

**THE CALCUTTA JOURNAL OF
MEDICINE: A MONTHLY RECORD
OF THE MEDICAL AUXILIARY
SCIENCES. VOL. XXV, NO. 4,
APRIL 1906; PP. 130-172**

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AMRITA LAL SIRCAR

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April 1906.

[No. 4.

THE HAHNEMANN ANNIVERSARY.

The Hahnemann anniversary and the annual meeting of the Hahnemann Society were celebrated on the 10th April. We had a sprinkling of the regular and irregular practitioners and friends. Cards of invitation were issued to all our colleagues. Their paucity of attendance was a marked feature. Perhaps an ill-will prevented them from the national ovation to our Great Master. The bond of adhesion was wanting. It is an ill-wind that does no body good. An ill-feeling creates greater disaster than the passive negation. We wanted all our friends to muster strong to do justice to the cause. It was a hopeless task to tune the discordant notes. We live in wonderful days of self-assertion. Harmony and peace are generally wanting. Arrogance has taken the place of humility. For all this degeneration, we are not without the hope of regeneration. The rainbow of peace is prospective.

The Chair was taken by Dr. H. C. Ray Chaudhuri. Dr. A. K. Datta, the Honorary Secretary announced the sad news of the death of Dr. Hurrnath Roy, who as a Vice-President was a great supporter of the Society. All the members felt deep sorrow on account of the loss.

Dr. Ray Chaudhuri then asked Dr. Girish Chunder Dutt to read his paper on the Sanitation of Calcutta. It is our custom to hear the subject dealt with without any discussion, lest any

acrimonious debate destroys the kindly feeling pervading among the members. Dr. A. K. Datta proposed the following office bearers for the ensuing year :

President :

Dr. H. C. Ray Chaudhuri.

Vice-Presidents :

Dr. W. Younan,

Dr. P. C. Mazumdar,

Dr. C. S. Kali.

Secretary :

Dr. A. K. Datta.

Assistant Secretary :

Dr. P. L. Kumar.

The happy occasion ended with a social gathering.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF HOMŒOPATHY IN
CALCUTTA AND THE SANITATION
OF THE CITY.

By Dr. Girish Chunder Dutt, L. M. S.

(Read at the Hahnemann Anniversary.)

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—We have assembled to-day to commemorate the birthday of the great Hahnemann, the man of thought and work, who sacrificed himself for the cause of humanity. Such men are born before their time and their life-work is appreciated by a grateful posterity. Christ sacrificed himself on the cross, and his burning words and exemplary life serve as a beacon-light, shedding a hallowed lustre which vivifies prince and peasant alike. The sacrifice of Hahnemann is no less noble. He had no thought for dear life which he consecrated to suffering humanity. Hahnemann is the father of Homœopathy which is now effecting so much good all over the world. We practise homœopathy, and it is opportune that we should bow down our heads in gratefulness and love, before that living figure, who towers head and shoulders over his contemporaries, whilst burning incense to the great redeemer of homœopathy, it is meet, we should offer our tribute to the

memory of the man, who was mainly instrumental in introducing homoeopathy in Calcutta. He spared no pains to foster the sacred cult which he advocated in and out of season, with all the strength of his character.

Half a century ago, homoeopathy was openly ridiculed in this metropolis and there was hardly a practitioner who could avow his belief in it. There was no homoeopathic dispensary, no practitioner, and it was by precept and example that the late Babu Rajendra Dutt tried to introduce the system in Calcutta. He brought out the late Dr. Berigny, opened the first homoeopathic dispensary, at his own cost and expense, and day and night moved about the town, treating hundreds of patients without the least remuneration. On the contrary, he always opened his purse-strings to his indigent patients. Such men like Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Raja Digambar Mitter, Peary Charan Sircar, Rai Bahadur Juggodish Nath Roy, Peary Charan Mitter and others were brought over to the side of homoeopathy by him alone. Is it not therefore our duty to commemorate the work of such a man? My poor self and Dr. H. G. Ray Chaudhari must hold his memory in grateful remembrance for the many difficulties he smoothed away from our path. Rajendra Dutt deserves a public memorial for the sacrifices he made for homoeopathy. I leave it to you to settle the nature of the memorial but it is meet and proper that in an assembly of homoeopaths of the town, we should offer our humble tribute to the man who laboured and died in the interest of homoeopathy. Had Dr. Sircar been still living, he would have joined us in paying tribute to the memory of Rajendra Dutt.

I will, with your permission, say a few words about the sanitation of Calcutta. I regret I have not been able, on account of my poor health and professional engagements, to devote much time and attention on the subject. I will only point out to you the landmarks, and it would be for you to chalk out the routes.

