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# ART OF CUPPING







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**A TREATISE**

**ON THE**

**ART OF CUPPING.**

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“ Mittere autem sanguinem cum sit expeditissimum  
usum habenti; tamen ignaro difficillimum.”—To let blood  
is extremely easy to an experienced operator, but very  
difficult to one who is ignorant.

“ Idque auxilium [sc. cucurbitulæ], ut minus vehemens,  
ita majus tutum; neque unquam periculosum.”—And this  
remedy, cupping, as it is less violent, so it is more safe;  
nor is it ever attended with danger.

CELSUS, lib. ii. cap. 11.

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A  
TREATISE  
ON THE  
ART OF CUPPING:  
IN WHICH

THE HISTORY OF THAT OPERATION IS TRACED,

THE

COMPLAINTS

IN WHICH IT IS USEFUL INDICATED,

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## PREFACE.

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*March, 1830.*

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PART I.

*Historical Sketch of the Operation of Cupping.*

REMEDIES for disease were divided by the ancients into two general classes—those by means of which something was abstracted from the living body, and those by which something was added to it. Among the former, the act of diminishing the quantity of the vital fluid, or circulating blood, by opening a blood-vessel, may certainly be considered as one of the most efficacious and important.



The abstraction of blood, as a method of restoring health when impaired by disease, is, indeed, mentioned in the earliest records of the science of medicine.

Blood-letting is divided into general and topical. The former is well known to be effected by making an aperture in a vein, or occasionally in an artery, and allowing the blood to flow till the quantity of the whole mass be duly diminished. Topical or local bleeding is performed by making slight incisions, or scarifications, not extending deeper than the thickness of the skin. It must have been very early discerned, however, that the blood did not flow readily from these superficial wounds, without the aid of some species of suction. The



most natural, and probably the earliest means of effecting this purpose, would be, by the application of the lips, probably suggested by the very ancient custom of sucking the poison out of wounds. The utility of producing a partial vacuum must have been discovered at a very early period, as HIPPOCRATES\* takes notice of two kinds of instruments for the purpose of eliciting blood after the operation of scarifying: the first, a small gourd, or cucurbit, furnished with two orifices, one of a sufficient size to comprehend the scarifications, the other very small. By applying the mouth to the latter, the air was exhausted, and a partial vacuum

\* HIPPOCRATES flourished 361 years before CHRIST.



formed ; the aperture was then closed by means of a bit of wax, softened by being kept in the mouth, until a proper quantity of blood was obtained, The other cup of similar form and size, was constructed of brass, but with only one aperture. In this a vacuum was produced by including a piece of burning flax or linen previously to applying it to the skin ; a method very analogous to that which is employed for making a vacuum in the cupping glass at the present day.

HIPPOCRATES mentions also the application of exhausted cucurbits over the wounds made by leeches.

It is probable, however, that the art of scarifying and abstracting blood, by the application of vessels in which the



air is rarified by means of heat, as a mode of removing disease, was, like many other arts, adopted by the physicians of Greece from the more ancient practice of the natives of Egypt.

PROSPER ALPINUS, who resided several years in Egypt, as physician to the Venetian consulate, about the close of the sixteenth century, has given an excellent account of the practice of medicine among the Egyptian people at that period; and as it is well known, that although the nations of the East have frequently changed masters, they are by no means prone to change their manners and customs, it may with probability be conjectured, that the practice of medicine was at that time much



the same as at a period of very remote antiquity.

Among the Egyptians, and the various nations who inhabit that peculiar country, the abstraction of blood appears to have been considered as a remedy for almost every species of disease, as well as an important means of preserving health. The reason they give for supposing that they laboured at all times under a plethora, or redundance of blood, is not a little singular. They contend that the water of the Nile, which is their chief drink, is, in the living body, converted entirely into blood, and that it has possessed this property ever since the period when MOSES, at the command of the Lord,



turned its water into blood: “ And he lift up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned into blood.”

The complaints in which the Egyptians used scarifying, for which ALPINUS quotes the authority of HERODOTUS,\* a celebrated physician of antiquity, were the following: “ Scarification, with cupping, possesses the power of evacuating offending matter from the head, of diminishing pain of the same part; of lessening inflammation; of discussing

\* HERODOTUS of Greece, the first writer of profane history, lived 413 years before CHRIST.  
—Vide *Goldsmith's Natural History*.



inflations; of restoring appetite; of strengthening a weak stomach; of removing vertigo, and tendency to faint; of drawing deep-seated offending matter towards the surface; of drying up fluxions; checking hæmorrhages; promoting menstrual evacuations; arresting the tendency to putrefaction in fevers; allaying rigors; accelerating and moderating the crisis of diseases; removing a propensity to somnolency; conciliating natural repose; removing heaviness;—these, and many analogous maladies, are relieved by the judicious application of the cucurbits, dry or bloody.”

They appear, however, to have considered the operation of cupping rather



as a means of producing a derivation, than of diminishing the total quantity of blood.

ALPINUS states, that children in Egypt are peculiarly liable to inflammations of the eyes, and enlargement of the tonsils. For the cure of these complaints they scarify the lobes of the ears; from which, after being well fomented with hot water, a considerable quantity of blood may be obtained. So common, at certain seasons of the year, is this operation, that of a hundred children, taken promiscuously, you will find sixty with pieces of lint adhering to those parts of the ear upon which scarification had been performed.

In head-ach they take blood by sca-



rification from the inside of the nostrils with much advantage.

On the first attack of the plague they bleed largely.

Cupping behind the ears they consider as peculiarly efficacious in conciliating sleep.

They are either unacquainted with the use of leeches, or have a prejudice against them, as considering their bite to be venomous.

They also use scarifying with cupping successfully, to remove the swellings consequent to reiterated attacks of gout.

But by far the most common place whence to take blood by scarifying and cupping is the calves of the legs. In all complaints of the head, and in suppres-



sions of the evacuations peculiar to the female sex, this operation is considered as much the most efficacious remedy that can be employed. In order to make the operation succeed properly, the parts to which the glasses are to be applied must be carefully fomented with hot water, and a slight bandage applied below the knees, to arrest the course of the blood through the superficial veins. The practice of cupping on the legs is at present neglected: I can see no reason, however, why it should not be revived, as it is attended with less pain than when the operation is performed upon any other part of the body.

