

Health and disease / by Charles F. Taylor.

Contributors

Taylor, Charles Fayette, 1827-1899.

Publication/Creation

New York : William Radde, 1861.

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THE
NORTH AMERICAN JOURNAL
OF
HOMŒOPATHY.

**A Quarterly Magazine of Medicine
and the Auxiliary Sciences.**

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XXXVIII.

NEW-YORK:

WILLIAM RADDE, 300 BROADWAY.

PHILADELPHIA: WM. RADDE, 635 ARCH-ST.—BOSTON: OTIS CLAPP.—ST. LOUIS: R. & H. LUYTIES, M. D.—CHICAGO: HALSEY & KING.—CINCINNATI: J. M. PARES, M. D.—CLEVELAND: JOHN B. HALL.—MANCHESTER, ENG.: H. TURNER & Co., 41 PICCADILLY AND 15 MARKET-STREET.—LONDON, ENG.: H. TURNER & Co., 77 FLEET-STREET.

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NORTH AMERICAN JOURNAL OF HOMŒOPATHY.

CONTENTS OF NO. XXXVIII.

FOR NOVEMBER, 1861.

ARTICLE.	Original and Translated Papers.	PAGE.
XIV.—On Scabies: Its Nature and Treatment. By H. Freytag, M. D. Read before the Homœopathic Society of Leipsic. Translated by H. L. H. Hoffendahl, M. D., of Boston. From the <i>Allg. Hom. Zeitung</i> , Vol. LX., 1860,		193
XV.—The Natural History of Disease. By R. Ludlam, M. D., of Chicago, Ill...		206
XVI.—Post-Partum Hæmorrhage—The Uterynter. By E. C. Franklin, M. D., of St. Louis, Mo.		214
XVII.—Clinical Cases. By J. Davies, M. D., of Chicago, Ill.		225
XVIII.—Dengue and its Homœopathic Treatment. By W. H. Holcombe, M. D., of Waterproof, La.		230
XIX.—Surgical Cases. Reported to the Illinois Homœopathic Association at its Annual Meeting, held in Bloomington, Ill., May 15th, 1861. Collected by R. F. Baker, M. D., of Moline, Ill.		235
XX.—Cases treated at the Northern Homœopathic Dispensary, 695 Sixth Avenue. Reported by S. Lilienthal, M. D., and J. B. Petherbridge, M. D., of New-York,		240
XXI.—Is Hahnemann the Alpha and Omega of Homœopathy? By John H. Henry, M. D., of Selma, Ala.		245
XXII.—An Hour with Past Generations. By J. C. Peterson, M. D., of St. John, N. B.,		249
XXIII.—Case of Incarcerated Inguinal Hernia. By H. G. Dunnell, M. D., of New-York,		257
XXIV.—Tarentism: Comprising the Pathogenesis of the Venom of the Tarentula of La Pouille, and of other Varieties, together with the Corresponding Nervous Epidemic or Spontaneous Malady. By Mr. Ozanam. (Translated from <i>l'Art Médicale</i> , by M. E. Lazarus, M. D., of New-York.		259
XXV.—Nitrate of Uranium in Diabetes. By Edwin M. Hale, M. D., of Jonesville, Mich.		274
XXVI.—Moonshine versus Rationalism. By C. Pearson, M. D., of Mount Pleasant, Iowa,		280
XXVII.—Concussion of the Brain. By C. M. Samson, M. D., of Hudson, New-York,		290
XXVIII.—Is there any Law or Order Governing Disease? By Prof. John T. Temple, M. D., of St. Louis, Mo.		292
XXIX.—Health and Disease. By Charles F. Taylor, M. D., of New-York.		293
XXX.—Inhalations of Iodine and Bromine in Croup. By E. H. Drake, M. D., of Detroit, Mich.		296
XXXI.—A Clinical Lecture. Delivered during the Summer Course on Clinical Medicine for 1861, in the Hahnemann Medical College, Chicago, Ill. By R. Ludlam, M. D.		301

Reviews and Bibliographical Notices.

1. Uterine Diseases, and their Treatment. By Dr. J. Davies, of Chicago, Ill.	5. The Races of Man: A Fragment.	328
2. Consanguinity: A Treatise on Moral Degenerations of the Human Race.	6. Annual Address, before the Illinois State Homœopathic Association.	331
3. The Sources of Health and Disease in Communities.	7. On <i>Æsculus Hippocastanum</i> . By H. M. Paine, M. D.	332
4. On Transmission from Parent to Offspring of some Forms of Disease.	8. Address on the Past and Present Condition of Homœopathy, &c. By Wm. H. Watson, M. D.,	332

General Chronicle of Medical Science.

