversion."

The witty Le Sage says: "Death has two wings; on one are painted war, pestilence, famine, fire, shipwreck, with all the other miseries that present him at every instant with a new prey. On the other wing you behold a crowd of young physicians, about to take their degree before him. Death, with a demon smile, dubs them doctors, having first made them swear never in any way to *alter the established practice of physic.*"

Lock, Smollet, Goldsmith, (all three physicians) held their art in contempt. Swift, Hume, Temple, Adam Smith, Hazlet and Byron, regarded the practice of medicine as shere quackery, as destructive to health and life. Byron says it is the destructive art of healing. He had a fever and wrote to a friend an account of it. He tells him "I got well by the blessings of barley water and refusing to see my physician."

Adam Smith, author of 'The wealth of Nations,' holds the following language in relation to the profession: "Some persons will tell you, with an air of the miraculous, that they recovered although they were given over, when they might with more reason have said, they recovered because they were given over. But in very truth the great success of quacks, in England, has been altogether owing to the real quackery of the *regular physicians.*"

Here we have the testimony of some of the greatest men that ever lived; among them doctors, honest and conscientious; men of great observation, of education and genius. They look upon the spurious art of medicine with utter contempt, and regard it as naked quackery.

On the other hand, the whole herd of doctors and professors, who swarm in these times, are gulling the people by their boast of improvement in their art; but, in the words of a sprightly writer, "death strides past the doctor and seizes upon the young and robust as boldly and surely now as a thousand years ago."

It is a common and true saying that no two doctors agree. Their destructive trade gives them a pugnacious feeling and they fasten to the throats of each other like so many bull-dogs.

Dr. James Johnson, late editor of the London Medical and Chirurgical Journal, recommends in his 'Diseases of Tropical Climates,' as the basis of all successful treatment, bleeding and calomel. Dr. Dickson, a government physician, asserts that bleeding and calomel are the most deadly enemies in a tropical climate. What strange agreement among the doctors? a good remedy in the hands of one is a deadly poison in the hands of the other.

The same Dr. Johnson, in reviewing the conduct of indiscriminately prescribing kreosote, iodine, &c., observes: "The patrons of the new remedies would seem, in their experiments, to proceed on the principle of that Hospital physician, who ordered his clerk to bleed the south ward and vomit the north."

Stohl believed the frequency of consumption to be occasioned by the use of Peruvian bark; Morton thought it almost a specific. Reid

ascribed its frequency to the use of mercury—and he was right;—Brillonet, that mercury is the only thing that will cure it. Salvadora says tonics, stimulating remedies, and a generous diet, are the true means. Galen says that vinegar is the best preventive of consumption. Dessault, and others, assert the disease is often brought on by the use of vinegar. Dr. Beddoes regarded fox-glove as a specific; Dr. Parr declares fox-glove to be injurious and dangerous. Dr. Hosack believes it hastens consumptives to the grave. Dr. Hastings says naptha will cure consumption—forty other physicians deny its curative power, and say it is injurious. Dr. Pereyra, of Bourdeaux, says cod-liver oil has great curative power in this disease.

“What conclusion forces itself upon the mind in view of this state of things among the great lights in the profession. In the words of Frank, “*Thousands are slaughtered in the quiet sick room. Governments,*” says this honest physician, “should at once either banish medical men and their art, or they should take the proper means that the lives of people may be safer than at present, when they look far less after the practice of this dangerous profession, and the *murders* committed in it, than after the lowest trades.”



# HYDROPATHY OR THE WATER-CURE,

BY JOHN FORBES, M. D.

*From the London Quarterly Journal, October, 1846.*

*Brit. & For. M.-Chir. Rev., Lond.*

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In consequence of the modern water cure having been originated by a non-medical and uneducated man, and having been subsequently for the most part adopted and professed by lay practitioners, or by medical men of somewhat equivocal reputation,—and yet more, from the system being held out as a *panacea* or cure for all diseases, with an exclusive scorn of medical aid,—the medical profession, as a body, have naturally enough, and not inexcusably, treated it with much contempt, not to say aversion, and have shown a pretty general determination not to admit it into the catalogue of therapeutic means.

Exercising a natural influence on the public, medical men have succeeded in communicating to a large portion of the intelligent classes the feelings entertained by themselves.

Thus hydropathy has become a tabooed subject, being either entirely excluded from medical journals and medical books, or only admitted into them for the purpose of being ridiculed or utterly denounced. Indeed, it is regarded almost as a violation of professional etiquette to mention this subject in the language of toleration, much more to speak of it with approbation.

