

On some of the results of the successful practice of physic / by Sir Henry Halford.

Contributors

Halford, Henry, 1766-1844.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

London : John Murray, 1838.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/dfktw8h3>

Provider

Royal College of Surgeons

License and attribution

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. The original may be consulted at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. where the originals may be consulted. This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

3

ON
SOME OF THE RESULTS
OF
THE SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE
OF
PHYSIC.

BY
SIR HENRY HALFORD, BART.,
F.R.S., &c.
President of the Royal College of Physicians.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.
—
MDCCCXXXVIII.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

ON
SOME OF THE RESULTS,
&c.

GENTLEMEN,

YOU heard me with great kindness, when I read a paper some time since, on the Education and Conduct of a Physician. Will you afford me the same attention whilst I lay before you, this evening, some of the rewards of a successful practice of our profession, the result of sound knowledge, and of those highly moral and religious principles on which the education, which I advocated, ought to be built? I do not intend to advert to the pecuniary fruits of our toil; nor do I mean to speak

of the honours awarded to Physicians, (for those distinctions are more limited and rare in our profession than in either of the kindred ones). No—I contemplate the moral influence which the cure of the ills of the body has upon the minds of patients. I allude to that deference to the Physician's judgment, on other subjects, which follows his successful exercise of it over pain and sickness—to that gratitude and attachment, which is the sweetest reward of our anxious and laborious life.

It is your peculiar privilege, my Brethren, in the daily exercise of your calling, to go about doing good; and, from the moment you have made choice of your profession, it ought to be a gratification and an encouragement to you to recollect, that the great Author of our Salvation first conciliated the attention and good-will of the multi-

tudes which followed him, by healing their sick. This first disclosure of His miraculous power was, indeed, followed by a still more awful manifestation of it, by raising the dead,—a display well calculated to awaken the whole world to His Message of Mercy.

Nor is it possible to find a happier moment to create and establish a confidence and a regard in the heart of the sick person, and of those who are attached to him, than this, in which his own hopes and fears, and those of his friends, hang upon the Physician's counsel and his decision. It has been remarked, by an able Divine,* “that a state of affliction is a school of humility,”—a remark which applies with equal truth to the maladies of

* By the Rev Dr. Jortin.

the body as of the mind ; for, undoubtedly, man is humbled when his continuance in this life depends, essentially, upon the assistance and kindness of others. Nor is he more utterly dependent and helpless, even in infancy, than when he is bowed down and prostrated by pain and disease. He dies, notwithstanding every possible care—every effort to save him ; nevertheless, the skill with which his Physician had administered to him all the resources of his art, whilst he lived,—the tenderness with which he announced the patient's danger to his family, when the disease assumed a fatal form,—and the sympathy which he manifested with the feelings of those who hung over his sick-bed,—made a deep and sharp impression on their minds, in those hours of anxiety and fear, which no time can obli-

terate; and confirmed and increased that attachment to him, never afterwards to be alienated.

Or, rather say he lives, and how enviable are the feelings of the Physician; how grateful those of the sick man recovered! How impossible is it for him not to respect that judgment, in all circumstances hereafter, which proved so correct and successful in his hour of peril!

But, further,—the Physician will have manifested a kind and friendly interest in the sick man's comfort by suggesting, at a proper moment, the necessity of "setting his house in order," and of arranging his worldly affairs, by which, not his own peace only, but the happiness also of those who were to come after him, may have been consulted and secured. Here a debt of gratitude was contracted, and it may be that

this obligation was augmented by the Physician's having availed himself of a fit occasion to call the sick man's attention to his future state, and to the consideration of his spiritual concerns. I know that this is the province of others, rather than of the Physician—but if the suggestion had been presented unobtrusively, and with a sound discretion, at a proper moment, we may rest assured that it was accepted with Christian good-will and with thankfulness. But I need not pursue this argument further. Many of you are in the habit of observing its truth in your daily experience; and I hope there is not a Physician in this assembly who will not, sooner or later, have the same happiness in confirming it. I will rather turn to history for instances in verification of my position, yet I will not go back to antiquity, though I might find passages in

Homer, strongly expressive of the attachment and respect of the Grecian heroes to their medical attendants; and several instances in the life of Hippocrates demonstrative of the regard and admiration of his countrymen. Our own times furnish me with a striking example of the deference paid to a Physician by the highest Potentates. When Dr. Jenner first promulgated the protective influence of vaccination against the danger of small-pox, the king of Spain fitted out an expedition to carry the vaccine matter to every part of his transmarine dominions; and after having left the valuable material at the Canary Islands, the Caraccas, and all the provinces of South America, the director of the expedition resolved to carry the preservative to the remotest part of Asia, and having stopped at Acapulco, and the Philippine Islands,

he introduced vaccination into China. The emperor of Russia, too, after he had established the practice of vaccination throughout all his European dominions, sent Dr. Boutaltz to traverse his Asiatic possessions for the same benevolent purpose. The mission, therefore, when it had reached the capital of Siberia, proceeded to Ocholtz, from thence he sent it to Kamtschatzka, and the Islands situated between Asia and America. Fresh matter was transmitted also into China; so that the Spanish and Russian expeditions reached different points of the celestial empire nearly at the same time.

