

Very Good - S. S. G.

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AN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION,

ON

*Lancet-
Venesection - Bloodletting*

SUBMITTED TO THE

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In compliance with your requisition, Gentlemen of "the Medical Department of the University of Nashville," I make this my first essay in Medicine, and had I have stopped to have consulted my own feelings or been governed by the dictates of my judgement and common sense, I should have certainly remained silent: but nevertheless always having been willing to abide by, and been submissive to my superiors and Teachers in learning whether literary or medical. Therefore I have selected the Lancet for my theme to make some crude and cursory thoughts upon; and in doing so, I hope I may be allowed the latitude to use the Lancet, Bloodletting and Venesection as synonymous terms, and furthermore in speaking of the employment of them in the treatment of diseased organs or functions of organs I am speaking of a resort to the Lancet in the early stages of any, and all diseases of whatsoever type and also in healthy, robust and plethoric individuals. The causes which first led the ancient practitioners of Medicine to resort to, and adopt blood-

letting in its various modifications, is not now mentioned, if known, by medical writers, but doubtless seeing that the system was surcharged with a fulness of venous blood, and that local organs were filled and largely distended, and reasoning upon the ground that pressure of the blood by turgescence and tension of the diseased organ, must produce the unpleasant feelings, and sensations experienced by the individual; and quite likely in this manner they were induced to make trial of it, and also probably having witnessed and carefully observed the effects of the loss of large quantities of blood in persons, who had, by accidental hemorrhages, sustained the loss of enormous amounts, and noticing their exsanguine condition and relaxation of the blood vessels, in the different organs. So we may conclude that in this manner, it took its first, and bold stand among remedies as an agent in the reduction of morbid principles in the human system. And it, like all other new and important discoveries, was doomed to have

its vile opposers, who always oppose truth in all of her paths to distinction and fame. But nevertheless the light of truth - eternal truth - when once struck, may be smothered up for a short time, by blinded prejudice and folly, and thus covered up, she will at some future time relume herself again, and will burst forth like the meridian sun to disperse every cloud, and after all mist and fog have been dispelled, then the glorious rays of truth may be seen in all their refulgent brightness, shining along the road of the Medical man to eminence and fame. Also again the precise period of time, when the Lancet began to be employed as a therapeutic agent in the treatment of diseases, is not positively known; but facts are on record that it has been resorted in some form or other from a remote period of time. And at all times and during every period since its first introduction it has had its warm advocates, who have generally been led on and guided by truth as it

has shone forth to illuminate medical science to the relief and amelioration of the condition of mankind. And the truth of its remedial and beneficial agency, has stood the test of time, and has nobly maintained its high and lofty position as such; notwithstanding men of deep and scientific learning, and research, have at various times, written against its employment; and at times, by their writings have led off the unsuspectful youth, and thus, gained warm partisans to their false and untenable theories, and during these periods, the truth of its benefits, has been made to lag and falter for a short season only; After all, "truth crushed to the earth, like a worm will rise again," and plume her wings for another and better day to display her brilliancy.

And not only have men of scientific learning and research disclaimed against the use of the Lancet, but there are men, even at this day of learning and progress, who disapprove of the

letting of blood, on all occasions, and under any circumstances whatsoever, — Men, I mean who make some pretension to medical learning, both theoretically and practically — some it is true are carried away by prejudice, while others are the mere dupes of ignorance. Men too of ingenious minds and eloquent tongues have spoken and written against the employment of the lancet, as a noble medical beneficiary to the relief of suffering humanity. It baffles my ingenuity to contrive how any man of any practical knowledge and common observation at all, can have the hardihood to deny the good resulting from the right and timely resort to venesection, in a great many of the diseases to which the human family is liable as living and mortal beings. That bloodletting may be regarded as one of the best and noblest of remedial agents belonging to the "appropia remedia," of the medical man, in his intercourse with diseases

and diseased conditions, is almost self evident, to any man who has given an attentive observation to the subject of pathology and the organisation of the human structure.