Among the Romans the utility of cupping appears to have been properly



appreciated, and the practice of it to have been very general. The description of the operation, and the account of the diseases in which it is beneficial, given by the celebrated CELSUS\*, are so correct and judicious, that I shall insert them at full length, for the sake of the information they contain, as well as to mark the general employment of, and confidence in, this remedy at that period.

“Of the cucurbitulæ† there are two sorts—brass and horn. Those of brass have an aperture on one side, the other is close; those of horn have a similar

\* CELSUS, the Roman philosopher and physician, flourished 20 years after CHRIST.

† Celsus de Medicina, lib. ii. cap. xi. De Sanguinis Detractione per Cucurbitulas.



aperture on one part, and on the opposite a small foramen or hole. Into those of brass a piece of burning flax is thrown; the aperture is then immediately applied to the surface of the body, and pressed on till it adheres. Those of horn are simply applied to the skin; then, by applying the mouth to the small aperture, the enclosed air is sucked out; the hole is then stopped with a bit of wax, and adhesion takes place. Both kinds may be formed not only of these materials, but of anything else that will answer the like purpose. If nothing else is at hand, a little cup or pot, provided it be somewhat narrow towards the mouth, may be used for this purpose. When adhesion has taken place, if the skin had been previously



scarified with a lancet, blood is drawn forth ; if entire, air. Therefore, when the matter within is of a noxious quality, the former method is to be employed ; when it is merely flatus, the latter.

“ Cupping is more peculiarly useful in local than in general diseases, where offending matter seems to be seated in some particular part of the body, the extraction of which is sufficient to restore health. Of this it is a sufficient proof, that if it be necessary to take blood from any diseased part by scarification, the nearer that it is done to the injured part of the member it is the more efficacious ; nor does any person apply a cucurbit to a distant part of the body, unless he is desirous of making a



derivation of blood from the part affected ; but as nearly as possible to the seat of the pain which it is intended to remove.

“ Cucurbits may also be useful in chronic complaints (even although some time has already elapsed), if there be peccant matter or improper flatus. Moreover, in some acute diseases, they are requisite, where it is necessary to relieve the system, and the strength does not admit of taking blood from a vein. And this remedy, as it is less violent, so it is more safe ; nor indeed is it ever dangerous, even if employed in the first attack of fever, or while crudity still prevails. Therefore, when there is a necessity for taking away



blood, and there is obvious danger in opening a vein, or when the disease is seated in some vital part, to this remedy we must have recourse : aware, however, that while it has no danger, it is at the same time less efficacious than general blood-letting ; for it is impossible to arrest the progress of a serious disease, otherwise than by the assistance of a remedy equally violent.”

In those beautiful Oriental tales called the Arabian Nights, cupping is mentioned as one of the qualifications of the chattering barber.

This operation, as a remedy for disease, appears, indeed, to have spread all over the world. I have cupped various gentlemen, formerly resident in



India\*, who have informed me that they have had the same operation performed in that distant region by natives, generally of the female sex, who continue to use the same means as the Egyptian cuppers. They extract the air by applying their mouths to the smaller orifice of a suitable vessel, generally formed of earthenware, having previously made a great number of incisions in the skin, by means of a razor, which they contrive to use in such a manner as to occasion little or no pain. It is, indeed, a remedy in common use among the natives of India, chiefly employed

\* The late much lamented MUNGO PARK, in his travels into the interior of Africa, saw this operation performed with a bullock's horn.—Vide *Park's Travels*.



by them for diseases of the liver and the spleen, in the removal of which it is found eminently successful.

I have been informed, that local extraction of blood, by applying the mouth to scarifications previously made by incisions with a sharp reed, is common in the islands of the South Sea. Something of the same kind has been observed to be practised by the rude natives of New Holland.

It is, however, very singular, that the original inhabitants of America, the savages, as we are pleased to term them, who inhabited the Isthmus of Darien, when that part of America was first visited by the Buccaneers, appear to have entrusted the cure of their diseases chiefly to an operation of this kind. It is



minutely detailed by LIONEL WAFER, surgeon to Captain Dampier, in his very curious description of this part of America.

After giving an account of his being taken captive by the native Indians, he proceeds to observe;—"We had not been long here, before an occurrence happened which tended much to increase the good opinion LACENTA and his people had conceived of us, and brought me into particular esteem with them.

"It so happened, that one of LACENTA's wives, being indisposed, was to be let blood, which the Indians perform in this manner,—The patient is seated on a stone in the river, and one with a small bow shoots little arrows into the



naked body of the patient, up and down, shooting them as fast as he can, and not missing any part. But the arrows are guarded, so that they penetrate no farther than we commonly thrust our lancets; and if by chance they hit a vein which is full of wind, and the blood spirts out a little, they will leap and skip about, showing many antic gestures, by way of rejoicing and triumph.

“ I was by, while this was performing on LACENTA's lady; and, perceiving their ignorance, told LACENTA, that, if he pleased, I would show him a better way, without putting the patient to so much torment. ‘ Let me see,’ says he; and at his command I bound up her arm with a piece of bark, and with my



lancet breathed a vein. But this rash attempt had like to have cost me my life; for LACENTA, seeing the blood issue out in a stream, which used to come only drop by drop, got hold of his lance, and swore by his tooth, that if she did otherwise than well, he would have my heart's blood. I was not moved, but desired him to be patient; and I drew off about 12 ounces, and bound up her arm, and desired she might rest till the next day; by which means the fever abated, and she had not another fit. This gained me so much reputation, that LACENTA came to me, and, before all his attendants, bowed, and kissed my hand. Then the rest came thick about me, and some kissed my hand, and others my knee, and some



my foot; after which, I was taken up into a hammock, and carried on men's shoulders, LACENTA himself making a speech in my praise, and commending me as much superior to any of their own doctors. Thus was I carried from plantation to plantation, and lived in great splendour and repute, administering both physic and phlebotomy to those that wanted."

Although honest LIONEL WAFER may have introduced a considerable improvement into the medical art of his Indian friends, his plain narrative abundantly testifies, that previous to his arrival they were in possession of the art of abstracting blood by superficial scarification; and that they even made use of a spring lancet, (for the small bow and guarded



arrow comes to the same thing,) which is, comparatively speaking, a recent improvement in the art of surgery.