Accordingly, we think it not unlikely that some of our brethren, and those even of the most estimable, may regard our present article as a departure from what is medically proper, and will pronounce us almost worthy to have the severe sentence of “water-doctor” passed upon us. We have, however, been too long accustomed to speak our opinions openly and boldly, when we believe them to be just, whether they were in accordance with the current notions or not, to be deterred on the present occasion by any apprehended risk of offending mere professional conventionalism.

Whatever we conscientiously believe to be true in medical science, especially if, at the same time, calculated to promote the great aim of all professors of the healing art—the increase of the means of lessening the sufferings of mankind—that we shall freely and fearlessly promulgate, careless of personal consequences.

Our purpose, in this article, being carefully and calmly to investigate the real merits of the system now so widely established under the name of hydropathy, we hold ourselves absolved from mixing up this investigation with any considerations whatever respecting the merits or demerits of those who practice it.

If it shall appear, as we believe it will on further examination, that the external application of cold water is capable of being beneficially applied in the cure of diseases, in modes of greater efficacy, and to much greater extent than has been hitherto practiced by medical men, *there remains only one course for the members of the profession to pursue, viz: to adopt the improvements, regardless of their origin or their past or present relations.*

When the religious reformer proposed to adopt profane airs to church psalmody, saying that he saw no good reason why the devil should have all the good tunes to himself, he is generally supposed to have acted as wisely as he thought shrewdly and spoke quaintly. In like manner, we see no good reason why the doctors of the orthodox school should refuse to accept *good things*, even at the hand of the hydropathists.

For our own part, we avow ourselves of such a catholic spirit, and so lowly-minded withal, as to be ready to grasp any proffered good in the way of HEALING, whosoever may be the offerers, and wheresoever they may have found it. It is not the demerits of the donor or the birth-place of the gift, that, in such a case, we are bound to look to; but simply whether it is qualified to aid us in our glorious and divine mission of soothing the pains of our fellow-men. If it is so qualified, the baseness of its source will be lost in the glory of its use; and if aught of its original impurity still attaches to its application in our hands, the fault will be in us, not in it. A saint may sing the devil's tunes without contamination; a hero may wield the weapon he has wrested from a robber or a murderer; the medicament or the formula of the most errant quack may be hallowed in the prescription of the true physician.

It must be acknowledged that cold water, applied in the manner of the hydropathists, is a powerful modifier of the condition of the human body, both in health and disease, and, when weighed in the therapeutic balance with other remedies, merits, at least, a fair trial in legitimate practice.

It is a consideration of great importance how the remedy shall best be applied in the ordinary practice of medicine. We believe that distinct bathing establishments will be found best for giving full effect to the hydropathic system, although we believe, also, that many parts of it may be adopted in ordinary practice at the patients' own homes. If hydropathy is, as we believe, a therapeutic agent of great power and value, it would be worse than absurd to exclude it from legitimate medicine.

The extraordinary revivifying effect of the cold plunge bath, after the system has been excited by artificial heat, is testified by various evidence of the most unquestionable kind. Numerous travellers have spoken of this very enthusiastically; among others, Stevens, the American, in his

'Incidents of Travel,' who took a Russian bath, after a most fatiguing journey, and came out of it, he says, quite a new man. We have had similar information from more than one private source. This practice, however, similar as it is to that of Priessnitz, has never, until his time, been extensively, if at all, employed in Europe as a means of curing disease.

The douche, the wet-sheet, the sweating blanket, the cold plunging after sweating, the wet compress, the sitting bath, must be allowed to be peculiar to the Graeffenberg peasant and his disciples. From the same source have proceeded some important precepts on the subject of diet and regimen.

His treatment, although apparently constructed of such simple elements, is capable of being varied almost *ad infinitum*, according to the peculiarities of the case, and of being rendered so powerful as often to excite in the patients apprehensions of danger. It is scarcely too much to say that he has modified the application of water, and some few other means, in a manner so ingenious as to render them a substitute for most of the drugs in the pharmacopœia. He has his stimulant, his sedative, his tonic, his reducing agent, his purgative, his astringent, his diuretic, his styptic, his febrifuge, his diaphoretic, his alterative, his counter-irritant. Combined with these are peculiar regulations as to diet, dress and regimen.

