

color and softening of the brain extended in every direction from the cavity of the ventricle; but much less, towards the septum lucidum. The following bodies, in the cavity of the ventricle, had entirely lost their consistence, and in part their shape, by the extensive ramollissement; viz., the lateral portion of the fornix, corpus striatum, hippocampus major and minor, and dipping down into the fourth ventricle and destroying, in part, the thalamus opticus.

In making transverse and longitudinal sections of the right side of the brain, after the minute examination was made, the ramollissement and yellow color could, in many places, be traced to the cortical portion of the brain. No further examination made.

T. HAYNES.

Concord, N. H., January, 1840.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MIND ON PHYSICAL ORGANIZATION.

BY JOHN CLOUGH, M.D., NEW IPSWICH, N. H.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

AN extraordinary discovery, or an innovation of any kind, seems to electrify the world, and the public mind is at once thrown into violent commotion, evincing in a striking manner the dissimilar and paradoxical composition of the human mind. Like the pendulum of a clock without a regulator, it is never allowed to vibrate within the bounds of utility, but is constantly driven at random, until a reaction is produced and the whole affair, more frequently than otherwise, consigned to a complete state of rest.

In those points which never can be clearly demonstrated, but must inevitably remain in obscurity, man delights to wander. By his vivid imagination he creates a little world to himself; his fancy so enormously magnifies his vision, that he adopts such theories as best suit himself, and by strong natural prejudices, urges them upon the world with an ardor and enthusiasm just in proportion as the subject may be ridiculous. However absurd any new doctrine may appear, however it may shock and disgust rational beings, it will have its followers and its advocates; and this may fairly be considered the great and principal cause of every new wonder which comes before the world. The public mind, in its present unenlightened condition, demands it, and proffers a reward to the innovator infinitely beyond what can be realized from any honorable avocation. The bloated and overgrown theorist believes, or affects to believe, that no one but himself is right, however at variance he may be with the generally received opinions of the most candid and scientific men.

Take a retrospective view, and go back in thought to the period when history commenced, and you will find man has ever delighted in the discovery of new and fanciful theories, and to traverse the boundless labyrinth of speculation. New theories are built upon long ago demolished ones, and new doctrines are continually germinating in the imaginary views of those who have feasted bountifully upon the preju-

dices of antiquity, and whose crooked reason and distorted judgment have ever delighted to bask in the sunshine of aerial dreams.

It will not, perhaps, be entirely uninteresting to allude to the effects of *magic, incantation, amulets, and holy relics*. These had their influence in an age of extreme ignorance and superstition—when the darkness which shrouded the human mind was so thick that it could be even felt. The charming of newly made wounds was effected by repeating, as it was said, some particular words backwards. Amulets were provided by the people to render themselves invulnerable to disease, and to ward off the tormenting influences of witches; and the relics of holy men were made sacred for the purpose of curing the most inveterate diseases. Anything which pertained to these holy departed worthies, which, by association, could be made to produce strong excitement, was considered an agent in working the wonderful effect. The sick were sometimes removed to the tombs of these departed saints, and by touching only the finger-nail or the bone of a finger, a cure would be effected. This latter mode had an additional influence upon such subjects in restoring them to health. Being in the midst of the consecrated dead, they were endued with feelings of reverential awe, which added solemnity to the farce, and made the deception operate more effectually.

In connection with this, I cannot omit to mention a circumstance which occurred in this town (New Ipswich), not thirty years since, and similar occurrences probably occurred in many other towns in New England. This was disinterring a human body, which belonged to a family all strongly predisposed to consumption, for the purpose of removing the heart, which was burned, the ashes of which were considered a sovereign remedy to those of the family who were still living, and might be afflicted with the same disease. This only illustrates the fact that those elements of character which held such a magic sway over the minds of men in ancient times, have not ceased altogether to influence the community in our comparatively enlightened day.

I cannot pass over this part of the subject without a brief notice of *animal magnetism*, and the deception practised by Perkins with his *metallic tractors*. To give only a synopsis of the proceedings and results of Mesmer and his disciples, would occupy too much time. I need only say that it illustrates, in a remarkable manner, the wonderful influence of the imagination. This subject has been so much discussed before the public of late, that all have some knowledge of it, and are also acquainted with the fact that Dr. Franklin and others were successful in discovering the imposition which was practised on the nervous and ignorant. Although the fraud practised by Mesmer and others was so completely exposed, and so palpably proved to be a mere chimera of the imagination, fostered by ignorance and superstition, we see Perkins coming forth only about fifteen years after the introduction of Mesmer's project, with a new discovery, which, he alleged, would supersede anything yet offered to the public in healing diseases, and for which he not only received a patent with royal letters, but a large donation from government.