When lately cupping a gentleman from the West Indies, he informed me, that perceiving a newly imported negro singularly occupied, upon more particular investigation, he found him sucking the blood from a number of small orifices in the skin of his arm, by the intervention of a gourd, which he said was to remove the effects of a bruise.

In the works of GALEN,\* a great many observations are to be found respecting the utility of scarifying and cupping, and of the distinctions to be observed between that operation, blood-

\* GALEN, the Greek philosopher and physician, lived 193 years after CHRIST.



letting, and the application of leeches. As GALEN was the oracle of the medical profession during what are commonly termed the dark ages, there can be no doubt that the operation would, during that period, continue to be performed according to his directions.

One of the most important improvements in the art of cupping is connected with the invention of the spring box, by means of which a number of incisions are made at once, instead of being done in succession, by repeated strokes of the razor or lancet. By the use of this instrument, the pain of the operation is considerably diminished, and the time required to perform it much curtailed.

All my endeavours have been hitherto



ineffectual to ascertain the precise period of the introduction of this useful improvement. It is not noticed in the voluminous works of AMRROSE PAREY, surgeon to Henry the Fourth of France, and which appear to contain cuts and descriptions of all the chirurgical instruments in use at that period. Neither is it to be found in the Armamentarium of SCHULTENS, published as a work professing to exhibit figures of every instrument known at that day. There is, however, a good figure of it in the works of HEISTER, the first edition of which was published about the year 1710. Indeed, I have had spring scarificators in my own possession, the workmanship of which clearly indicated



them to have been made about that period.

Until little more than a century ago, scarification and cupping appear to have been operations performed by the regular surgeon, when deemed necessary. About that period the use of warm baths was introduced into this country by a person who had resided some years in Asia, and which still continue to be designated nearly by their original appellation. *haumaum*, the Turkish appellation for a warm bath, corrupted in common parlance into hummums. As these baths were copied from those of Egypt, a country to which I have endeavoured to trace the origin of scarification and cupping, which were there generally



performed in the warm bath, so when the practice of warm bathing was introduced into this country, the practice of cupping accompanied it.

The following documents I think curious, in as far as they show the manner in which these novelties were first made public.

“ The Queen’s Bagnio,\* in Long Acre, is made very convenient for both sexes, to sweat and bathe privately every day, and to be cupped in the best perfection, there being the best and newest instruments for that purpose. Price 5s. for one single person; but if two or more come together, 4s. each.—There is no entertainment for women after 12 o’clock

\* Tatler, vol. ii. No. 95, p. 429, Chalmers’s edit.



at night ; but all gentlemen who desire beds may have them at 2s. per night.

“ Persons may be cupped at their own houses ; the way of cupping is the very same as was used by the late Mr. VERDIER, deceased.

“ Wash balls, perfumed, camphired, and plain, shall restore complexions to that degree, that a country fox hunter, who uses them, shall, in a week’s time, look with a courtly and affable paleness, without using the bagnio or cupping.

“ Air pumps,\* single and double barrelled, with apparatus for demonstrating the several properties of the air.—Small air pumps, with glasses for the new way of cupping ; scarificators, one of which

\* Spectator, vol. iv. No. 289, note.



makes at once 10, another 13, another 16, effectual incisions."

The custom, which appears to have become prevalent, of resorting to these bagnios, or haumaums, to be bathed and cupped, appears to have superseded the practice of this operation by the regular surgeons. Getting into the hands of mere hirelings, who practised without knowledge, and without any other principle than one merely mercenary, the operation appears to have fallen into contempt, to have been neglected by physicians, because patients had recourse to it without previous advice, and disparaged by regular surgeons, because, being performed by others, it diminished their professional profits. Of late years, however, the



utility of this local abstraction of blood has been recognised by all the more enlightened and eminent practitioners of both medicine and surgery. The practice has, consequently, been rescued from that class of inferior practitioners into whose hands it had fallen. Men of experience have devoted themselves to this peculiar operation; among whom I trust I may be allowed to class myself as an humble individual; an instrument, I hope, for good, in the hands of Providence. Still the adroit performance of this operation, simple as it may appear, continues to be confined to a few individuals in the metropolis. My purpose in committing these few pages to the press, is to render more extensive the practice of an operation, now



generally acknowledged to be in many cases essentially useful, and which the remarks contained in the subsequent pages, especially if aided by a very few practical lessons, will, I trust, enable any man, possessed of common ingenuity, to perform with propriety and even elegance.



## PART II.

*Of Complaints in which Cupping, with or without Scarification, has been found useful.*

I BEG leave here to disclaim any intention of intruding on the province of the regular practitioner of medicine, by pretending to direct in what complaints cupping is to be used; but having had the honour of being employed by many of the most eminent physicians and surgeons of the present day, I trust I may, without any impropriety, be allowed to state, for the information of practitioners less acquainted with the nature of this operation, some of the diseases in which,



under their direction, this remedy has been successfully employed.

The physicians of antiquity, by whom cupping, both with and without scarification, appears to have been very frequently employed, seem to have considered that this operation was not merely useful by diminishing the general mass of blood, but that it also acted by producing a derivation of that fluid from the part affected. Without pretending to offer any opinion upon the theories of derivation and revulsion, which formerly occasioned so many disputes in the medical world, I may be permitted to state, that I have seen many instances of inflammation of the eyes, being immediately relieved by taking blood from the temples, from the nape of the



neck, or behind the ears, which had received no benefit whatever from the application of numerous leeches in their more immediate vicinity. Indeed, several cases have occurred to me, where the redness of the eyes seemed to be augmented, and the sense of fulness to the feelings of the patient increased, after the application of leeches to the temples, when, by applying a cupping glass over the part bitten by the leech, and thus taking away more blood, immediate relief has been produced.

Since the first edition of this little book was published, I have seen several patients who for some days were blind after the application of leeches : but this effect is completely obviated by applying a cupping glass immediately after



the removal of the leech, by which means also a much greater quantity of blood may be abstracted.

Upon this principle of revulsion the ancient physicians appear to have recommended the application of cupping glasses to the legs and thighs, in suppression of the catamenia; a practice which I know, by experience, to be eminently successful; and for a similar reason, when that secretion exceeded in quantity, they were in the habit of applying large cups, with or without scarification, upon and in the neighbourhood of the breasts. I understand this practice is particularly recommended and insisted upon by HIPPOCRATES. The connexion between the uterus and the breasts is very striking. When



the functions of the uterus cease, the breasts are often absorbed, or become cancerous.