A point uniformly insisted on by Priessnitz is, that his patients abstain from wearing flannel next the skin.

When we consider how generally the use of this article of clothing has been advised by physicians and adopted by invalids, especially in this country, we can easily conceive that strong prejudices will exist in the minds of patients against relinquishing it. Yet it appears to be almost universally discarded by hydropathists, and, as far as we have learned, without any mischievous consequences.

Let us now inquire, on physiological and pathological grounds, supported by some personal experience, what appear to be the effects, or among the effects of a course of water treatment according to the Priessnitzian system.

In the first place we remark the careful withdrawal of all stimulants from internal parts. In this, hydropathy is at once distinguished from ordinary practice. The stomach, constructed to digest simple food and admit fluid at the impulse of thirst, becomes the vehicle of conveying to the nervous system alcohol in various forms, and other similar fluids. These are unnatural to the stomach itself, but grateful to the nerves. Consequently, the mucous lining of the alimentary canal may suffer in the attainment of an object required only by the nervous system. This is, possibly, the origin of dyspepsia, hypochondriasis, bilious affections, &c. To the treatment of these affections the physician brings his purgatives, carminatives, his anodynes, his stomachics. But it is to the surface of the same unfortunate membrane that they are all applied; and it

frequently results, that, when they relieve temporary suffering, they often leave the general health *worse than they found it*.

The hydropathists adopt a system of diet, such as other practitioners seldom venture to prescribe. If a person, suffering from constipation, or any of its long train of ills, applies to an ordinary physician, he is told to avoid fruit, pastrys, and all vegetables, except, perhaps, a favorite one, or it may be two. He is cautioned against the use of veal, pork, and even beef and new made bread. We have known such a patient ordered to live for months—we might say years—constantly on mutton and bread never less than five days old. What is the consequence? The patient is compelled to take aperient pills every day; to stimulate the digestive organs by occasional glasses of sherry or porter, and to compensate the deficient nutrition by indulgence in strong tea and coffee. Such a patient goes to a hydropathic establishment, and is ushered into a *salle-a-manger* in which he finds all the variety of food customary at a foreign *table-de-hote* dinner, and is told to obey the dictates of his appetite. He does so, timidly at first, but finds that he can take the forbidden luxuries of broccoli, turnips, veal, game, puddings, and fruit, with as much impunity as the never-varied mutton and dry bread.

Another principle of hydropathic treatment is, that almost all its measures are applied to the surface. It is one of the most formidable difficulties with which the ordinary physician has to contend, that nearly all his remedies reach the point to which they are directed, through one channel. If the brain requires a sedative or a stimulant, if the muscular system demands tonics, if the functions of organic life need correction by alteratives, the physician has no means of attaining his object, except by *inundating* the *stomach* and *bowels* with *foreign and frequently to them pernicious substances*.

In being made the medical door-way to all parts of the system, the *organ of digestion* is *contorted to a purpose for which it was never intended*. The consequence is that it has to be consulted before we enter upon the treatment of any case, and it often forbids our availing ourselves of remedies, which are plainly, perhaps urgently, indicated by the condition of other organs, or the system at large. How often do we find that one stomach will neither bear ether nor opium; another is injured by steel; and others are intolerant of mercury. Iron is employed to raise the tone of the system, but it occasions constipation by its action on the alimentary canal; therefore, in order to counteract this portion of its effect, it can only be used in conjunction with aloes, or some other purgative, the tendency of which, as respects the system at large, may be exactly the *reverse of that of steel*. With mercury the case is just opposite. The physician is frequently placed in the dilemma, either to injure the stomach in an attempt to relieve other parts or to leave the latter to their fate, because they can only be rescued at the peril of the former. His only mode of escape from this predicament is to employ a legion of *adjuvantia, dirigentia, corrigentia*, in the multi-

plicity and confusion of which it is by no means easy to make out so clear a balance of power as shall enable him clearly to foresee which kind of action, in the *melee* will get the uppermost; and unless he is well skilled in chemistry he may unconsciously prescribe a dose so scrupulously guarded as to be neutralized and altogether impotent.

Hydropathy employs a system of most energetic general and local counter irritation. By the diligent employment of hydropathic machinery, due regard being had to the constitutional vigor, a condition is often excited, termed by hydropathists *the crisis*. This consists in the appearance of various cutaneous eruptions and boiles, more or less severe; in other cases its leading feature is disturbance of the function of some internal organ, creating diarrhea, abnormal urinary discharges, vomiting, &c.