1. Medical Science, from <i>l'Art Médicale</i>	12. MATERIA MEDICA:	
2. Practical Remarks. By Dr. Gross, of Prussia,	1. Indian Hemp.	342
3. Partial Deafness.	2. Ignatia.	344
4. Rheumatism.	3. Ipecacuanha.	345
5. Remarks upon Pseudo-membranous Ophthalmia.	4. Iodine.	345
6. Acycelia, Irideremia, and congenital Hemiphasia.	5. Kall-Bichromicum.	346
7. Hemeralopia consequent upon Scurvy.	6. Santonine.	348
8. Intermittent Conjunctivitis.	7. Action of the Extract of Nux-Vomica and its Analogues on the Human Economy.	350
9. Syphilitic Paralysis of the Common Oculo-Motor Nerve.	13. Fragmentary Provings of the <i>Allanthus</i>	358
10. The Pathological Anatomy of Cataract.	14. <i>Grindelia</i> , or <i>Donia</i> , as an Antidote for Rhus Poisoning.	361
11. Exophthalmia, with Hypertrophy of the Thyroid Body, and Organic Disease of the Heart,		

Miscellaneous Items.

1. Hahnemann Academy of Medicine, Diphtheria,	12. Scrofulous Inflammation of the Synovial Membrane of the Joints.	374
2. Chronic Angina-Tonsillaris.	13. Diabetes Mellitus, complicated with Piarrhœmia, or Fatty Substance in the Blood.	376
3. Count Cavour and Allopathic Medicine.	14. Tetanus.	377
4. Calcearia-Muriatica in the Treatment of Boils and Carbuncles.	15. Epilepsy.	378
5. Natural History of the <i>Crotalus Horridus</i> , or Rattle-Snake.	16. Hæmorrhoids.	379
6. Nostalgia—Home-Sickness.	17. Gout.	380
7. Syphilis.	18. Meeting of the Central Society of the Homœopathic Physicians of Germany, at Leipzig.	381
8. Glaucoma.	19. Pathology of Scorbutus—Scurvy.	382
9. Uræmia.—Uræmic Poisoning.		
10. Concussion of the Brain.		

this force is a part (inherent) of the particular plant, mineral or animal, to which it is attached. And we also know that all of these kingdoms, and every member of each, are the products of physical law. These facts being admitted, are we not forced to the conclusion that, as the pathogenetic action of drugs resemble in their effects those produced by the disease forces, that therefore they (the disease forces) must be controlled by physical laws, and conform to the great law of nature—order? Then, why is it that we do not find uniformity of action, regularity, order, in disease?

These remarks have been suggested by a very interesting and singular case of dysentery—singular only on account of its periodicity. The case occurred in a family of high standing in our city. The lady, about forty-five years old, of amiable disposition, cheerful temper, and ordinary health, has at various periods for fourteen years been under my charge, for various attacks, but none of violence, except the dysentery. This disease she has had for *nine years*, returning regularly on the fourth day of July. She is regular and prudent in her diet and her life. The disease always yields beautifully to remedies indicated, which have generally been Aconite, Nux, and Merc.-corrosive. It may be said that periodicity is a law of nature;—we know that the planets have their periods of revolution; that plants have their periods of germination, development, and decay; in fact, that all organic and inorganic matter has this great law written upon every atom of their being. But the question is, has disease, dysentery for example, the law of periodicity? Is there any law regulating scarlatina or intermittent fever?

Will some brother please enlighten me on this subject?

ARTICLE XXIX.—*Health and Disease.* By CHARLES F. TAYLOR, M. D., of New-York.

THE professional mind of all schools seems to be more or less practically possessed with the idea that disease is an *entity*, and is to be exorcised by boluses or globules, potions or potencies, as though it were a distinct and independent existence.

Practically this idea seems to be the main-spring of the modes of the different schools of medicine. The truths of physiology and the conditions called pathological are all equally well understood by educated physicians; but still it seems to be the most difficult thing in the world—so easily are habits formed in ignorance perpetuated even under the light of greater knowledge—to remember what we know when we come to the practical business of medical treatment. Medical practice, at the present day, is no more what it should be, in order to correspond to the lights of science we have to guide us, than for Liebig or Dumas to forget the laws of chemistry already discovered, and retiring to some dark cave, hung about with pictures of imps and dragons, should, with jugglery and incantations, belabor the “elements” for the production of the philosopher’s stone, or the elixir of life, in the vain endeavor to educe chemical laws which themselves have a hundred times proved, cannot exist.