In all diseases occasioned by fulness of blood in the head, cupping is particularly useful.

HEADACH, when seated in the fore part of the head, and attended with a sense of fulness, is in general immediately relieved by cupping on the occiput. When the pain is seated in the back part of the head, which I believe is generally considered as a symptom of debility, I have not found the abstraction of blood so useful, nor would I recommend it. When the pain is felt chiefly over one eye, a complaint to which the name of *clavus hystericus* has been given, and which is generally con-



nected with disorder of the digestive faculties, I have not found cupping to be of service.

In the delirium attendant on incipient fever, cupping never fails to do good ; and I have reason to believe, that if a sufficient quantity of blood were drawn away, the further progress of the disease, in many cases, might by this means be effectually checked.

In PHRENITIS, or inflammation of the brain, cupping is the most active and energetic means of depletion that can be employed, particularly if performed on the temples or behind the ears. In such cases, I have frequently taken away at intervals, within a few days, upwards of 100 ounces of blood ; and the issue has been finally successful.



I could enumerate a vast number of cases, in these and other diseases, where cupping has performed wonders; but such details would be improper on my part, as they belong exclusively to the medical practitioner; I have therefore chiefly confined myself to a few brief remarks.

In slighter cases of INSANITY, abstraction of blood always does good, and in the more confirmed states of this deplorable malady, seldom fails to afford (at least) temporary relief. I was lately sent for, by an eminent practitioner, to a gentleman who had passed two nights totally without sleep, and was committing all manner of extravagances, such as tossing his watch and clothes out of the window, &c. I was



directed to take full twenty ounces of blood from the occiput, in a short time after which the patient fell into a sound sleep, which continued for about twelve hours. He awoke perfectly tranquil and rational, without, apparently, any recollection of his frantic conduct.

In a variety of cases of insanity which have come under my observation, particularly of the *melancholy* kind, I have remarked the good effects of cupping below and behind the ears, particularly on the mastoid processes of the head, in allaying irritation, and tranquilizing the minds of the patients.

In that species of delirium, or insanity, to which some delicate females are liable after parturition, I have wit-



nessed many instances where cupping has been eminently useful.

In VERTIGO, or giddiness of the head, and disposition to lethargy, which may perhaps all be considered as species of, or tendencies towards APOPLEXY, it is well known cupping always affords relief, and, indeed, is generally recommended. I have heard a very eminent practitioner, of long and extensive experience, observe, that if the effects of cupping were more generally known, and duly appreciated, we should not hear of so many instances of sudden death.

It is a general remark, that apoplexies are now more frequent than in former times: but when we consider



the fashionable hour at which the principal meal is taken, the variety of high seasoned viands and rich wines used, we need not wonder at so many sudden deaths which we daily have accounts of in the public prints.

In apoplexy, when the patient is comatose, and cannot readily change his posture, I prefer taking blood from the temples; and have frequently drawn twenty and even thirty ounces, without materially lowering the pulse. Two cases of this description occurred to me very lately, where, under the direction of an eminent surgeon, the patients, who were females rather advanced in life, were each of them cupped to the extent of 100 ounces of blood within a week.



In PALSY, which is generally the sequel of apoplexy, the utility of cupping must depend upon the general health of the patient. But as in this disease there is a tendency to fulness of the head, occasional abstraction of blood may, in most instances, be had recourse to with advantage, to obviate repeated attacks of the complaint.

The *whizzing noise*, or singing in the ears, a very troublesome complaint, is generally removed by cupping: and in certain cases of DEAFNESS,\* I have also known it extremely useful.

In HYDROCEPHALUS, or the watery head, cupping is now recommended by the most eminent practitioners of the

\* In cases of deafness, the glasses should be applied behind the ears.



metropolis; and I have been employed to perform the operation in many hundred cases of this complaint, some of which have terminated favourably, especially if the remedy was used at a sufficiently early period of the disease.

In EPILEPSY,\* taking blood from the immediate vicinity of the brain is frequently very beneficial. In a case of epilepsy which recently occurred at the Westminster Hospital, where the fits amounted to ten and even twelve in the course of the day, I applied cupping glasses, and so sensible was the patient (a young man) of relief, that he

\* In cases of epilepsy, little relief is experienced, unless the operation is frequently repeated, and particularly at the time when it is supposed the fit is approaching.



frequently solicited to be cupped, even when it was not ordered by his physician, and by this means, I believe, alone, he obtained a perfect cure.

Colonel G. had for many years severe attacks of epilepsy, and experienced immediate relief from being frequently cupped; the effect of which has been, that the fits have gradually left him. It is now two years since his last attack; but he loses a little blood once in six months as a preventive.

DEJECTION of SPIRITS, where that unpleasant feeling is produced by pressure of blood upon the brain, is always relieved by cupping. That low spirits frequently proceed from this cause, I have reason to believe, from the very general expressions of cheerfulness and



relief from weight which I have heard after the operation, even when it has been performed for other complaints.

It has been generally remarked of most persons who have committed suicide, that “their spirits had been uncommonly depressed for some considerable time previously ;” and I am much inclined to believe that fatal consequences might often be prevented by a timely and judicious application of the cupping glasses.

Perhaps in no disease whatever is cupping more generally useful than in INFLAMMATION of the EYES. Taking blood from the temples, the nape of the neck, or behind the ears, produces in such cases almost instantaneous relief. I can assert from experience,



that abstracting blood by this means is much more efficacious than by leeches, and, as I have before observed, has frequently done good where these useful animals have been applied in vain.

In cases where it is deemed expedient to open the temporal artery, this operation is performed with great facility, by means of the small spring scarificator. Cupping on the temples is now recommended by all the celebrated oculists of the present day, and is found to be decidedly efficacious in arresting the progress of inflammation.

In ACUTE INFLAMMATION of the THROAT, where respiration has been so much impeded as to threaten immediate suffocation, I have witnessed the most



decided and instantaneous relief produced by taking blood from the neck.

In the CROUP, that disease so fatal to infant life, I have frequently been employed to cup, and have witnessed the repeated use of the operation attended with manifest advantage. That which is termed a congestion of blood takes place in diseased states of certain organs, can scarcely be doubted.