The plan of Perkins was to use *metallic tractors*, which were to be

pointed at the diseased part, and drawn gradually over it, and under the magnetic power of these *tractors* the disease would be subdued. This pretended discovery had the semblance of plausibility, on account of its having been brought before the public at the time when Galvani had just made his discovery, and which so startled the scientific world, in its effects upon the nervous system of dead bodies. Wonderful and astonishing effects were produced by the metallic tractors; diseases of the most inveterate kind yielded to their influence. Pamphlets were published, setting forth the wonder-working influence of this plan in curing diseases—newspapers teemed with certificates carrying evidence to the same effect. In fine, the people, everywhere, were enraptured with it; but like other schemes of this kind, it has now long been consigned to the tomb of all the Capulets. The farce was completely detected by Dr. Haygarth, who proposed that *wooden tractors* should be constructed and painted so as to resemble the metallic, and applied in the same manner. Accordingly several individuals were selected who were suffering from chronic diseases, and who were assured that their cases would yield to the *tractors*, which, on experiment, proved true. Others were constructed of lead, &c., and whenever benefit was really expected, it was alike accomplished with the *wooden, leaden or metallic tractors*.

As we approach our own time, we see the same influences operating on the community, though in some respects in a modified manner, according as the people are better educated and more enlightened. Those elements of mind which conduce to this state of things appear to be original in man's constitution. A seeking after something which does not exist, is a characteristic of man; and so strong is his hope of obtaining it, that he is ready to forego anything for the sake of an experiment. We see this verified even now in the use of patent medicines, with their flaming advertisements—in the homœopathic system, which is identical with Mesmerism and Perkinsism; and last, though not least, in Grahamism. People are gravely told that their stomachs are so delicate that they can digest only such and such articles of food; and that other kinds, which they have eaten all their lives without injury, produce unpleasant symptoms and diseases which are minutely detailed. In this way, persons who before scarcely knew they had a stomach, are soon brought to experience all the symptoms in the exact order in which they were related. Thus diseases are really produced by taking certain kinds of food, aided by the mind, and are as effectually cured in the same way.

In taking this partial view of what has passed, we should be instructed not to follow too hastily any new doctrine, however pure and real it may seem to our limited experience. Its rays may illuminate our path, but be scarcely less delusive to us than the empty *ignis fatuus* is to the bewildered traveller.

The influence of imagination, in aiding the happy effects of medicine in curing disease, should not, however, receive our unqualified censure. Too many facts are before us, and many others might be adduced, to show what I hope has already been proved. The influence of the

imagination has indeed wrought many wonderful and important changes in the nervous and vascular systems, independent of those medicines which are considered specifics. For instance, bread pills have been known to operate as a cathartic, when given with a confident assurance that they would operate as such.

How ought we to act, then, if such surprising effects are produced by *inert* remedies through the action of the mind, when we administer *real* medicines? Shall we allow the medicine to produce only its mechanical effects, without calling into aid the strong powers of the imagination; or shall we inspire the mind with all reasonable hope, combined with this the proper use of medicines, to effect our object? It is well known by many, that the same medicine has dissimilar effects on the same individual, in the same disease, when administered by different individuals. Here are lessons to be learned by the young practitioner who, with high hopes, goes forth into the world to do his great work upon the stage of action.

During the siege of Broda, in 1625, the soldiers were dreadfully afflicted with the scurvy. The Prince of Orange hearing of their distress, and fearing unfavorable consequences might result, hit upon an expedient to effect a cure. He sent letters, accompanied with a few phials of medicine, which he promised would afford the most speedy and happy relief. This information was made public, and all were eager to use the new medicine, which had, as was stated, been procured at great expense, and a few drops only were sufficient to medicate a great quantity of water. The results of this fraud were truly wonderful. Health, cheerfulness and vigorous activity were the speedy effects. They boasted of being cured by the Prince's remedy, when all other remedies had been of no avail.

Dr. Haygarth observes, "The patient ought always to be inspired in the best manner possible with confidence in any remedy which is administered; but if a favorable opinion of it cannot be obtained, and especially if there be a marked prejudice against it, another though less powerful medicine should be preferred."

How often do we hear of the marvellous cures which are performed by the dexterous empiric. His medicines, though nearly powerless, are recommended with magnificent and unqualified promises, which so affect the weak and credulous that wonderful cures are the result—cures which the most scientific practitioner had failed to accomplish. Here the empiric too often receives the unqualified censure of the profession for calling into aid a class of remedies of the most powerful kind, to which the regular practitioner often attaches too little importance. When high hopes are held out to some persons, the mind is at once stimulated to new exertions—a new train of thoughts is exchanged for those of a morbid and monotonous character, and the physical system so sympathizes with the shock, that disease is driven from its empire, and health resumes its original throne.