In the Island of Java, certain portions of land have been set apart for the support of vaccination; and as a mark of respect and veneration for the author of this valuable discovery, these lands have been designated Jennerian lands.

This detail may be considered perhaps as affording evidence rather of the confidence of these Sovereigns in the merit of the new invaluable resource, than of their personal respect and deference to Dr. Jenner. But it is true that Bonaparte, in the plenitude of his power, accorded their freedom from bondage to no less than nine captives, severally, at the request of Dr. Jenner, a homage to the benevolent author of so important a discovery; and that the Emperor of Austria and the King of Spain paid equal attention to Dr. Jenner's intercession in behalf of individuals who were detained in their dominions.

But the anecdote most flattering to the medical profession which I would recal to your remembrance is, the occasion of the first establishment of the East India Company's power on the coast of Coromandel, which was procured by the favour of the

Great Mogul to one of our profession, Gabriel Boughton, of the ship *Hopeful*, in gratitude for his efficient help in a case of great distress to the monarch. It seems that in the year 1636 (a very early period of our direct intercourse with India, after the Portuguese had discovered the passage thither by the Cape of Good Hope) one of the Princesses of the Great Mogul's family had been burnt dreadfully, by accident, and that a messenger was sent to Surat, where foreign traders resorted, to desire the assistance of one of the English surgeons there, for they had acquired a great reputation amongst the natives for their skill in the cure of diseases. Gabriel Boughton proceeded forthwith to Delhi, and was successful in performing a cure ; on which the Great Mogul's Minister asked him what his Master could do for him to manifest his gratitude for so important a

service? Gabriel answered, with a disinterestedness, a generosity, a patriotism beyond my praise, "Let my nation trade with yours." "Be it so." A portion of the coast was marked out for the future resort of English ships, and all duties were compromised for a small sum of money.* A better station, it is true, was selected at the mouth of the Hoogley river some twenty years afterwards, and Calcutta was built; but *here* was the first establishment of our power. Here did the civilization of that vast continent begin—from hence the blessed light of the Gospel may have been first promulgated amongst a hundred millions of native idolaters, since subjected to the control of British power, and made partakers of our enlightened comforts.

* On the payment of three thousand rupees, a government license for an unlimited trade without payment of customs in the richest province of India was accorded.—*Mill's British India*, vol. i. p. 70.

This happy result of the successful interposition of one of our medical brethren suggests a question to my mind of the expediency of educating missionaries, who are to be sent to the rude uninformed population of distant countries to propagate the Gospel, in the medical art, as the earliest object of their studies, in order that they make themselves more acceptable than if they presented themselves professedly to teach a new religion. I propound this question with great diffidence, particularly in the presence of that part of my audience with whom it may rest to direct the preliminary education of this useful body of men; but I know that the candour of these venerable characters is equal to their high dignity, and that they will receive my suggestions in good part, and feel assured that I mean that these missionaries should carry the Gospel in their

heads, and in their hearts, and govern their conduct by its precepts; though I conceive it might further their purpose to withhold the sacred volume until after they had acquired the good-will and confidence of their hearers, by the service they had done them in healing their sickness. We know what the Jesuits have accomplished in the pursuit of this concurrent object, wherever they have found admittance; and I am sanguine enough to believe, that even that proud and exclusive people, the Chinese, would receive those who entered their country with these views, without that suspicion and distrust which they never fail to manifest when they surmise that trade is the object of the stranger's visit, or some covert intention to interfere with their institutions; and that this might be made the occasion of giving the comfort of the Gospel

to three hundred millions more of the inhabitants of our globe, in process of time.

The Chinese received vaccination kindly ; and when a small English tract, written expressly to recommend that process, had been translated into their language by Sir George Staunton, though strenuously opposed to every innovation, on all occasions, they not only submitted to receive this new practice, but actually raised a considerable subscription to assist in diffusing it throughout their vast empire ; and since that time they have allowed missionaries from America to establish an ophthalmic institution, and also a general dispensary for the supply of European medicines and advice to the sick poor. I will read a part of a letter from Canton, dated the 2nd of April, 1837, from the Rev. Mr. Gutzlaff, a member of the American Medical Missionary Society there,

in which he says, "I humbly hope that the Association will prove a great blessing to this country. Dr. Parker continues to operate most atonishing cures, and other Physicians have already arrived at Sincapore." By endeavouring to benefit both the body and the soul, some favourable impression, it is to be expected, will be made on the minds of this people.