In cases of ENLARGED TONSILS, a complaint frequently met with in delicate children, I have seen many instances where cupping has been employed with success.

In INFLAMMATIONS of the LUNGS and of the BRAIN, I have witnessed immediate relief from cupping, after bleeding by the lancet had been re-



peated as often as was consistent with safety.

In the more serious inflammatory affections of the lungs, denominated PLEURISY and PERIPNEUMONY, topical abstraction of blood may always be considered as a useful auxiliary to general venesection.

A COUGH which, when recent, may be considered as a slight inflammatory affection of the lungs, is in many instances immediately removed by cupping.

Slight bleedings are found to give relief in PULMONARY CONSUMPTION; but when topical, they certainly weaken less than when blood is taken from the general system.

SHORTNESS of BREATHING, and PAROXYSMS of ASTHMA, are generally



relieved by cupping. In the last named distressing complaint, I believe doubts exist respecting the propriety of taking blood from the system; but I never saw any mischief result from topical bleeding: on the contrary, it generally gives immediate and considerable relief.

I have seen numerous cases of spasmodic asthma, which have been immediately relieved by cupping between the shoulders.

Of PALPITATION of the HEART I have seen several instances, where relief from cupping on the chest was not only almost immediate, but permanent.

PAIN or STITCH of the SIDE, is in general immediately relieved by topical bleeding.



NERVOUS COMPLAINTS are much relieved by cupping. The pulse is not always a criterion to judge of the propriety of taking blood. I am acquainted with many persons of both sexes, who are nervous to an excess, but who always find instant relief from cupping; and, in some cases, have recourse to the remedy oftener than necessary. Such persons should always consult their medical friends, before they venture on the operation.

IN MEASLES I have, in many cases, been employed to cup upon the chest, with a view to obviate the troublesome cough that is too frequently the consequence of that disease; and it may not be improper to observe, that children in general complain less of cupping,



than persons who had not seen them undergo the operation would imagine.

In obstinate cases of HOOPING COUGH, I have also known the local abstraction of blood to be attended with advantage.

In OBSTRUCTIONS of URINE, I have in many cases been directed to take blood from the loins and vicinity of the bladder.

In recent attacks of LUMBAGO, the application of several glasses to the lower parts of the loins, and taking away a sufficient quantity of blood, will generally remove the pain.

In RHEUMATISM, cupping with scarification is much recommended by the celebrated HOFFMAN ; he observes, that when the part where the pain is seated feels cold to the patient, less blood is



obtained from the part itself than from the neighbourhood; upon which, therefore, he recommends the glasses to be applied in preference. He quotes a variety of passages from CELSUS in favour of the utility of this operation, which he considers, to use his own terms, as vicarious to blood-letting.

In INFLAMMATION, and in obstinate CONSTIPATION of the BOWELS, I have been in many cases directed to cup upon the abdomen, previous to the use of the warm bath. Cupping on the soft parts of the abdomen is extremely painful, and very seldom succeeds in obtaining any considerable quantity of blood. I think a sufficient number of leeches applied to the parts answer much better, and give less pain.



In SCIATICA cupping is always of service. A number of exhausted glasses are applied to the *sacrum*, and along the outside of the affected thigh, and blood taken from some of them. I have seen many severe attacks of this complaint entirely removed by this means in the course of a few hours.

In cases of IRRITATION and SPASM of the BLADDER, and diseased PROSTATE GLAND, it is now the practice of some of the most eminent surgeons to order cupping on the perinæum; and, in many similar cases, on the lower parts of the loins; and I have always heard patients express their conviction of its utility.

In DISEASES of the WOMB and WEAKNESS of the BACK and LOINS, cupping is



now recommended by the most eminent accoucheurs. The glasses are applied very low down the back, on each side of the bottom of the spinal bone.

In CRAMP, and NUMBNESS of the LIMBS, I have seen many instances of immediate relief from the application of the dry glasses.

In some cases of WEAKNESS of the ANKLES and KNEE JOINTS, after blistering and many other remedies had been ineffectually employed, dry cupping was advised as a kind of experiment, or last resort; but the happy result was the complete cure of the disease.—I recollect, some years since, a female relation of mine being unable to walk for some weeks, from a contraction of the muscles of the legs. I proposed



scarifying the parts slightly : she objected to the loss of blood, but permitted the application of dry cupping, frequently repeated, which, in less than a week, enabled her to walk about as usual.

In one case of DEFECTIVE PERSPIRATION, accompanied with a dry and scabrous state of the skin, cupping was attended with the most beneficial consequences.

I have known the operation also useful in removing many kinds of CUTANEOUS ERUPTIONS on the face, as well as on other parts of the body.

In CONTUSIONS, from falls and blows, and in cases of EXTRAVASATED BLOOD, cupping is very serviceable.

When it is thought proper to scarify the legs, to draw off the fluid in ANA-



SARCA, the application of the spring scarificator, and partially exhausted glass, answers the purpose extremely well.

In DROPSY, the usual mode of scarifying the legs with a common lancet does not answer the purpose, as the wounds heal up suddenly; but when done with the cupping instrument, will discharge water for some months, nay, in some cases for a year.

Taking blood from the feet, especially by applying scarification and cupping to the soles, is mentioned by the celebrated HOFFMAN, as an efficacious means of obviating a return of the GOUT, in persons liable to that complaint, if used when the early indications of a fit are perceived.—Of the utility of this practice on the feet I have no



personal experience, although I have been frequently ordered to take blood from gouty patients, for affections of the head, even during a severe attack of that disease.

Of the various effects of cupping, the most extraordinary I ever witnessed is the effect of that operation (when performed in the vicinity of the head) in almost immediately suspending the state of INTOXICATION in consequence of taking too large a quantity of fermented liquor. To illustrate this subject, I shall, from many cases within my knowledge, detail the following circumstances, which occurred some months ago. By the desire of a physician, I repaired, about ten o'clock at night, to a celebrated tavern, where



we found four gentlemen, one of whom was laid on a sofa; his face extremely red, his eyes suffused with tears, the pupils dilated, and his knees every half-minute drawn up to his chin by violent spasmodic convulsions.—Although the state of their companion was such as to create alarm, not one of the party could articulate sufficiently plain to give any account of what had occasioned it; but we learned from the waiter that a great deal of wine had been drunk.