Whatever the crisis may be, there is no disputing that it results from the operation of a powerful system of counter irritation. It is to this that we wish to direct attention, because we suspect that in it is contained the true explanation of the good effects of the water-cure in many chronic cases.

Another physiological feature of the water-cure is the number of *coolings* to which the body is subjected during the day. The generation of coloric in the animal system has been traced to its real source. It results from *burning up* of waste matter, which, by accumulation, would become injurious. The oxygen of the atmosphere, admitted into the lungs by inspiration, traverses the various blood-vessels of the body, and in the minute capillaries unites with carbonized substances. The union produces carbonic acid emitted from the lungs, in expiration, and is attended with the development of what is called animal heat. It is obvious that lowering the temperature of the body within certain limits, by awakening an uncomfortable sensation in the nerves, would induce increased activity in the calorific process, in order to maintain or restore the average degree of warmth. This increased activity could only be supported by an additional consumption of carbonized matter. If the carbonized matter were already there and if its existence constituted the disease, or an important part of it, as is probably sometimes the case, a perfect cure would result from its removal. But supposing there is no such matter present, what would then be the consequence of stimulating this decarbonizing operation? The consequence would certainly be, that the constituents of the tissues themselves would be consumed, in order to supply the pabulum required by the oxygen. This would as certainly excite an effort of restoration, by which the digestive organs would aim to renew to the tissues the amount abstracted by the oxygen. In other words, the appetite would be increased. Hence it is that more food is required in cold climates than in warm; in winter than in summer. The greater consumption necessary to maintain equal temperature in cold weather, can only be met by increased supply. What in a vague and general manner arises from the ordinary progress of the seasons,

may be rendered methodical and profitable, by the careful interference of art.

If a rude exposure of the surface to cold and wet is capable of producing internal disease, there is no doubt that a close relation exists between those agents and the morbid conditions of internal parts. Therefore, if they could, by skilful management, be so applied as to excite an opposite effect from that to which their bad consequences are due, they would then become equally powerful means of removing disease. This is the very thing that Priessnitz and his disciples profess to have done—and to do.

Let us, then, consider a little further the consequences of repeated applications of cold, supposing it is used with due reference to the constitutional powers, so as to create an incessant activity of the vital functions. It appears to us that this is *exactly the thing needed in a great many cases of chronic ailments.*

It is easy enough to construct methodical catalogues of organic lesions and their symptoms, and to assign, on *paper*, a "local habitation and a name" for every malady that is to require our treatment. But the truth is that there are a vast number of cases in which the symptoms may be said to constitute the only disease that can be detected, and in which they point rather to a general torpidity or derangement of all, or almost all, the vital functions, than to special change or disturbance in any particular organ. Many cases known as indigestion, gout, rheumatism, liver complaints, or nervous affections, come under this description. In a large portion of such cases, and their like, we could conceive the practice of Priessnitz to be peculiarly beneficial, if it consisted in nothing more than the frequent application and skilful adaptation of cold water.

We happen to know the case of a lady who was at a hydropathic establishment for the treatment of a very aggravated chronic rheumatism. She was much weakened, and had been unable to walk for about four years. After several weeks of sweating and cold plunging, locomotion began gradually to return. The first indication of this was that she could walk a few steps *immediately after leaving the cold bath.* For a considerable time this continued to be the only occasion of her being able to walk during the day, though she afterwards made considerable further progress. We mention this case because *we can guarantee its truth,* and it always appeared to us a *striking and instructive instance of the stimulating property of a cold bath.*

A still more important and less questionable quality of the water cure is its power of lowering the system to any extent, without any of the debilitating means otherwise used for that purpose. In a general inflammatory or febrile condition of the body, a lengthened immersion in cold water, or envelopment in a succession of cold, wet sheets, would reduce the temperature and force of circulation to the most extreme degree. These means are, to the functions of life, what an extinguisher is to a flame. *The reducing power can be gradually applied up to the point of actual extinction.*

In the treatment of febrile diseases an important indication is to reduce the morbidly increased activity of some of the organic functions most distinctly manifested in the circulation and the temperature. For this purpose the great instrument heretofore most in use is blood-letting, as being our only certain and expeditious method of reducing the frequency, force, or fullness of the pulse. So that, in order to suppress febrile action, we hazarded occasioning more or less lingering debility.