Undoubtedly the Chinese practice of physic is so meagre, and inadequate to meet and control the "ills which flesh is heir to," as to give an easy superiority to the commonest pretensions of European knowledge. You will agree with me in this opinion, when I tell you what their physiology and pathology is, and what are their resources under disease, which I am enabled to do by the kindness of the Right Honourable Sir Alexander Johnstone, who

put into my hands a MS., since printed in the ' Asiatic Journal,' giving, from the best authority, a full account of the practice of physic in China.

It seems that they know nothing of the doctrine of the circulation of the blood. They believe that the human body is composed of five elements—water, fire, wood, metal, and earth ; that as long as the equilibrium between these elements is maintained, people enjoy health ; as soon as one predominates, sickness ensues—that all diseases arise from disturbing the equilibrium of these parts, and that the art of healing consists in restoring their mutual relation. They know nothing whatever of chemistry—there is not even a name for it in their language. Their medicines are almost all vegetable, and the Ginseng root their panacea. Detesting the sight of blood, the

abstraction of it, by whatever means, is almost or altogether unknown amongst them; and their utter aversion to any surgical operation reduces them to the necessity of depending upon the inefficiency of internal remedies in surgical cases. The employment of the moxa and acupuncture can hardly be considered as exceptions to this general interdict.

So long as the erroneous opinion prevails with them that everything ancient is excellent, and superior to recent inventions, they must necessarily remain in their present state of ignorance, and the most useful sciences will be rejected. Not that we can expect the Chinese to grasp with eagerness at our improvements, yet the cure of diseases, set down at once as fatal, in their experience, must be likely to facilitate the introduction of our knowledge, and add most

humanely to their comfort and civilization, and not to their temporal happiness only, but to their future felicity, by the introduction of the Holy Scriptures amongst them, by this avenue.

With those who practise upon such a system of physic as I have detailed, if system it can be called, is it possible that the acquired knowledge of his profession in an English medical practitioner should come into competition, without the greatest advantage in his favour? Is it possible that his knowledge of anatomy, by which he is enabled to detect the seat of disease; his acquaintance with chemistry, and all other resources of his art, by which he administers effectually to maladies within the reach of human skill, should not give his patients and those who surround them a greater confidence in his judgment, than in that

of a feeble native practitioner? Be it understood, however, that I do not claim your acknowledgment of his superiority for an Englishman of superficial knowledge only. In our profession a little knowledge may be a dangerous possession. And it is on this conviction that I humbly propose that those who are to be educated to become Missionaries, after having had their minds thoroughly imbued with moral and religious principles in their first scholastic discipline, shall then attend to anatomy and chemistry, and other courses of medical lectures, and for a certain time frequent some one of the great hospitals, so as to qualify themselves to practise physic and surgery, as if they were to prosecute our profession as their means of living.

With minds so exercised, men are surely not ill prepared to receive and weigh well

and deeply study the sacred truths; and, having the sanction of holy ordination, to go forth amongst the heathen to expound them. The Americans seem disposed, according to the accounts from Canton, to keep separate the civil and the clerical characters, and have no other missionary there professedly educated for the practice of physic and surgery, but Dr. Parker; yet it is acknowledged that he is most in credit for the good which he does. Now, confidence is not transferable, and it does not follow that the impression of gratitude and attachment which the Physician shall have made by his successful ministration to disease, will be given necessarily and of course to a stranger, introduced to explain what is required for the salvation of the soul. I hold it, therefore, far preferable, that the two characters should be united in those whose zeal for the benefit of mankind may

carry them to remote parts of the world. Of this union we all know numerous and respectable instances at home ; and it cannot fail to be remembered within these walls, that our founder, Linacre, the first President of the College, took orders in the latter period of his life, and died in the exercise of those sacred functions.

But I am afraid I become tedious. Let me make haste then to thank you for your patient attention, and to add, in evidence of the sincerity with which I have represented the frequent occasions of the purest mental gratification which the Physician finds in the exercise of his calling, independently of any other consideration, and contrary to the maxim in Horace—

Nemo quam sibi sortem
Cœa ratio dederit, seu fors objecerit illâ
Contentus vivât, laudet diversa sequentes—

if I were to begin my life again, I would adopt the profession of physic.

Amongst these gratifications, I should be ungrateful to you if I did not enumerate the repeated pleasure of meeting and co-operating with you for the improvement of medicine, and for the promotion of the respectability of our profession, in these evening assemblies at the College; and when it shall please the great Creator to remove me to another world, which must necessarily be at no very distant day, some of you who now listen to me may bear in mind these my unfeigned sentiments and attachment to our common profession, and not be surprised if you should hear that

Occidit et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.

VIRGIL.