I was desired to take blood freely from the shoulders: in a short time after the operation was over, the gentleman, who was the youngest of the company, perfectly recovered his senses, and stated every circumstance that had



occurred ; that they had been hunting all the morning, and had hastily taken a good deal of wine upon an empty stomach, a condition in which it is very apt to induce sudden intoxication. He soon became so decidedly sober as to be able to see his companions safely home in a coach.

I have seen many examples of this kind, although none perhaps quite so striking ; and am inclined to believe, if the efficacy of this operation in such cases was more generally known, we should more rarely hear of instances of perhaps unpremeditated intoxication terminating in death.

It may be necessary here to attempt to obviate some prejudices respecting the consequences of cupping.



Frequent repetition of cupping has been said to injure the sight. I can with truth assert, that no instance of this kind has fallen within my knowledge: on the contrary, I have heard many persons observe, that they could discern objects more distinctly after the operation than before; and some gentlemen, whom I frequently cup for inflammatory affections, have told me that their sight continues remarkably good, and even seems to be improved since they had recourse to this remedy.

It is also said, that if a person acquires a habit of losing blood, he cannot leave it off with impunity. This observation is unquestionably true, but it applies equally to all remedies.—If a person is in the habit of using purgatives, he



cannot do without them; but that would not be a reason for omitting to take a cathartic when necessary.—Doubtless a person in perfect health requires no physic, and should not take any; but those whose constitution, either by nature or accident, deviates from this standard of perfection, must use such remedies as are requisite, to correct the errors which they cannot otherwise remove.

On this subject I shall beg leave to offer the opinion of a sensible writer, and most respectable practitioner of medicine, which will, at least, have the merit of being less interested than my own, as the author has long since paid the debt of nature.

“ Blood-letting is in itself extremely



innocent, in the limited degree in which it is used, and productive of no bad consequences but imaginary ones; and those who have most experience will tell us, that we can bleed oftener than we can purge or vomit with safety, in many cases: and the same can inform us, that in being too saving of our vital fluid, as we fondly call it, we often cherish a snake in our bosoms; for that they know it on many occasions to act a very troublesome and a very traitorous part in our microcosm, and never so often as when it exceeds in quantity.\*”

Our ancestors were accustomed to

\* Vide Empirical Observations on the Use of Bleeding in the Island of Jamaica, &c. By GEORGE SPENCE, 1777.



lose blood regularly twice a year, spring and fall; and I have heard medical men of sound judgment and extensive experience doubt whether the custom is more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

I am acquainted with a medical gentleman, who considers it as a means of preserving health to lose blood now and then. After cupping he compares his sensations to those of a person recovering from disease. He thinks it affords the constitution an opportunity of renovating the vital fluid occasionally. He is a man of accurate observation; and I have heard him state, that after losing eight or ten ounces of blood by cupping, he experiences an increase of appetite for about three days; at the



end of which period, he supposes the loss to be compensated by a fresh supply of new blood.

To prove that cupping, or the occasional loss of blood, has no tendency to shorten the duration of life, I might cite the example of a physician, by far the most eminent and the most respected of his time, who not only recommended the operation very generally, but who, I have the best authority for saying, was himself cupped at least twice a year, and who died, full of age and of honours, upwards of ninety.—The late Dr. HEBERDEN observes, “The symptoms of giddiness is moderated, in those who can bear this small loss of blood, by taking away six ounces by cupping glasses, more than by any other means :



this has been well borne by those who could not bear the loss of blood from a vein by a lancet. I have known it experienced by several, and particularly in a woman of sixty-eight, who had such bad fits as made her several times fall, and frequently threatened apoplexy. She began the use of cupping at that time of life, and used it constantly every six weeks, until she died, which happened at the age of eighty-five. She was in no danger of ever omitting it; for she felt the most evident marks of requiring this relief whenever she deferred it beyond the usual period. During all this time, the giddiness was inconsiderable, and came but seldom. She was at last struck with a palsy, which had been probably kept off for



many years by this practice of cupping.”\*

Did the limits of this little publication permit, I could cite the cases of a great number of persons very far advanced in life, who find the operation indispensable; one of which I lately cupped for the seventeenth time within the period of one year.†

A gentleman who is now in his 101st year, calls at my house generally twice or oftener in the year. He loses ten ounces of blood, and walks home, a distance of three miles, without inconvenience. He has enjoyed good health

\* Commentaries on the History and Cure of Diseases, 1806.

† This patient died lately, aged 78. He was subject to frequent fits of epilepsy, and had been a very free liver the greatest part of his life.



for the greater part of his life, and has no complaint at present, but occasional vertigo.

There are two states of health that frequently indicate the approach of disease—a state of restlessness and irritability, and one of languor, indolence, and dejection. The latter is noticed by HIPPOCRATES—“*Spontaneæ lassitudines morbum denunciant.*” If these indications were duly attended to, and a little blood abstracted by cupping, more serious affections might be frequently prevented.



## PART III.

*Of the Operation of Cupping.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the acknowledged advantages derived from abstraction of blood with or without scarification, the correct performance of the operation is at present confined within very narrow limits. Indeed, I believe I am justified in stating, that the operation can hardly be said to extend beyond the boundaries of the metropolis of these realms.

The art of cupping is not practised as a distinct profession either in Scotland or Ireland; and I understand it is rarely, if at all, recommended, even in Edin-



burgh, that supposed centre of medical information.\*

In Paris, I am credibly informed, the operation is hardly known; of course, seldom practised. I have been informed by several gentlemen who have visited that city, that they could not have the operation performed at all. It is very probable it may soon be introduced by some of our surgeons, who have lately emigrated thither, and have been supplied by me with the cupping apparatus.

The many applications for instruction in the art of cupping, which I have

\* Since this little work was first published, the art has become more generally known; and cuppers are now established in those parts, as also in many of our principal cities and towns.



received from practitioners residing in various parts of the country, suffice to convince me, that the performance of this operation forms no part of the present system of regular medical education; although, when gentlemen are settled in practice, they become sensible of the advantage of being able to perform it with dexterity. I shall, therefore, proceed to offer as plain and explicit directions for the performance of the operation as lies in my power—such as I trust may enable any man of common sense and observation to perform it: yet ocular demonstration and manual practice are doubtless necessary to acquire neatness and dexterity.