It is a question deserving of cautious and dispassionate investigation, whether any portion of the liability to these mishaps is attributable to the *bleeding, purging, salivating* and *low diet* employed in removing the fever. We are driven seriously to ask whether the debility consecutive to fever is not *partly occasioned* by the *remedies employed* in its treatment and the attendant local and organic lesions in a great measure produced by the febrile paroxysm itself? And could they not be avoided by boldly applying a remedy by which this febrile condition would be more speedily subdued? The real nature of fever is, unfortunately, beyond the reach of our present knowledge.

It may be supposed there is danger in the sudden and active employment of the cold bath in fever. *We suspect that this is entirely imaginary.* The cold bath seems to be *professionally* employed to strengthen the body, as temptation is to strengthen virtue, by furnishing an enemy to struggle against. Thus it is considered more as a test than as a source of strength. The hdropathists have discarded this excessive precaution, and boldly used their remedy as a tonic, wherever a tonic is required. They have administered it to the young and old, the weak, the bilious, the gouty, the scrofulous, the dyspeptic and the paralytic. Neither mucous membranes nor mesenteric glands, infantile weakness nor senile decrepitude, have stood in their way. Unless it can be shown that this all but universal administration of the system has produced *serious evils, we are actually driven to admit* that it is in the same proportion safe. The practice of the hydropathists is so open, and their disciples so numerous, that the innocence of their proceedings may be said to be established by the absence of evidence to the contrary.

We cannot enter any circle of society without encountering some follower of this method, ready to narrate a series of *psychrolousian* miracles, prepared to defend and zealous to applaud the Priessnitzian practice; but few or none come forward with satisfactory evidence of anything like general mischief having resulted from its general practice. Judgment must, therefore, be entered by default against its opponents, and hydropathy is entitled to the verdict of harmlessness, since cause has never been shown to the contrary.

In place of the *spongings* and *dribblings* to which ordinary practitioners commonly deem it prudent to limit the use of this remedy, the hydropathists employ *active plunging* and *powerful douches*. And assuredly theory, in this respect, goes with them. In the plunge there is a sudden shock which awakens nervous energy and leads to speedy and effectual reaction; whereas, in sponging, the whole surface is exposed to a

gradual and powerful cooling, without the protection of stimulus. In the former, the whole frame is at once covered with water and shielded from the reducing evaporation which would attend the latter. Moreover, the plunge can be more speedily gone through, and followed up more immediately by exercise. The same distinction may be made between the *hydropathic douche* and the *orthodox shower bath*. The force of the latter falls almost exclusively on the head and shoulders, as it merely trickles down the rest of the frame. How different is this from the powerful impulse of the *douche* upon all the muscular parts!

Another conspicuous item in the catalogue of hydropathic machinery is the *sweating process*. We wish here to direct attention to it merely in a physiological and pathological point of view. The skin is a part through which nature has arranged that a large amount of matter should be removed from the body during health, and a still larger amount, of a different character, in the process of recovery from many diseases. It is well known that a deficient cutaneous excretion is incompatible with perfect health. There is scarcely any disease in which the function of the skin is not, to some extent, damaged. To what extent, physicians have not bestowed sufficient pains to learn: nor have they been accustomed to give much attention to this part in the practical investigation of diseases. We possess little information, in medical writers, as to the amount or frequency of cutaneous disturbance in general disease, as to the effect of the therapeutic means in correcting such disturbance, or as to the value of the correction in the cure of disease.

In almost all cases of indigestion, gout, rheumatism, nervous affections, indeed of chronic disorders in general, the action of the skin is either deficient or depraved, the part itself being found dry, hard, rough, thick, pale, relaxed, or in some other manner unnatural. A course of perspiration, or of the wet sheet, followed by cold bathing, corrects these signs of disorder, and reduces the part to its normal condition. The beneficial influence of the remedy is speedily manifested in the improvement of the case in other respects. It might be expected that such a course would, at least, reduce the general strength, and require more vigor of constitution than many such patients possess. And yet, a course of active hydropathic sweating is found to strengthen instead of weakening the system. There is a gain instead of weakening the system, or loss of weight under its operation. Whether this is attributable to the subsequent cold bathing, to the water drinking, or to the peculiar regimen, may be a matter of question; but the fact is too notorious to be contradicted. In the sweating process several pounds of matter must be removed from the body. The patient, dripping and steaming, next hastens into the plunge bath, stays there his appointed time, undergoes the prescribed friction, drinks his water, and finds himself actually invigorated by the strange process he has undergone!

