AN INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

on

capacities in \textit{\textbf{Medicine}}

submitted to the

President, Board of Trustees, and Medical Faculty

of the

University of Nashville,

for the degree of

Doctor of Medicine.

by

James R. R. Horn

of

Tennessee

\textit{March 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1857}

W. T. Berry & Co.,

Booksellers and Stationers,

Nashville, Tenn.
Specifics in Medicine

By this term is meant the indiscriminate administration of certain medicines for the cure of diseases which diseases are treated by name without reference to symptoms or accompanying complications. From conviction of the evils arising from such procedure and believing as I do this to be the mountain rock upon whose bosom the crafts of more young practitioners are wrecked than any probably all other combined has induced me to notice some of the ills arising there from. As to these being specifics for disease may well be questioned I mean such as will cure invariably. Now there are such medicines as have a specific influence over
or relevancy for certain structures I would not deny. Such as Mercury for the Sinner or Exgot for
the Atoms. Ex eis a Paribus these Medicines would
exert the same influence over the Organism.
But in as much as surrounding circumstances
are much varied their use must vary likewise.
A Medicine to be a specific must of necessity cure
in all instances without failing in any, and see
then at once if we have such they are of the fewest
number, having as I hope made myself understood
as to what I conceive to be a specific in Medici-
me, I will now proceed to notice some of the
very many Evils arising from a Treatment
based upon such a principle. Where shall we look
for the deleterious effects of those Specialities in
Medicine. Shall it be into its incipience (if it was
to be found) Only these it would be of itself moment
but it is found among all Nations sini-
the days of Hippocrates (the Father of Medicine) it even prevails to this time, but not to so imminent an extent as formerly when the science was less developed. In as much as it is impossible to examine each of the so called specifics, we will notice a portion only of those used in Jesus (making it the Type) for as this Disease is the outlet to more lives than any other it is likely those medicines have been used in it more than any other one. Sydenham says that this Disease is the outlet to two-thirds of the human lives this may be extravagant but when contemplated and the immense number who in passing from the present to a future state of Eternity are seen to migrate through this great pathway we cannot fail to perceive the vast importance to the Medical mind.

It behooves us therefore to take a retrospective
view of the before Established plans of treatment in this Disease and see which has been the most Successful mode of Practice. Striving to profit by our Examination in as much as the good of our fellow man should ever be the leading motive in Medical research and in so doing a few only of the theories which have received attention will be noticed and they but partially Examined in consequence of space being so limited. A few remarks only will be devoted to each theory they being sufficient to illustrate the point desired.