It has frequently occurred to me, that if every young gentleman intended for



the medical department of the navy or army, was, in the course of his studies, required to make himself master of the mode of performing an operation so extensively useful, the public service would be greatly benefited, and perhaps many valuable lives saved. An apparatus for cupping is indeed, I believe, now furnished by the naval and military medical boards ; but as the surgeons are not instructed in the mode of using it, the expense is incurred in vain.

Several years after this humble work had been printed, the subject was discussed by the director-general and members of the army medical board ; and by their recommendation, and with the concurrence of the commander in chief



and secretary at war, the author has been for some time appointed to instruct all the medical officers of the army in the art of cupping—a measure which, it is hoped may ultimately prove extremely beneficial to the service.

The rationale of the operation of cupping depends entirely upon the pressure of the atmosphere. The progress of knowledge has not only enabled man to weigh the air in a balance, but even to ascertain its weight or pressure with the utmost accuracy. A column of the atmosphere is very nearly equal in weight to one of water thirty-two feet in height. Upon this depends the power of the common pump in raising water. When, by repeated strokes of a piston, a vacuum is made in a tube, the



inferior extremity of which is immersed in water, the fluid will rise to the height of thirty-two feet, but no further. This depends upon the pressure of the air forcing the water into the tube to supply the vacuum made by the action of the piston.

Upon the same principle is the column of mercury supported in the tube of the common barometer; a column of mercury of thirty inches bearing the same ratio to a column of the atmosphere about five miles in height, that a column of water of thirty-two feet does.

When a cupping glass is exhausted, as is sometimes done, by a small brass piston, the portion of skin covered by the cup is forced up into it, by the pressure of the air on the surface of



the body, upon the same principle that water rises in a common pump.

The more common, more commodious, and more speedy method of rarefying the air in a cupping glass, is by the momentary introduction of the flame of a spirit lamp. If the margin of the cup thus partially exhausted of air, be immersed in water, the fluid will rise up in it to a greater height, in proportion as the vacuum has been more complete.

Upon precisely the same principle, if the rarefied cup be applied to the surface of the body, the skin will rise up in it, by the pressure of the air upon the general surface of the body. The pressure of the air being partially removed, the cutaneous and superficial blood vessels become distended, a larger quantity



of blood rushes into them; and when the cup is re-applied after scarification, a much larger quantity of blood is discharged than could have been obtained without the vacuum.

The Japanese, among whom cupping is very generally practised, have a theory, that many diseases arise from putrid air stagnating in the cellular membranes of the body, and that this is drawn forth by dry cupping, a practice to which they are very partial.\*

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The first step in the operation of cupping is to produce a partial vacuum over one or more portions of the surface of the skin. This purpose, as

\* Vide St. Pierre's Studies of Nature.



has been already stated, was formerly effected by sucking the air out of a hollow gourd or cucurbit, by the application of the mouth, or expelling it from a similarly shaped metallic vessel, by the introduction of a portion of flaming flax. The invention of glass has for many years wholly superseded these contrivances; and glass cups are now universally used for the purpose of exhaustion, as being neat, cleanly, and light, permitting also the colour and quantity of blood to be judged of, as it flows from the wounds. For the purpose of exhausting the contained air, these are occasionally made with brass caps and valves, and fitted up with a small syringe of the same metal. To this plan there are two objections: 1st, the exhaustion is apt to



be carried too far, which, instead of promoting, tends to obstruct the flow of blood; 2dly, the operation is rendered extremely tedious and fatiguing, both to the patient and the operator; besides, the glasses are very apt to be broken, and the valves to lose their elasticity.

The air contained in the glass may also be rarefied by steam; but the mode now, I believe, universally adopted by regular cuppers, is the momentary introduction of the flame of a spirit lamp, with a thick wick: the larger the glass, (if properly exhausted), the less pain does the patient suffer, and the more freely does the blood flow.

When about to perform the operation, let there be provided a hand basin with warm water, a piece of fine sponge, and



a lighted candle. Place as many glasses in the basin as may be judged requisite to obtain the quantity of blood intended to be taken away. If sixteen or twenty ounces are ordered, four glasses, of a size adapted to the surface, will in most cases be required. Each glass is then separately to be held, for an *instant*, over the flame of the spirit lamp, and immediately placed upon the skin of the patient. Upon the quickness with which this is effected, depends the whole neatness and efficacy of the operation.—To obviate their want of dexterity, many operators in the country throw a little bit of tow or paper, dipped in spirits and inflamed, into the cupping glass, the moment before it is applied,—a very clumsy expedient, often adding unne-



cessarily to the sufferings of the patient by cauterizing the skin; doing harm also by rarefying the air more than necessary within the glass; in consequence of which the edges of the cup compress the cutaneous vessels so much as to obstruct the influx of the blood.

If the glasses have been duly exhausted, the skin will be seen gradually to swell up within the cup, owing to the pressure of the air upon the parts in the vicinity, as well as the expansion of the fluids contained in the cellular membrane. The skin becomes also of a dark purple colour, owing to the influx of blood into the smaller vessels. If dry cupping be only intended, the glasses may be allowed to remain on the skin for a few moments, and replaced five or



six times, varying their position a little, to prevent bruising the skin.—If the intention be to scarify and take away blood, the glass ought not to remain more than a minute, when it is to be removed by gently introducing the nail of the fore-finger under the edge, and the scarificator *instantly* applied, and the lancets discharged upon the skin, before the tumour has had time to subside. Upon the rapidity or slowness with which the application of the scarificator succeeds the removal of the glass, depends all the sufferings of the patient. If the skin has completely subsided before the stroke of the lancets, much unnecessary pain is inflicted.

The glasses are thus to be removed and re-applied successively. They should be



a second time removed, if necessary, as soon as the blood is perceived to coagulate within them, or when they are so full as to be in danger of dropping off. For the sake of neatness, care should be taken to insert the nail under the upper part of the glass, and open them downwards, gently wiping the wounds at the same time with a warm moist sponge.

The glasses, previous to every application, should be rinsed in the warm water, but not dried. To obviate the unpleasant sensation produced by the coldness of the metal, it is advisable to pass the instrument for a moment over the flame of the lamp before using.

To ascertain the precise quantity of blood—a circumstance generally inte-



resting to all parties concerned—the contents of the cups should be emptied into a graduated glass measure, with which the operator should always be provided.

