

**RESTORATIVE MEDICINE: AN  
HARVEIAN ANNUAL ORATION,  
DELIVERED AT THE ROYAL  
COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS,  
LONDON, ON JUNE 21, 1871**

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Restorative Medicine: An Harveian Annual Oration, Delivered at the Royal College of Physicians, London, on June 21, 1871 by Thomas King Chambers

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**THOMAS KING CHAMBERS**

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## P R E F A C E .

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FOR upwards of two centuries the London College of Physicians complied with the letter of Harvey's wishes, as expressed in his Deed of Gift, by causing an annual oration to be delivered in Latin. But during the last few years there has been a growing conviction that in this pedantic adherence to the words, we were departing from the spirit, of the founder of the ceremony, the object of which is to stir up the audience to a diligent study of physiology and to professional *esprit de corps*. An "exhortation to mutual love and affection," as Harvey words it, was fitly enough of old couched in a language more familiar than all besides their own to the brotherhood of science in various countries. Is it too hurried an anticipation of nature to look upon English as now the most appropriate medium for circulating such exhortations among physicians in Europe? At all events, across the Atlantic and Pacific there are bands of relatives, whom we are much prouder to claim, and to exhort to mutual

love and affection in a tongue that recalls the fact of blood being thicker than water. This year the Oration, though delivered in England, shall be printed and published in America first. The offering is a poor one—then let it be repaid by a richer. No one can be more sensible than I am of the superficial manner in which several important questions are handled; but that very fact may lead others to more profound reflections. A judicious critic remarks that, in the Sequels especially, the coloring is very local. True—otherwise it would be unnatural. And Americans have not the same troubles as we have. But they may have them soon. Let them listen kindly to the outpouring of our griefs, and we will promise to sympathize with theirs when they tell them.

T. K. C.

LONDON, June, 1871.

### FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN OF HARVEY!

I KNOW I shall be carrying out in spirit the intention of this oration's founder, when I ask you to join me to-day in reviewing the contemporary progress of therapeutics. While science is our privilege, art is our duty, and quite as much as science is capable of advance by that method of direct experiment, to advocate which Harvey bids me stand here. Now is a fitting time to take such a review diligently and often, for I am sure that this our art of healing is passing through a most trying crisis, which will decide the direction and pace of its onward march in a most sovereign manner.

Let our motto be "Vigilemus," or we shall stumble and block the road.

This crisis I have elsewhere described by saying that medicine is now entering upon a biological phase. By this I mean that our practice is becoming yearly more and more influenced by that idea of Disease which paints it as a mode of living,

as an imperfect form of undeveloped vitality, as a loss of something present in health.

Is this new? is it true?

It is new; it is not implied in former theories of therapeutics. I must ask you to bear a little with the unpopular subject of medical history; for the advocates of various principles of healing have made their differences so strongly felt, that their important point of resemblance is somewhat overshadowed. And their point of resemblance is that in which they differ from the newer medicine of to-day.

The Athenian physicians were the first to recognize that health and sickness obeyed a universal law,\* and not the arbitrary wills of good or bad powers. They considered the important point in disease was *the excess of some constituent* of the body—of phlegm in winter, of blood in spring, of yellow bile in summer, of black bile in autumn. This view still survives in the practice of ELIMINATION, and in the phrases of “reducing the fever,” “clearing out the liver,” “getting rid of the bile,” and the like, so often in the mouths of patients.

\* Νόμος πάντα κρᾶνται.—HIPPOCRATES, “*de Geniturâ*,” I. 1.



Galen brought into physiology the notion of Force, as distinct from its object. To Plato's Life of Nutrition, Life of Animal Motion, Life of Volition, he added the idea of the foreign force of Disease. Diseases were foreign forces, foes to the native, and the duty of a physician lay in opposing them (*ἰσχυρίσταις*). Remedies were to be sought which in a healthy man would produce abnormal symptoms contrary to those of the disease. Nobody can deny that this CURE BY CONTRARIES holds its ground bravely, and will do so till we find sleeplessness not to be alleviated by narcotics, constipation not to yield to purgatives.

Its permanence has been in a great measure due to its openness to accept modifications and reforms. One of the most important of these is an extension of Hippocrates' suggestion that "diseases naturally contain their own cure" (*νόσους φύσιν ἰσχυράς*) into Sydenham's designation of their phenomena as an EFFORT OF NATURE (*Naturæ conamen*). This theory has been so salutary in promoting a milder and better treatment of acute ailments, that it too still influences deeply our pathology and therapeutics.

NEUTRALIZATION, by what may be called Antidotes, is the application of chemistry to the Cure

by Contraries. During a given disease there is found in the body a substance differing from what is found in health. United with certain drugs, it forms a third neutral and harmless substance.

We will give those drugs. If the urine be over-acid, we will give alkalies; if it be alkaline, we will give acids. It seems as if contagious fevers were set in action by a ferment in the blood, so we will administer, in as large doses as we dare, chemicals which decompose ferments. Though sometimes leading us into blunders, this idea has certainly taught modes of treatment which relieve illness; so that it has advanced along with advancing chemistry from the time of our famous co-fellow, Dr. Thomas Willis,\* author of the "Pharmaceutice Rationalis," up to the present time. And seeing that our generation of fellows has contributed a Dr. Prout, a Dr. Bence Jones, a Dr. Garrod, and many others to the laborers in the cause, we cannot be surprised that valuable therapeutical results have arisen.

COUNTER-IRRITATION† is a principle of treat-

\* Though Willis's reputation was mainly connected with Oxford, he was admitted an honorary fellow of our College in 1664.

† Dr. Parry calls it the Cure of Disease by "Conversion."

ment which owes its prevalent application to the study of morbid anatomy. The idea is, by exciting artificial diseased action in parts under our control, to divert the diseased actions from a less accessible or more hazardous localization. We see before us the fact that a spontaneously generated secondary disease is often rapidly followed by the cessation of a primary one, whether milder or more serious; and we infer with reason that the same result will be found if the secondary disease be the consequence of a drug. This therapeutic theory is obviously made more universally applicable by an exact determination of the parts affected, and, therefore, with the advance of morbid anatomy, has more influenced our practice. That this advance will continue, we have the guarantee of the devotion of our own Johnson, and Murchison, and Ogle, and Quain, and Sibson.

All rational cures seem to have resolved themselves into these five, namely, the Cures by Elimination, by Opposition of Contraries, by Assisting Nature, by Neutralization, by Counter-irritation.

But that word seems to imply change of nature rather than change of place, whereas in most of the examples of the influence of this principle the curative morbid process is either identical or closely related to the ailment.