

**CHLOROFORM, ITS
ACTION AND
ADMINISTRATION;
A HANDBOOK**

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Chloroform, its action and administration; a handbook by Arthur Ernest Sansom

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BY

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TO

DR. ARTHUR FARRE, F.R.S.,

THE AUTHOR'S TEACHER AND FRIEND,

This Book is Dedicated

WITH AFFECTIONATE RESPECT.

PREFACE.

I HAVE endeavoured in the following pages to present a brief résumé of our present knowledge concerning chloroform and its effects. The subject is so important that it cannot need apology; the apology must be for the Author.

My medical education commenced at a time when the vastness of the boon conferred by the discovery of the anæsthetic was just beginning to assert itself, and I was associated frequently with the late Dr. Snow, whose name is everywhere known in connection with the subject. For a considerable time also I was in the habit of administering chloroform at King's College Hospital, as well as in the practice of Mr. Fergusson and other friends (to whom I am anxious to express my obligations). Hence I have felt a real and practical interest in the matter of which this book treats.

I can scarcely avoid the hackneyed expression of "endeavouring to supply a want." It has appeared to me that the time has come when the separate experience and teaching of individuals may be advantageously formed into a continuous chain. I am well aware that I have imperfectly performed the task which I have undertaken, but I have strenuously endeavoured to combine the characteristics of truth and brevity.

A writer on chloroform cannot commence a list of those to whose researches he is indebted for his subject-matter without paying a tribute to the illustrious man who discovered the

properties of the anæsthetic. It seems to me that Dr. Simpson has never received a sufficient meed of thanks. If all those whose sufferings have been abolished by the agent he introduced were to join in the work, a noble monument might be erected to his fame. Why should not this be done?

I have been largely indebted to the classical work of the late Dr. Snow, to the researches of MM. Lallemand, Perrin, and Duroy, to Dr. Anstie's book on 'Stimulants and Narcotics,' and to the Report of the Committee on Chloroform appointed by the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society.

I cannot sufficiently express my obligations to many kind friends—to Dr. E. Symes Thompson, for his most valuable assistance, to Dr. John Harley, of King's College, for co-operating with me in my experiments, to Dr. George Harley, of University College, for help in the consideration of the physiological question, to Mr. W. Spencer Watson and Mr. Harry Lobb, for assistance in the chapter on Resuscitation, to Dr. Alfred Meadows, Mr. Francis Mason, and Mr. Parkinson, for hints and advice in the obstetrical, surgical, and dental portions of the subject.

I hope that this little book may prove of some practical use, and that those whose critical eye may detect its faults will at least give me credit for having expended much labour in its compilation.

A. ERNEST SANSOM.

29, DUNCAN TERRACE, N.;

• May, 1865.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DISCOVERY OF CHLOROFORM.

DISCOVERIES generally have long histories. They may startle with their apparent suddenness; but in reality they are the results of ages of patient toil, of efforts often misdirected, of lessons imperfectly taught, of experiences insufficiently recorded. Truths have been built up of the crumbling dust of errors.

Most of the great discoveries which have been of benefit to the human race have passed through an infancy which has been obscure, before attaining their perfect strength. The law of gravitation was taught, not by the fall of an apple, but by facts distributed throughout long ages. So also with regard to the discovery of the circulation of the blood. Erasistratus taught that the arteries of the body were filled with air. Galen, going a step farther, proved that they contained blood and not air, but Galen invested his thought with many errors. Step by step Servetus, Vesalius, Realdo Columbus, Cæsalpinus, and Fabricius, attained to a more complete knowledge. Errors were thrown aside as little truths were elicited, until at last there was built up in Harvey's mind the great fact of the circulation.

When Galvani experimented upon a frog placed upon a metallic plate there was probably the first step to the discovery of the electric telegraph. How gradually through

Volta and the host of observers which followed the first idea became developed into a science, and the science beget the practical result, is sufficiently known.

A process similarly gradual was observed in the case of the discovery of means for producing insensibility to pain, and of preventing the suffering which surgical operations inflict. The general idea was implanted at the earliest ages and was gradually developed; old systems were discarded as other and better ones presented themselves—and there was a culmination in the discovery of chloroform. None the less honour to him in whose mind this result was attained.

The ancients knew that, in certain states of the system, sensibility was wholly or partially destroyed; their observations upon epilepsy, catalepsy, upon advanced intoxication and the effect of certain medicinal substances, taught them this. They were acquainted with the power of medicines to relieve pain or assuage grief. Thus Helen tempers with drugs the draught that she offers to Menelaus and his friend.

“To clear the cloudy frown of wrinkled care,
And dry the tearful sluices of despair,
Charmed with that virtuous draught, the exalted mind
All sense of woe delivers to the wind.”*

These agents—Nepenthes—did not annul the faculty of sensation, but they deadened it.

The ancient Egyptians used many drugs for producing a state of intoxication or ecstasy; they were taken either as potions or electuaries. Of these there were various preparations of Indian hemp (*Cannabis Indica*), the juice of the poppy (*Affion*, the meconium of the Greeks) and another which was used when opium was scarce—the “*electuarius bernavi*.”

The effects of these preparations of Indian Hemp are thus depicted.† First they cause exhilaration; the men who have swallowed them become talkative, sing love-songs, and laugh; then they are rendered delirious, and fight and mutilate each other. This stage lasts an hour, then follows a stage of wild excitement, the characteristic of which is violent anger. Lastly is a stage of grief, during which they weep and lament; then they return to normal health. Such was the enjoyment of the Egyptians in their “convivial feasts.”

* ‘*Odyssey*,’ iv, 220.

† See ‘*Prosper Alpinus de Medicinâ Ægyptiorum*,’ lib. iv, c. ii.