“Physiology,” according to Webster, “is the science of the functions of all the different parts or organs of animals, or plants, or, in other words, the offices which they perform in the economy of the individual.”

And health is “that state of an animal or living body in which all the parts are sound, well-organized and disposed, and in which they all perform freely their natural functions.”

And, according to the same eminent authority, disease is pronounced to be “any deviation from health in function or structure;” “any state of a living body in which the natural functions of the organs are interrupted or disturbed, either by defective or preternatural action.”

The essence of disease, then, does not seem to be so difficult to comprehend after all. If the above definitions be true, pathology is simply one of the phases or manifestations of physiology; differing from health in the ratio of the conditions causing this particular physiological manifestation. Pathology, then, is but one branch of physiology, and is the proper out-marking of physiological laws under peculiar circumstances. When we examine a diseased condition, we encounter no new laws, but simply a special manifestation of old ones. These are facts which are so apt to be forgotten that it may do

us good to run a parallel between these two points—health and disease—and endeavor to see still more clearly by what and by how much they are separated.

Suppose an acorn be planted in a fertile valley in a temperate zone with all the conditions necessary for the growth of an oak. A healthy and perfect oak will be produced. Rearing its head high in the air and striking its roots deep in the earth, the spread of its branches, the character of its foliage, the appearance of its trunk will be a type of its species, and will proclaim to the naturalist, wherever he may see it, the latitude and longitude, the elevation and climate and soil where it grew. The conditions surrounding it have been made a part of its organism. In other words, the determining causes of its physiological manifestation have made these manifestations to be in the direction which we call health.

But suppose we plant another acorn on the mountain top, where the soil is thin and sterile, the winds chilly and tempestuous, and the climate severe; at one season the soil is parched with drouth, at another deluged with rain, and steeped in moisture. Here the conditions may be just sufficiently within the limits to make the physiological phenomena of germination and growth possible. But the oak-tree will be stunted, and gnarled, and twisted, and decaying at its core, and will prematurely die! Here the physiological manifestations have been in the direction which we call disease. The determining causes have been the same in kind as in the first case, that is, the light, and air, and heat, and moisture, &c., were alike required in both cases; but these causes, differing in quality and degree, the physiological manifestation of tree-growth differed also in the same ratio in quality and degree. But whatever the quality of growth,—whether the perfect oak of the valley or the gnarled and imperfect specimen on the mountain-top, both were alike the result of the same physiological laws. And in all the gradations, from the most perfect to the feeblest manifestation of vegetative life, no new laws have been introduced, and no new capacities discovered.

This is made still more clear when we consider what is to be done to the sickly tree, in the illustration, in order to make it flourish like the one in health; that is, to cure the disease.

Do we add anything to it, or take anything from it that is not necessary to the one in health? No. We seek for nothing new, but we simply alter the conditions under which its physiological life was exhibited. Using the same kinds of vital stimuli, the light, and heat, and moisture, &c., they are so arranged that the physiological manifestations produced thereby result in health instead of disease. Remove the influences of the mountain location—that is, transplant the acorn or the young oak to the fertile valley and the disease is *cured*.

The husbandman is the scientific physician, for his constant study and aim is to surround all physiological activities, animal or vegetable, with such conditions as must favor complete development or health. Using always the same materials, he seeks by endless modification of their relations to insure the completest physiological harmony.

Health and disease, then, are not positive but relative terms. The line that separates them is wholly imaginary; we cannot tell where the one begins or the other ends. We only know the results of imperfect or improper physiological action; but that action is still physiological.

Such being the relations of health and disease, any practices that proceed essentially as though disease were a separate and independent quality which is to be charmed away by a witch's broth made from

“Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog, &c.”

is certainly very far behind the light of modern science.

Let us pay a little more attention to special hygiene, seeking for those conditions under which physiological manifestations take place most perfectly under varying circumstances, and we shall be surprised to find how little else there is to do.

ARTICLE XXX.—*Inhalations of Iodine and Bromine in Croup.* By E. H. DRAKE, M. D., of Detroit, Mich.

HAVING used the above medicines in the treatment of croup for the last two years, with a far more decided and uniform success than I ever experienced in the use of any other reme-