

**AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE
WATER-CURE**

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An Introduction to the Water-cure by Thomas L. Nichols

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THOMAS L. NICHOLS

**AN INTRODUCTION
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WATER-CURE**

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INTRODUCTION
TO
THE WATER-CURE:

A CONCISE EXPOSITION OF THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION; THE CONDITIONS OF HEALTH; THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF DISEASE; THE LEADING SYSTEMS OF MEDICINE; AND THE PRINCIPLES, PRACTICE, ADAPTATIONS, AND RESULTS OF HYDROPATHY OR THE WATER-CURE; SHOWING IT TO BE A SCIENTIFIC AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM FOR THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF HEALTH;

FOUNDED IN NATURE, AND ADAPTED TO THE WANTS OF MAN.

BY THOMAS L. NICHOLS, M.D.

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INTRODUCTION
TO
WATER-CURE.

OF THE SUBJECT AND THE AUTHOR.

THE TITLE of this work expresses its intention. There are many able treatises on WATER-CURE or HYDROPATHY, but it can not be expected that people will read them, until they have, in some way, become interested in the subject. To be interested in any person or thing, we must form some degree of acquaintance; and the usual way of making an acquaintance is by having an introduction. I have, therefore, taken it upon myself to introduce the reader to a knowledge of the nature, principles, and results of that system of curing diseases, and acquiring and preserving health, which is, from its chief agent, properly designated—the WATER-CURE.

But an introduction, to be well received, supposes some knowledge of the introducer; and where he is not already known, and has no one to introduce him, there comes the evident, though awkward necessity, that he should introduce himself. It seems proper, in this case, that I should give such an account of myself, as may enable the reader, to whom I am not in any way known already, to form an idea of my qualifications for the important task I have assumed. I say *important*—for his health, his happiness, his very existence may depend upon the impression which he may get from these pages. Feeling this, I earnestly entreat a candid perusal of what I am about to write. I wish to make it acceptable; but I write with the feeling that style, and taste, and literary merit, are all of trifling importance, compared with the great truths to which I would call the attention of intelligent minds.

I was born in the state of New Hampshire, where I commenced my medical education, under the instruction of Dr. M. R. Woodbury, about the year 1832. After the usual preparatory studies, I attended a course of medical lectures at Dartmouth College, in 1834, when the medical department of that ancient institution boasted at least two professors of some eminence; I mean the late Professor Oliver and Professor Muzzy, now of Cincinnati. With my preceptor, Dr. Woodbury, I saw, and to some extent assisted in something better than the usual routine of country practice; but, pleasant as I had found the study of medicine, its practice had no charms for me; and though I did not wholly abandon the desire to complete my course of study, I was never attracted to the "art of healing," as taught in the schools. I gave lectures on various subjects, particularly on Phrenology and Physiology; I wrote for the press; and finally, for more than twelve years, worked steadily as editor and author. In all this period I found my medical knowledge of great use to me. I preserved my own health, I gave advice to others, I wrote much upon sanitary reforms. These writings, generally unconnected with my name, have had a very wide circulation, and, as I believe, considerable influence.*

My attention was first called to the Water-Cure, by the celebrated letter of Bulwer, which was an earnest and enthusiastic, but in some respects mistaken advocacy of the system. From that time, I read such works upon the subject as came in my way, but was too much absorbed in my editorial duties to give it much attention. In 1838, I became acquainted with Mrs. Mary S. Gove, whom I had known by reputation as an eminent lecturer and writer. Her "Lectures to Ladies on Anatomy and Physiology," published by the Harpers in 1846, established her scientific reputation; while her novels, tales, and poems, would have given her a wide literary celebrity, had they not been published either anonymously or under a *nomme de plume*. I found her, not only a lady of high literary and scientific attainments, respected and beloved by all who knew her, but the most scientific and successful of Water-Cure physi-

Among my later writings are my editorial articles during two years, in the New York "Dispatch," and the "Universe;" a historical work, entitled "Woman in all Ages and Nations;" the "Religions of the World;" and "The World's Reformers," in the same papers, not yet published in book form; a series of articles on "The Science of Life," in the "Monthly Bulletin;" a series on "Sanitary Laws," and another on "The Curiosities of Medical Science," in the "Sunday Times;" and various others.

cians. A new light broke upon my career—the mingled rays of love and wisdom. My destiny was joined to hers, in the holiest of bonds; and our studies and work, as well as our lives, lay henceforth in the same track.

Every day I saw, and heard of, the triumphs of Water-Cure. Taking charge of the male patients of our establishment, I saw the practice, while I diligently read the theory in the works of the best writers; I also gained no little knowledge in assisting to prepare for the press the "Experience in Water-Cure," written by Mrs. Nichols, and lately published. And, as if Providence had determined to take every stumbling-block out of my way, at this period, my two partners conspired to plunder me of my share in the proprietorship of a newspaper, of which I had been for two years an editor; and I was left, with a loss of some thousands of dollars, by this piece of unimaginable rascality, to enter without hindrance upon the professional career so strangely marked out for me, and into which I was at once attracted and driven.