Indeed it forms one of the main columns in the paraphranalia medicinae to the physician, and without it he would be as a sailor on the boisterous waves of the mighty deep, and a deadly tempestuous storm raging, - the vessel without a rudder whereby the helmsman would be enabled to steer her into a safe and quiet haven, and what would be still worse no power whatsoever left him whereby to calm the raging and angry storm, nor time allowed him to haul down the sails, and under these circumstances, he cannot say in the beautiful and dying words of Com. Lawrence "don't give up the ship boys," (the patient), nor can he wrap himself up in his country's flag, (his conscience) and say I have done all in my power to save her (his

patient, from the inevitable vortex (death), to which she (the sick man) is making such rapid head way, and must sooner or later arrive at without a speedy relief

There are certain diseases, that without the employment of the lancet, death seems to be as inevitable as the wreck of the ship in the picture above drawn; in that case the storm might perchance subside, but the disease would not be likely to abate, and therefore ship would escape being stranded, but the demise of the patient is almost inevitable.

Let the Lancet be set aside, proscribed, from practice, and I should consider that, at least one of our greatest therapeutical agents, for the successful combatting of diseases, was gone, yes the master remedy of the whole armatory of medicine had been silenced, the great cannon of therapeutical agents was spiked, and therefore disease with all his train, would march on to conquer

and obtain almost unmolested a complete
Victory over many hard fought, and well
contested fields (of noble efforts, where and
when by the right and timely employment
of the lancet, doubtless the case would have
terminated favorably, and one human
being would have been saved from an
untimely grave, and probably thereby pre-
venting infants from becoming and holding
the unenviable position of orphans, too often
to be cast out to eat the cold bread of charity
of this unfriendly world. Therefore blood-
letting, ^{claiming} a place in our *Materi Medica* as
one of our most effectual remedies—our sheet-
anchor, both sure and steadfast, and in
its effects reaches to the innermost temple
(the heart), of man—in all diseases superven-
ing upon a phlogistic diathesis—such dis-
eases as Pneumonia Pleurisy, Cerebritis, and
Phlebetis—and many other diseases of an
inflammatory character

In the successful treatment of all of these diseases; It is first, in most all, and second to no other remedy in any, at the beginning, or at the onset. That in the treatment of Pneumonia, it is our chief and most reliable remedial agent to the arresting the inflammatory action, no one at all conversant with the pathology of Pneumonitis, will pretend to deny - and that to be successful in its application, a resort must be had to it at an early stage of the disease. And not infrequently its repetition, is demanded, and a few cases do occur in which it may be employed a third time.

So by the proper and timely resort to the lancet, the lungs may be relieved of the congestive engorgement of venous or decarbonized blood, which is found to obtain in the early stage of Pneumonitis. And thus very often, we may "cut short," the disease at once. While on the other hand if the Lancet be withheld, the second and third stages may supervene, and the individual would be lost, while other and less effic

cient and powerful Remedies are employed. Notwithstanding other therapeutical agents may act a very important and noble part in the subduction of inflammation of the lungs, and other diseased organs, but "their day and time," is after bloodletting has, as a general, rule and almost universal, been premised.

In in inflammation of the pleura, Pleuritis, also as in Pneumonia, Venesection is "the remedy," especially is it so at the beginning. A distinguished man and an eminent writer said "that with the Lancet and water gowel, that he could cure more cases of Pleurisy than any man could with all of the medicine in the Apothecary's shop besides, and he certainly was not far from the truth. I have on many occasions fully attested the truth of the above asertion. In the county of Buncombe North carolina, where I have been practising phypic nearly five years since my first course in a Medical College, there are during the win-

ter season many sporadic cases of Pleurisy originating from exposure to the various vicissitudes of weather peculiar to the mountain regions, and the Lancet is nearly always demanded if the individual be of full, robust and plethoric habits, a full venesection, purgatives, and putting into complete and full action the antiphlogistic treatment the inflammation will immediately decline, and then the practitioner will have nothing more to do of an active character. If we next take up the most terrible and fatal of all of the diseases, to which parturient women are liable in their lying ins, Puerperal convulsions, we find that venesection is the most faithful of all of our remedies, when had recourse to at a sufficiently early period and to an extent far enough to make a decided impression, not only upon the patient, but also upon the disease itself. It has been my misfortune to have witnessed several cases of this frightful malady, and in conjunction and consultation