It is placed beyond a doubt, by experience, that this proceeding may be adopted daily, or even twice a day, for *many months*, without producing any deleterious effect upon the general health. Many cases have

occurred in which it has been ascertained that it has been attended with an increase of weight, and that of no light amount. We know the particulars of one case in which a gouty gentleman gained seven pounds in a fortnight of such treatment; and of another in which there was a gain of eight pounds in ten days. We are also acquainted with the case of a lady who was unable to walk at any other period of the day except immediately after the sweating process—a sure proof that it did not occasion debility.

The safety of the immediate succession of cold bathing upon copious sweating has been called in question; but the practice of so many hydropathists as there are around us amply establishes this point. On scientific grounds the question was completely set at rest by Dr. Currie.

An effective and innocuous means of increasing the excretion from the skin being found, which appears to combine with its own peculiar action the indirect effect of a tonic, have we not reason to regard it as a promising instrument of cure, in many disordered states of the system? *We believe that we have.* We know the utility of augmenting the secretion of the mucous membranes, the liver, the kidneys; we recognize this in our constant practice. It is by this means that we combat a large proportion of chronic as well as acute maladies. Why should the skin alone be neglected! Physiology teaches us that it is the vehicle for conveying out of the system a large amount of matter. Practical experience exhibits it as the channel through which *morbid matter*, in many instances, and the burthen of plethora generally find their exit. These facts indicate it as a legitimate locality for the same artificial measures which are found serviceable on other secreting organs. It may be objected to what we are now urging, that profuse perspiration itself characterizes many diseases, of which it is one of the most formidable symptoms. How can sweating cure acute rheumatism, it may be asked, of which it is almost a constant feature? But the same remark applies to other medical phenomena. Excessive purging and increased action of the kidneys are dangerous, frequently mortal, symptoms. But does that prevent our employing them as remedies? *Do we not in spite of our frequent experience of their injurious effects, apply them almost constantly to the cure of diseases? Are there ten cases out of ten thousand in which some kind of purgatives are not administered? Nay, is not dysentery itself treated by purgative calomel?* Let us extend the same toleration to sweating. It is contrary to all the instructions of experience to *confound* the consequences of a *phenomina violently excited by morbid causes* with those it induces when *reasonably created and carefully managed by skilful treatment.*

In many of these cases, the benefit does not appear to result so much from stimulating the function of any particular organ, as from removing a certain portion of matter from the system at large. There is no reason to suppose that exciting the liver, the colon, the duodenum, or the kidneys, for instance, has any special influence over a morbid condition of the brain. We find that drugs which act upon any of these organs frequently relieve such conditions, and they may often be selected *indis-*

*criminally*, the one answering much the same purpose as the others. A common anti-bilious pill, retailed for a penny by a druggist, or a patented nostrum of Cockle or Morrison, will generally do as well as the most elaborate prescription. The whole of those remedies appear to act in such cases, either by a general principle of counter-irritation, or by removing a quantity of fluid or of excretory matter, from the circulation, either of which object might be attained as speedily, as certainly, as extensively and as safely, by the *skin* as by any other part, and thus prevent the injurious effect of drugs on the system.

But the power of the water-cure over excretions is not limited to the skin. It professes to be both a purgative and a diuretic. That it is a diuretic, in a certain sense, needs no proof. It is no new discovery that in proportion to the quantity of fluid imbibed by the mouth will be the quantity emitted by the kidneys. This, though verbally, is not medically a diuretic action. It may consist simply in the mechanical discharge of the fluid imbibed, with no augmentation of the proper functions of the kidneys, as respects the previous condition of the blood-vessels. But it is not perhaps unphilosophical to give hydropathists the benefit of supposing that water-drinking may do indirectly what it does not appear to do directly; by its diluting power, may it not destroy the influence of any mischievous constituent of the blood, the excess of dilution being immediately repaired by the removal of the water through the kidneys, in company with the deleterious matter dissolved in it?

The purgative action of hydropathy is less equivocal. It frequently happens in cases of constipation that after a few days' or weeks' use of its appliances, the patient is attacked with diarrhea. This is sometimes troublesome, but we believe seldom dangerous. On its subsiding, the bowels are said to have generally acquired a regular and healthy action, which is thenceforward maintained by persevering in the drinking, bathing, &c. In other cases, a regular action of the bowels comes on in a gradual manner, without the occurrence of diarrhea, the treatment appearing to influence the bowels through its action on the system at large. In others, and every one has seen examples of this, the mere drinking of a few glasses of water before breakfast is represented as a purgative that may be relied on. We are ourselves acquainted with some persons who regulate this function as accurately by water-drinking as they formerly did by drugs. There are cases, again, in which the sitz-bath, and other external applications of water, produce a purgative effect.

