

**ON WINTER COUGH, CATARRH,
BRONCHITIS, EMPHYSEMA,
ASTHMA
WITH AN APPENDIX ON SOME
PRINCIPLES OF DIET IN DISEASE**

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On Winter Cough, Catarrh, Bronchitis, Emphysema, Asthma with an Appendix on Some Principles of Diet in Disease by Horace Dobell

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HORACE DOBELL

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WINTER COUGH,

CATARRH, BRONCHITIS, EMPHYSEMA, ASTHMA,

WITH

AN APPENDIX ON SOME PRINCIPLES OF
DIET IN DISEASE,

A COURSE OF LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE ROYAL INFIRMARY
FOR DISEASES OF THE CHEST.

BY

HORACE DOBELL, M.D.,

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P R E F A C E .

I THINK it must be admitted that those who have trained their minds to observe correctly and to form conclusions cautiously, cannot pass through a large experience without acquiring wisdom in matters which relate to that experience; and yet, that such persons, if called upon to prove that their wisdom is the result of sound conclusions, based upon a sufficient number of unquestionable facts, may be quite unable to do so to the satisfaction of others. The facts which have been carefully stored up in the mind, like the centring of a builder's arch, until the conclusions which they support have become ripe, are then allowed to slip away one by one from the memory, and others are accumulated as the bases of fresh conclusions, to disappear again in their turn. The wisdom which remains as their fruition is like the seeds gathered together in a granary; it bears no proof of how or whence it came, until some sower has again gone through the process of rearing fresh plants to maturity and winnowing out fresh seed.

This, indeed, is that unwritten wisdom which is the

peculiar property of the sage. That it cannot be transferred or transmitted to others is, perhaps, the chief cause of the slow advance of intellectual progress from age to age. The tendency of the world has been to disregard authority in proportion as the means and facilities of recording facts have multiplied; so that, in the present day, the wisdom of the sage, if unsupported by the record of his experience, is scarcely valued at the price of the hasty conclusions of a novice, who may have picked out and recorded a few facts by which they seem to be supported. The danger of this tendency is, that society may drift into the disbelief of everything; for, if we first disbelieve in every conclusion which is not supported by recorded facts, that is to say, if we disbelieve in the opinions of wise men unless the whole course by which they arrived at those opinions be demonstrated, the next step is to doubt the correctness of all recorded facts, however good the authority of the recorder; and thus, when the demonstration has been given, to doubt its correctness still.

Nevertheless, there is wisdom in this incredulity, if kept within proper bounds. Though it may apparently retard the progress of truth, if the steps that we are permitted to take are made more secure, by being taken slowly, our advancement will be quicker in the end. It is, then,



our unquestionable duty neither to disregard the opinions of wise men, nor to neglect, so far as we are able, to record our own observations as we go along; so that our own conclusions and our future wisdom may have less danger of meeting with disbelief, and of thus proving useless to the world. The great difficulty in this busy life is for men, like ourselves, who have to earn their living by their professional labours, to find the time to do that which they well know to be best, and which they most desire; for, in proportion as our opportunities of observation are great, our opportunities of recording them with care diminish; and so, I fear, it must always happen that much of the wisdom of our greatest physicians will die when they die.

I do not for a moment presume to possess the wisdom of which I have spoken; but the foregoing remarks are applicable to these lectures to this extent—that the number of cases which I have here recorded, and which, therefore, appear as the bases of my conclusions, is really absurdly small as compared with the number of similar cases which, during many years' experience at the Royal Infirmary, and in private practice, have been quite as carefully observed, and have only failed to be recorded because all the available time was spent in examining them with care.

I must, however, point out one important fact in relation to the cases here cited, viz., that they were taken with the utmost fairness as to the conclusions they might justify, no one point having been set before the mind at starting on which to acquire proof or disproof. A simple and open enquiry was pushed into the facts of the cases, to yield what results it might. My conclusions have been forced upon me as the unavoidable results of this enquiry; but, as all probable evidence is subject to the contingency of having a variable weight in different minds, what has seemed most clearly proved to me may to others appear in quite a different light.

41, HARLEY STREET, W.,
January, 1866.

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