with other medical Boethren; and the only case that I ever had the good pleasure, to see recover, was as I conceived solely and entirely due to the free and copious employment of bloodletting - Blood was taken to the amount of forty eight to sixty ounces before the pulse lost its firmness, and became soft and compressible, and not until this was done, was the patient cognizant of anything transpiring or passing in her apartment.

The last sixteen ounces was taken by myself, and through my suggestion and advice, and so marked were the effects produced, that no one who was present, could mistake the cause of it. And in less than twenty minutes the sensorial organs began to display their normal and natural functions of sensation and perception, in the economy. The patient, ^{had} as early getting up, as any other patient that I have ever attended in their confinement. I say this case was so marked and the result so plain that any one of even dull comprehension could not mistake the

cause of the improvement that was so readily brought about. Inflammation of the brain, and its appertenances - meninges - cerebri meningitis more fully, the surest and best remedy, is certainly to be found in the early and complete employment of bloodletting, and that not sparingly neither; in plethoric robust and full habits in an individual; and to that extent that will make a decided, and not to be mistaken impression upon the circulation.

Thereby equalizing the circulation, and relieving the brain of the oppression and congestion that may manifest itself. In the diseases of the brain and most all diseases originating or supervening upon a phlogistic diathesis, and especially so in healthy heretofore robust constitutions, constitutions not impaired by disease heretofore nor injured by debauchery; the Lancet has it claims to be heard, in the successful and proper treatment. In that most dreadful and fatal of nearly all diseases, Apoplexy, is another of

many diseases that the Lancet claims and demands our first and almost-entire confidence and attention, as a great remedy, and without it we would find our hands manacled, so to speak, and our efforts of non avail, abortive.

If used in apoplexy, it-must-be done promptly, energetically, and fearlessly, that is to an extent that will tell upon the circulation, as well as upon the disease, For it-is the practitioner's main and only dependence and when employed in such diseases, it-should be with decision and judgement-

I might extend the list of diseases, far beyond what-I have, but-I have endeavored to adduce only a few of the most important ones, in the treatment of which the Lancet is our main sheet-anchor, always nearly responding to the operator in terms of recognition: and relief to the suffering patient

Having in the preceding remarks made some hasty references to the beneficial effects of Venese-

tion, in some of the most fatal maladies appertaining to the human family, And it remains for me to show the other side of the question, in order that truth may have an honest and impartial hearing, but as my space is so limited, had I the ability to do so, and will not allow me to extend my remarks, I must content myself with a short and brief notice of only a few facts, as I pass along, and in doing so I am necessarily compelled to search the old musty and hidden records of the dead, which could they speak with an audible voice, would doubtless astonish the young physician who, with lancet in hand had gone forth to employ this the most powerful and speedy nearly of all remedies, for good or evil, - weal or woe - proposed by the profession. It being therefore a remedy of power, demands the exercise of great discrimination and judgment on the part of the practitioner employing it. And no doubt need be entertained

that evil results have followed its indiscriminate and thoughtless employment. But even this of itself does not condemn the *Lancet*, only the employer for his ignorance and stupidity. And thus many, it is true have been its victims, and as I remarked before, when speaking of its beneficial effects, that the refusal or ignorant neglect of its employment on many occasions had made widows and fatherless children, even so on the other hand by it, many alike have ^{been} doomed to the same unfortunate fate - of being orphans - so you may readily perceive that its employment demands of the practitioner a great judgement of mind for perception and discrimination - a faculty which should be possessed and cultivated by every practitioner of medicine - that he may not only avoid Scylla but that he may at the same time avoid also Charybdis. Gentlemen the above imperfect remarks are most respectfully submitted to your most favorable consideration & esteem.

I am yours truly
M^r W^m Sudger