It may be asked, is not this effect too uniform for the purpose of the practical physician? Does it not often result from the mere percolation of water through the mucous lining of the intestinal tube? Is it not clearly inadequate to excite the particular action of the liver, the pancreas, the lower or upper portion of the intestinal tube? Is it not necessary that we should be able to act on these parts separately, for the effectual cure of disease? *These questions*, important as they appear, may with equal justice be asked as to the *practical proceedings* of our profession in general. *It is true, that, in theory*, many nice distinctions

are laid down respecting the peculiar operation, as to *locality* or *otherwise*, of *different cathartics*. But are these directions generally observed in practice? Did not Abernethy's page 72 contain the *curative maxim for all cases?* and were not his prescriptions *almost always identical?* Has not every respectable family doctor his "*my pills*" carefully prepared from some ingredients for *every* difficulty in the bowels? Is not the black draught as universal a purgative as Priessnitz would make cold water? Are not all our moneyed dyspeptics and hypochondriac nabobs sent in a body to mineral springs, because they are *purgative*, *without any preliminary investigation* as to their action on the *duodenum* or the *colon*, the *liver*, or the *pancreas*, or as to the *expediency of such action in the individual case in question*.

We observe, also, in the hydropathic practice, the developement of a peculiar sedative or tranquilizing influence. Every practitioner knows the difficulty presented in the treatment of chronic cases, by morbid irritability and painful nervous sensations, which are not only intolerable to the patient himself, but most prejudicial to his recovery; and which can only be relieved from time to time by repeated and gradually augmented doses of a drug whose own effects are almost as pernicious as the symptoms it is used to palliate. This is one instance of a predicament in which the physician is not infrequently placed, when he has most gravely to consider whether there is most mischief in the disease to be combatted, or in the only remedy by which it can be encountered. If "a routine system of sweating and bathing" affords a means of extrication from the present instance of this difficulty, this is a *strange reason* why it should not continue to be *obstinately excluded* from the *well-fenced pale of the medical profession*.

Our subject brings us to make a few remarks on *medical habits* in reference to chronic cases. We have only commenced the treatment when we have removed the immediate symptoms. The real difficulty consists in preventing their recurrence. Accordingly the patient quits his physician with ample instructions for his future guidance, and with most impressive warnings as to perseverance in their observance. What are these instructions, and to what habits do they lead? Let us take a case of biliousness or chronic dyspepsy, and briefly trace the history of its "*legitimate*" treatment, according to the *heroic school of London*.

In addition to constipation, the patient, we shall suppose, is affected with acidity, depraved appetite, foul tongue, oppression after meals, susceptibility to cold, debility, headache, despondency, irritable temper, inconstancy of purpose, hopelessness of relief, with divers local grievances. A few brisk cathartic doses, combined with mutton diet, and a gentle stimulant, empty the bowels and carry off most of the attendant ill. By continuing this plan for a short time the patient is, what is medically termed cured; but, for future protection, he is furnished with a prescription—say—of *aloes, colocynth* and calomel, or some such compound, to take *pro re nata*; another of senna and salts, to take less frequently, as more urgent symptoms require; a third of columba, gentian or cinchona,

to take at noon with a glass of sherry. He is told to live on boiled mutton, rice, and dry bread, avoiding fruit and vegetables. What future has such a person before him? As long as he lives he will be a martyr to the disease, probably in an increased degree; he must abandon all hope of the action of the bowels ever resuming its normal state; his general strength will gradually diminish; his nervous system will become more and more irritable; he will become the most pitiable of all sufferers, a person "*living by rule*;" his health will be supported, as one of our witty doctors remarks, like a shuttlecock between two battledoors, by the alternate impulse of senna and sherry, of calomel and coffee, of jalap and gentian. As long as these instruments are so directed, that their respective influences succeed each other in compensating proportion, all seems for the time smooth, but let either overdo or underdo the mark and every thing breaks down. The game must then be commenced anew, to be continued as long as feather and cork resist the tendency which it has to knock them to pieces.