Calcutta is not particularly healthy during this season of the year. Diseases of sorts are ravaging the town, and it would not be unprofitable, if we discuss the sanitation of our surroundings

and some of the causes affecting health in a friendly way before an assemblage of qualified medical men. I will first turn my attention to the food-stuffs which are offered for sale. Are they kept in such a way as to prevent outside-contamination? Who has not seen sweet meats and perishable food-stuffs exposed for sale with no safeguards worth the name to protect them from dust, flies and bacilli, and disease-germs which float about in the air? Adulteration on a large scale, in ghee, milk and other substances and necessaries of life is openly carried on under the very nose of the gentlemen who are called upon to look after our health. I will be the last person to say anything behind one's back but taking into account the extensive adulteration carried on and the putrid meat and fish offered for sale in the light of the day in the most open manner happening almost every day in most of the markets of the town, one would be apt to think that these sanitary officers are not alive to a sense of their duty. The Health Officer of the Corporation is not seen where he should be. He confines himself within the four walls of his laboratory intent upon gaining bacteriological experience which may benefit him in diverse ways. He should freely move about, and without depending upon the subordinates for his facts and figures look to the sanitation of the town himself. If one of our Municipal Commissioners with a bit of waggery in him should fix upon a most insanitary hole, and ask the Health Officer about the site and its surroundings then he would, I am afraid, be on the horns of a dilemma.

The drainage of the town is defective; the flushing operations are not up to the mark. Vitiating gas from the manholes is freely and constantly issuing and circulating in the town. This decomposed gaseous matter, which is heavier and denser than the surrounding air, circulating below a height of ten feet, is poisonous, and causes the deaths of coolies, entering the manholes. These effluvia, unhealthy emanations create acute and chronic diseases of various sorts and foster the hordes of bacilli which like ravenous greedy vultures float about ready to enter the human system. The cumulative action of sewer gas on the

human system gradually debilitates and weakens the conservative power of the vital force, which when unable to resist the action of the gaseous poison gives way to the generation of acute diseases, which may with lapse of time become chronic. The constant breathing of this vitiated atmosphere produces gradually general malaise, depression of health and more or less anæmia. To stop the mischief which is brewing and which may assume serious proportions any day, it is better now to nip the evil in the bud by not allowing privy connections. Night-soil should be removed by methars and should not be allowed to pass through the drains reeking as they are with contamination of sorts. Night-soil will make the contamination more powerful and dangerous to health. Who has not noticed gas emanating from the manholes, while they are kept open in the morning before flushing? The manhole trap is not air-tight and there is constant issue of deleterious gas from it. Pedestrians, taking a constitutional walk in the morning, should beware instead of inhaling the salubrious morning air, they are likely to inhale the most subtle poisonous effluvia, which may dangerously affect their health and safety. Cases of typhoid fever were rare before the drainage system came into vogue, now they are met with almost in every part of Calcutta. You are all familiar with the name of Dr. Mouat whose academical distinctions and practical work raised him to a high position of trust and responsibility under Government. He emphatically said that Calcutta would be at sometime or other ruined on account of the underground drainage system, which will give birth to the worst and most virulent form of epidemic diseases. His sage and prophetic utterances are almost going to be verified. There is another patent fact about the drainage which I would like to point out to you. The drainage pipes may carry contagion from one house to another. If that occurrence is possible the look-out is dark and dangerous. Who has not noticed the fact that during the time of flushing, bad deleterious gas forces out of the sewers and contaminates the surrounding atmosphere. Now, please turn your attention to our drinking water. The

taste of filtered water has of late changed; at times a peculiar smell is noticed. Whence these changes? I have no hesitation to attribute them to the impurities, animalculæ and deposits formed up, germinated and accumulated in the water-mains and pipes which have never been cleaned since they have been laid under the soil. Decomposed matter and animalculæ have often come out through the hydrants. Leech and snake stories are extant in the town. These water-pipes have been left uncleaned for years together. Does not common-sense say that it is a source of danger to public health? The Ganges water if kept for a long time, would never generate animal life, but purified pipe-water would do so and contaminate under certain conditions. I have hurriedly and imperfectly laid before you the plain facts which have come under my personal observation in the hope that you may look out for yourselves and devise schemes which will improve the sanitation of Calcutta, and obliterate dangerous conditions under which we all live. Another fact which I lay before you is that when there is a fall of rain, the streets and lanes especially in the native quarters of the town, are submerged and the water remains on the surface for a considerable period. This stagnation of water is one of the principal causes for the generation of the malarial poison and diseases of the digestive system. Is there no remedy for the accumulation? The drainage is defective or else why will the water remain for such a length of time on the surface? It is the duty of the Health Officer to take notice of this fact and prevent the stagnation of water.

Another matter affecting our health is the promiscuous use of foreign patent medicines and many other indigenous patent medicines, the ingredients of which are not always known to us.

A pushing, bustling speculator desirous of reaping a golden harvest within the shortest possible time, blows his own trumpet lustily; his words are believed in like Gospel truths, and we have not the least scruple to prescribe those nostrums for the benefit of our patients with results which may be better imagined than described. I do not go so far as to assert that all patent