After all that has been said in this article, there may be, and undoubtedly are, many individuals who are not susceptible of such changes in the physical system by the influence of the mind; and some even

may be incredulous how these important changes are effected by such influences alone. But such is the fact, as we have clearly seen; and though we can trace it from cause to effect, we cannot detect the silent operations in the process, and must rest satisfied with mere hypothesis as to the result, which each one is at liberty to frame for himself. We have a familiar example of instantaneous change in the bloodvessels of the face and neck, produced by sudden emotions of the mind; such as the blush of modesty and the paleness of fear. In blushing, the capillaries are suddenly engorged. The distention of vessels occurs in other organs to a much greater extent by voluptuous thoughts.

It is now understood that the action of mind is treated of as depending upon a physical organ; that organ is the brain, the great centre of the nervous system, from which all the nerves ultimately proceed. In their ramifications they may be considered as so many little messengers, carrying to and from the brain every sensation we realize. The command is given by the brain, and the mandate is instantly obeyed. It may well excite our wonder and admiration, to see how beautifully and inscrutably mind and matter are blended.

It may be a matter of honest inquiry by every medical man, after thus viewing the subject, how far he should attempt to influence his patient through the operations of the mind. It will not be my object to show whether a man may ever use deception or not—whether to do a greater good he may do once a little evil. The popular notion, however, is that a physician has this privilege, and would be justified on the same ground that a man would be who should snap his tobacco box in a dark night to alarm the highway robber. On the other hand, some of the most able divines contend that it is utterly opposed to the spirit of the divine law to do the least wrong that good may come; and here I might quote St. Paul to the same effect.

A physician may, however, promise his patients, in the strongest terms, that they will recover, with the same propriety that he administers cathartic medicine with a full assurance that it will operate as a cathartic, if he finds a like result—that is, if he finds that promises operate through the mind to cure diseases as uniformly as castor oil operates as physic, he is at liberty to use them as remedies, under a *judicious* administration.

The old maxim that drowning men catch at straws, is philosophically correct, and should admonish every practitioner of the importance of being circumspect in all his conduct while in the sick chamber. It is not uncommon for patients, however sick, to be found keenly alive in noticing every movement, and especially is this the case when the physician is present, in order to discover, if possible, either in his looks, actions or remarks, his views in relation to their case. Here the physician should be doubly on his guard, as the smallest affair will be very much magnified by a sick and enervated person; or it may be misconstrued.

Finally, a physician should study to make himself as interesting as possible to his patients, by kind looks and soothing expressions. In the examination and collecting of the symptoms, he should be familiar without being bold, attentive without affectation, complacent without ostenta-

tion, all which being blended with the judicious administration of medicines, he will often have the ineffable happiness to know that he has been instrumental in disarming disease of its power, and restoring health and happiness to the afflicted.

NOTICE OF THE WILLOUGHBY UNIVERSITY AND SOME OTHER
MEDICAL COLLEGES.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

DEAR SIR,—Now that I have returned again from the West, you will pardon me, I presume, if I give some account, in your Journal, of my tour, and of some of our medical schools.

Soon after my return from Dartmouth, where I gave a course of lectures upon medical botany and medical jurisprudence before a class of seventy-eight students, I set out for the University of Lake Erie, at Willoughby, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, with the medical department of which I am connected as Professor of *Materia Medica*, Pharmacy and Medical Jurisprudence. My journey was most delightful. I arrived at Cleveland on the ninth morning from my departure from Deerfield, in Massachusetts, a distance of about 650 miles. The autumn, up to the 25th of October, had been remarkably mild and warm, and it continued so till some time into November. The latter part of summer had been warm and sultry, and intermittent and other fevers had been much more common through the region of country which I traversed, than they had been for several years before. In particular I understood that fever and ague had been extremely prevalent along the whole northern shore of Lake Erie; and I was informed that the complaint prevailed almost as an epidemic throughout nearly the whole of the southwestern States. It also prevailed considerably in Cleveland, Willoughby, Painesville, and several other places in northern Ohio, which have heretofore been, and are now, as healthy as any places of their size in New England. The causes inducing intermittent fevers are now principally removed, and the Western Reserve, the Fire-lands, and many other parts of Ohio, are now as healthy as any part of the Union. A more sober, industrious and intelligent population can hardly be found in any section of our country, than that of those regions. The inhabitants are principally from New England.

Soon after my arrival at Willoughby, I understood that a greater number of applications had been made by students to attend the Medical College this year than last, notwithstanding the tremendous pressure in money matters at the West, which I have no doubt has restrained great numbers of students from attending our school this season. As it is, there was considerable gain in our ranks this year. Then we numbered forty. This year our catalogue will probably contain fifty or more, as students were coming in, even when I left, after a course of two or three lectures a day for nearly four weeks. In all the medical schools in which I have lectured, viz., at Berkshire, Fairfield, Hanover and Willoughby, where I have always had fine and highly interesting classes, I