As a first step to success in that career, I resolved to complete my regular education as prescribed by law; and for that purpose I attended my second course of lectures in the Medical Department of the University of New York, where, after some five hundred lectures and clinics, by Professors Mott, Pattison, Payne, Dickson, Bedford, and Draper, I presented my credentials, passed the required examination, and received the diploma of my degree of Doctor of Medicine.

Nor did I think even this full and legal course of regular education in medicine and surgery sufficient. With a competent knowledge of the allopathic system of practice, as certified by the highest authorities, I have carefully examined the systems of Hahnemann and Dickson—Homœopathy and Chrono-Thermalism—and have seen some practice in the former. In an earnest love for TRUTH as the greatest good, with a strong desire for usefulness, I have attentively considered these leading systems and doctrines of medicine, and have deliberately adopted that which I believe to be not only the best, but the only system founded in nature and adapted to the wants of man.

With this conviction, my duty is clear. With knowledge that can benefit my fellow creatures, I am impelled to use it. Knowing the truth, I have no right to conceal it. Thousands around me are ignorantly sacrificing health and life—thousands are suffering from disease and pain—thousands are cut off in the flower and prime of

existence ; and I should stand condemned of my own conscience, and accursed of God, if, knowing the means of preserving health, of curing disease, and saving life, I neglected to use them.*

These means are all comprised in what is called *Hydropathy*, but which I prefer to term the *WATER-CURE*. The name must not be received in any narrow sense. It means more than giving sick people plunge baths, wet sheet packs, and douches. It comprehends, in the sense in which I shall use it, a knowledge of the relations of man to the universe. It is a central science ; a pivotal system ; the desideratum of progress, and the basis of reforms.

OF HEALTH AND DISEASE.

HEALTH is the natural condition of every organized being. It is that condition in which all animals enjoy the highest development, beauty, vigor, and happiness. It is a state of harmony with nature, and a fulfilment of the ends of creation.

The same laws of life apply to all organized beings. Their natural condition is one of health during all their progress up to maturity ; their only natural disease is the slow decay which precedes dissolution. Vegetables, animals, and men, are governed by the same organic laws.

Let a plant spring from a perfect seed, in a well adapted soil, with the proper moisture, temperature, and electrical conditions, and it will be healthy, well developed, and beautiful. Change any of these conditions, and it will be diseased, stunted, and short-lived.

The animals, in their natural state, are full of health and vigor. Confined, pampered, and abused by man, they grow sick and short-lived. Our horses, oxen, sheep, and swine are the prey of diseases arising from the unnatural lives to which we subject them, and which they never know in a state of nature. The wild horse needs no veterinary surgeon, the buffalo needs no cow doctor.

Man is an animal, with the same tissues and organs as the whole class of mammalia to which he belongs. Like them he has bones, muscles, blood-vessels, and nerves. Like them he has senses, powers of locomotion, organs of nutrition, of reproduction, and of thought. He is, like them, hungry and thirsty ; subject to heat and cold. Like them he has his origin, his gradual development, his maturity, his gradual decay, and finally he dies when his race

* To withhold from society facts regarding health, is a sort of felony against the common rights of human nature.—*Dr. Lambé*.

is accomplished. Such is the law of nature; but very different, in some of these things, is the sad reality of fact.

Every plant and every animal has a certain period of existence assigned to it by nature. There are plants and animals whose entire existence lasts but a few hours. The oak endures for centuries. The antediluvian life of man is said to have been as long as that of the oak, and it is predicted that in some future period "his life shall be as the life of a tree." What is the present term of man's existence? Three score years and ten is set down as its ordinary limit; but there is no law which confines it to that, for we have all around us persons of eighty, ninety, and a hundred. We have rare cases, indeed, in which men live to one hundred and fifty, and, it is said, even two hundred years, at the present day.

The natural life of man, then, may be from seventy to a hundred years; and those who go over or fall short of these periods, must be set down as exceptions to a general law. Every plant, every animal, enjoying proper conditions, ought, accidents excepted, to reach the period of existence it is fitted by nature to attain. We should think that a bad field of corn in which not one stalk in a hundred came to maturity; we should think that a bad breed of animals of which one half should die in infancy, and nineteen-twentieths before old age. In one case, we should suspect that the seed was bad, the soil inadapted, the climate insalubrious, or the cultivation poor; in the other, we should think we had been imposed upon by a worthless breed, or that our animals were placed in unnatural conditions.

The natural condition of the human animal is a healthy birth, a robust and happy infancy, a joyous youth, a vigorous maturity, a calm old age, and a painless death. This is nature; and it is the instinctive desire of every human being. It is what man is fitted for in his anatomy and physiology. It is in harmony with all nature around him. It is his proper destiny; and every other life than this is a violation of the will of God, as revealed in His own universe.

Men are subject to disease and premature death, the same as all organized beings are, and in no other way. The plant may be crushed, or a drouth may wither it. The worm may be trodden upon, or the lamb become the prey of the tiger. Men, like all other animals, may be burned with fire, drowned with water, or frozen with cold. All animals may be diseased with poisons, and