When the operation is finished, it is common to apply a piece of fine linen rag to the wounds; but if the patient does not object to a little smarting, either Arquebusade water, or spirits of wine, is a preferable application, as it immediately stops the oozing of the blood, promotes the healing of the wounds, and prevents the subsequent itching, which I have heard some patients complain of, as the most unpleasant part of the operation.

In some gross and inflammatory habits I have seen slight suppuration of



the wounds made by the scarificator, but never any case that might not be healed by the application of a little of the common wax ointment.

It is a common error to make the incisions too deep, especially if the object be to take away much blood; being convinced nothing is gained by going deeper than the cutis, or true skin, while an unnecessary increase of pain is caused to the patient.

The quantity of blood obtained (in most cases) depends wholly upon the due exhaustion and proper application of the glasses, to attain expertness in which requires some practice and experience. In cupping upon the back or neck, the glasses should never be placed upon the spine itself, which produces



unnecessary pain, but on each side of it. If it can possibly be avoided, the glasses should not be applied to parts where the skin is in immediate contact with the subjacent bones or ligaments; though if care be taken to apply the scarificator before the tumour caused by the glass has subsided there is no danger.

It is certainly preferable to make the incisions in the direction of the fibres of the subjacent muscles; but it is not of much importance, as, in my opinion, the incisions ought never to penetrate so deep as the muscular flesh.

In some diseases of the head, it is requisite to cup upon the posterior part of the hairy scalp, which of course must be previously shaved. As the skin is peculiarly loose and thick upon this



part, the cups often bury themselves so deeply as to require the introduction of a thin piece of metal (an old shilling answers very well) to displace them; and the scarificator also requires to be properly adjusted, so as to cut a little deeper than is necessary in other parts to which cups are applied.

From cupping on the temples I have seen many hundred instances of decided benefit in severe inflammation of the eyes; but I would not advise any person to attempt this operation unless he has had considerable practice upon other parts of the body.

Previously to applying the glasses, it is of importance to foment the skin well with a sponge and warm water. Cupping in the warm bath is rendered more



efficacious by the relaxed and softened state of the skin.

No step in the operation of cupping demands more the attention of the operator than the state of his scarificators. If not exquisitely keen, they occasion unnecessary pain; if foul or rusty, they may communicate disease, or give rise to festering sores.—The lancets or cutters should be kept as sharp and in as fine order as possible, so as to make a clean incision, without bruising or giving fruitless pain.

The intention of the operation is, I believe, frequently defeated, from want of attention to these apparently trivial circumstances.

An ingenious artist has lately invented an instrument which cuts from the



centre outwards. I have frequently tried it; but cannot say that it has any particular advantage over that commonly employed, excepting that it is more readily taken to pieces; and, by shifting pinions, and different sets of lancets, may be useful to those persons who are incompetent to put their instruments in order when they become dull.

After cupping, persons are in all cases, much less liable to faint than after taking blood from a vein. If that accident should supervene, the application of volatiles to the nose, and an horizontal posture, will generally be found to restore animation. If the stomach be quite empty, persons are more apt to faint from losing blood than if it



be moderately distended with food. I know many practitioners of medicine who are of opinion, that abstraction of blood produces more benefit when accompanied by fainting than if it be not.

Many persons prefer being cupped in the evening to which there can be no objection, provided some hours have elapsed since the principal meal. If the operation is performed while the process of digestion is going on, the serum of the blood has often the appearance of whey. I mention this circumstance to prevent the inexperienced practitioner from being alarmed at such an unusual appearance of the blood.

Cupping glasses have been formerly applied, with the view of producing a



rapid vesication, which the inventor particularly extols, as the most efficient mode of removing the consequences of intoxication. “ The organist of a certain convent of English Benedictines, (says Burnet), having become extremely intoxicated, fell down senseless upon the stone floor of the tavern where he had been drinking, and bruised the back part of his head. I was sent for to visit him as one past all hope. Finding however, that there was no fracture, though stertorous breathing and total insensibility, I did not despair ; but after administering an active purgative, of extract of colocynth, &c., I applied to the nape of his neck a wide-mouthed cupping glass, exhausted with a large flame.



“ After remaining a quarter of an hour, I removed it, and immediately replaced it, exhausted as much as possible. In a short time, small vesicles made their appearance, almost the size of pins’ heads.

“ These gradually coalescing, formed, in the course of half an hour, a vesicle so large as completely to fill the cavity of the glass.

“ If the cupping glass be not provided with an aperture, stopped with wax, on piercing which with a needle the *vapour escapes*, and the glass drops off, I generally break the glass by the stroke of a knife; for if it be too forcibly dragged away by the hand, it lacerates the blister, and occasions acute pain.



By this means I produce to a certainty, in less than an hour, extensive vesication, while blistering plasters, even after being applied for many hours, often disappoint our expectations. This is my own invention, and, as far as I know, hitherto unemployed by any other person; and by this means, accompanied by the usual remedies, I cured my patient of his apoplexy, as well as of a paralytic affection of his tongue which supervened.”\*

Of the effects of this mode of producing vesication I profess to have no experience; but it may probably answer equally well as the recently proposed

\* Vide Burnet's Thesaurus, Medic. Practicæ, 1675.



mode of blistering by the application of scalding water.

The operation of cupping differs from venesection in this, that by the former arterial as well as venous blood is abstracted. The crimson and purple colour may be clearly distinguished, as the two kinds of fluid mingle in the glass.—The arterial blood generally flows more abundantly on the second application of the glasses than the first. I have observed, that the more abundantly the arterial blood appears, the more benefit is generally derived from the operation.

To me it appears, that in most cases the state of the constitution may be judged of equally well by the appear-



ances of the blood taken by cupping as if drawn from a vein.—The bluish film is often very obvious, said to be indicative of the first or slightest degree of inflammatory action.

The strength of the coagulum, the appearance of the buff, often more obvious on the second than the first application of the glasses, its different degrees of tenacity, and the tendency to become hollow or cup, as it is termed, all present themselves to the practised and discriminating eye.

Sometimes the blood flows very slowly, and does not coagulate, but exhibits nearly the appearance of common treacle. Experience has taught me, that this is in general a mortal



symptom, the almost certain harbinger of death. Physiologists would perhaps term it an indication that the blood was deprived of the principle of vitality.

THE END.



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