This is scarcely a caricature picture of the discipline to which dyspeptic patients are often forced to submit. Everybody's experience must furnish abundant proof that the illustration is too close to nature. It is in the latter stages of these affections, when the patients have long been under the influence of therapeutic means, that Priessnitz pronounces them "*drug diseases*."

But what is the result of placing the cases now under consideration in a hydropathic establishment? Precisely such as might be expected from the abandonment of a pernicious custom and the adoption at the same time of a more natural mode of life with healthier and harder habits. It is the general report that in a large proportion of such cases, the patients are immediately enabled to discontinue the use of purgative medicines. They can bear a mixed animal and vegetable diet, in the ordinary proportion. The country rings with such accounts as these; if they are correct, undoubtedly, the patients are in a fair way of recovering their lost health and strength, and are pursuing subsequently to systematic treatment, a much more *rational* and *scientific* course of medical habits, than that enjoined to the dyspeptic disciple of *medical orthodoxy*.

## TROY HYDROPATHIC INSTITUTE,

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DR. HAMILTON.

This is one of the most beautiful and comfortable locations in this country. The building is elegantly built of brick, four stories high; the rooms large and airy. It is elevated—overlooking the beautiful cities of Troy and Albany. It commands a view of the noble Hudson for miles, with its steamers and river craft, giving life and activity to the varied scenery. The Catskill mountains are distinctly seen in the distance bathing their heads in the clouds. The swift locomotives are seen plying their course, on their iron roads, through the woods and fields in various directions. Communications by Telegraph can be sent to the East, the West, the North, and the South.

The Baths are arranged in the most convenient manner. A new and abundant supply of soft, pure water, will be conducted to the Institute as soon as the season will permit, from a spring sixty rods from the building, and of sufficient elevation to throw the water thirty feet higher than its top.

Forty patients can be accommodated—this number is sufficient for one individual to manage properly. It is the intention of the Director to devote his time and talents to hasten the cure of patients who may seek his advice and aid. He has the conviction that his knowledge of disease will enable him to form correct opinions of the curability of patients that may resort to the Institute in the pursuit of health. Each patient is furnished with a neat French bedstead, with a mattress of hair or palm leaf, and all other necessary chamber furniture, board and treatment, for six dollars per week. If the bed-clothes are provided, and all other necessary articles, the charge is seven dollars. It is desirable that patients find their own bed-clothes and towels. Kind and careful attendants will be provided to minister to the afflicted patients, and every comfort will be allowed that will not interfere with their progress to a cure.

The establishment went into operation in April, 1847. Sixty patients have resorted to it, and the result of the treatment has been most satisfactory, and has been a further demonstration that the Water-cure treatment of disease is the *true Medical art*. Dr. H. may be permitted to say, he has been regularly educated to the profession of Medicine, and was formerly in extensive practice, and probably as successful as his compeers,—that he early learned its fallacies and the uncertainty and danger attending the administration of drugs. He believes, with the eloquent and learned Dr. Rush, that “disease is not only multiplied but made more fatal by the administration of drugs,” and with the honest Frank, that “thousands are slaughtered in the quiet sick-room.”

The Water-Cure is not a thing of yesterday. It is now a quarter of a century since the immortal Priessnitz began his splendid career. At his establishment alone, more than twelve thousand patients have been treated—patients from every civilized nation on

the globe; patients abandoned as incurable by doctors; patients mostly of the higher classes; men of science, philosophers, professional men; *even Doctors*, in numbers, have resorted to this Prince of Physicians, and have been healed. And notwithstanding there is a mass of living witnesses of the efficacy of this system of healing, which is overwhelming, and which should silence all cavil—pride, obstinacy, selfishness and ignorance, prevent its use by the *regular faculty!!* They still go on suppressing disease with poisonous drugs; diminishing the vital power of all the organs and tissues; administering drugs that they know combine with them and operate as causes of disease. We appeal to themselves for proof of this. Professor Herr, of the University of Freiburg, says, "Certain medicines, after having been in any manner applied, are found deposited in the solid parts of the body. Thus, in such persons as have taken mercurial preparations, we find mercury in the brain, muscles, bones, &c. Lead is found in the liver, in the muscles and spinal marrow. Copper deposits itself likewise in the liver. The incorporation of matter into osseous substance is well known, and likewise that nitrate of silver discolors the skin, and that various bitter remedies communicate their taste to the flesh."

Persons who may purpose to resort to the Institute are requested to communicate with the Director previous to their coming.