When medicine was in its infancy before it had developed its component parts as it has done by the Scouting and close investigation of the many Illustrious men who have illuminated our Profession and consequently before the Phenomena of Fever
There was a Fever Theory which sprung up (the humoral theory) very erroneous, so much so that we wonder how it could have received the attention of the Profession so exclusively as did it! Yet when we consider for one moment their thin stock of medical information we are not so much astonished, having confined their observations as they had to the living Subject had not so much even as discovered the circulation of the Blood, a subject of so vital importance to the Physician, much less those morbid appearances had they failed to perceive which are revealed only by Postmortems, and without (knowledge of which the true Pathology of the Diseases must have remained unknown and their Treatment erroneous as a natural consequence.
Their want of information on such subjects as the above is sufficient proof of their lack of knowledge of many of the phenomena both of health and disease. The above mentioned theory proposed an explanation of the cause of fevers, and also a cause for all fevers of whatever type or grade. This was to be accomplished by a few medicines used in all cases whatever irrespective of type complications peculiar idiocrasy. How did this theory succeed its abandonment as soon as the science began to develop its self is proof of its beneful effects. When physicians had acquired a more extensive knowledge of the feeble movement seeing as they did the fallacy of the above mentioned theory formed another more scientific yet not much more successful. This was the Spasmotic.
Theory, receiving as its supporters did the
cause of fever to be some offending matter in the blood, this being the cause the
indications for treatment were quite
clealable it was but necessary that the
blood should be brought back to its original
purity to insure health equal to that
enjoyed previous to the febrile attack, this was
to be accomplished first by Bloodletting and
secondly by Purgation, for which purpose they
used but few remedies. This was not at all
successful, just what would have been expected
with our present light upon the science.
For we foresee the innumerable circumstances
with which such practice would not be admirable
especially in those of a Typhoid tendency,
for we foresee its debilitating influence
exerted through a series of weeks which it will
run, it being a self limited Disease, this Disease is far from requiring debilants on the contrary calls for stimulants as I believe is the received opinion at the present day, at least among our Profession, beyond a doubt this would account for some of the fatal consequences which have attended former Epidemics where in this mode of Practice was applied. This like other Specialties used without surrounding circumstances being taken into notice will be seen as Ever has been the case productive of great harm though often placed to the credit of some other circumstance or a combination of circumstances. This Theory is universally Abandoned at the present time Nevertheless Engaged a reasonable portion of the most Eminent Practitioners at the time in which it prevailed, it is probable that it
has contributed its mite to the Elevation of our Science, though at the Expense of the lives of many of our fellow man, many who did not fall an immediate Sacrifice to this mighty two Edged sword (the lancet of Pugation) have had their health much impaired through the remainder of their lives. This like the preceding Theories had its notaries run its round of popularity and was abandoned. Finding all of the above Theories to have failed their Patients dying both on right and on the left they looked still deeper into the Ocean of Science and these saw with their minds eye the cause of Fever to be resident in the Nervous System, a Nervous Disturbance. A new plan of treatment followed of Recepty. This was Substantially to set up a counter action or to declare war against the invaders and whip him out of camps;
This was to be done by a Special set of remedies. Mercury, Arsenic, and a few adjuncts, then admitted valuable remedies in some Diseases have been so much abused that it is a question if some difficult solution whether or not their introduction has been a curse to the human family, who of us has not seen the deleterious Effects of Mercury, that has not seen Nature herself defaced in the most shameful manner that has not seen Cheeks destroyed, lips sloughed away, and teeth drop from their sockets, and worse even than these constitutions impaired, Cheeks may be made anew, lips reconstructed, and teeth restored, but a broken down constitution can never be replaced. This theory has not run as rapid a course as the
preceding, indeed some stick to it up to the present time. They however are mere Empirics and steadfasts in the science, who do not deserve to be ranked among Physicians. This treatment might be admirable in some of the forms of Malarial fever but is always injurious in those of a Typhoid nature. Nor as we know this fever of itself very much impoverishes the blood and at the same time Mercury being a known defibriniser the very medicine which is to be avoided in this Disease. It is a well known fact too that separation can not take place while this debility of the blood continues to exist. Those like all medicines which have been as Specifics in Disease, in many instances have caused the most disastrous effects. But as the most Physicians must have their
focus focus upon which to ride into Practice as does the Politician into Office. By far too many have mounted mounted the Sampson of Medicines (Mercury). But again in one of our Sister States there was a man who sprung up and declared to the public that he had found the long sought for Remedy, which was the cause of and cure for Fever. The cause in his mind consisted in venous congestion especially of the Vena cava ascendens. Little more had he to do in the treatment than to convert the black or congested blood into black bile, and in this way correct the cachetic state of the System. This could be done in no way so Effectually as by stimulating the Liver to active secretion, it being the Only Organ which forms ascension
from venomous blood, hence we see agreeably with his Theory (which bears the name of its founder Hook) the consistency in his mode of Treatment, but since farther investigation of this subject has proved him to be in error as respects the cause of Fever, his treatment must necessarily be erroneous. This distinguished man whether more landed in consequence of his intellect or disposed for the injury sustained by the human family is a question which eternity herself alone can solve. He excited the Siver to active decision by the administration of Mercury, a very skillfully selected remedy if the cause had been what he supposed, with his Cava Pell composed as it was by Colonel Rhubarb & alco, with this and a few adjuncts he proposed to do all for Fever that could be done of what ever variety or complications,
This Theory had a wide spread circulation, many of its advocates were men of distinguished talent. It had its greatest area in the great Mississippi Valley for the obvious reason that this locality abounds with Fever, I now pass to the last Fever Theory which I propose to notice, in as much as I believe there to be sufficient to illustrate what I designed. This the Thompsonian Theory is still in vogue among us, it reigns to some extent where the science of Medicine has shed her most benignant rays. Not so much so though as where men are not skilled in the Profession, unphilosophical as it is, I am willing to presume it, doubtless from the fact that it cost but little, it receives some patronage from the contracted and miser who had rather risk dying than incur an unreasonable bill. I may safely say unphilosophical for surely I do not believe its advocates are guided
by one solitary ray of sound philosophy. How can they be when we see them trying to produce the same effect in all kinds of disease using steam as their great shot anchor, or more properly making use of it as a specific, or again as the vulgar call it, the cure all. A name which is only exceeded by their extreme ignorance, using steam with a few additional aids in all varieties of Fever, Intermittent, Remittent, Typhoid, as the case may happen to be. If the patient is hot he must be steamed. If cold he must be subjected to the everlasting steaming process, for which they are so remarkable more so from the absurdities to which they hold than their success, I witnessed a case of Typhoid Fever which had been under this mode of treatment for three weeks, the free access of atmosphere had been denied the Patient, the
was wrapped in one blanket after another almost beyond numbering. Seas had been given ad libitum he had been delicious for six days in defiance to all that Steam could achieve, his Person in comparison was as hot as Mt Besuvius, and his head smoked like unto a tar kiln, profuse Sweating had been kept up until he was reduced to a mere skeleton, his friends had given him up to die, but being unwilling to give him up thus. They made their last effort to save the already dying man by calling in a regular land Physician, who in honor to himself and our Profession, as it was reached down into the vault of the grave and secured the body from the tomb, I will firmly believe that there is no sane man with common understanding after due reflection who would use the selfsame agent to drive away both
heat and cold, these principles so different in their nature as these would (if necessity require) different means to remove them. This theory has shared to a great extent the fate of the Fever theories in general, while each may (and no doubt has) cured cases of a particular kind it will fail in the majority, as will readily appear when we consider the multiplicity of circumstances arising in any given disease, much less in those whose characters are so essentially different. In Watson's Practice of Physic (1755) he says that much harm has resulted from treating Fevers by name without reference to accompanying complications. Again (1757) he states that it is not only individual cases of Fever which differ but that epidemics very much in their character so that a plan of treatment which was well suited
to one Epidemic may be improper and even harmful if indiscriminately applied in another, (958) he declares that he believes with Pasteur who being asked what he thought of a certain treatise on Fever replied that he did not like Fever Cures, further more he said that a Fever may be guided but not cured, just as a ship may be guided during a storm yet the storm cannot be quelled, one being as impossible as the other, (962) in speaking of changing the treatment for Fever remarked that we should not depend upon any set of remedies in our Fever practice, but that it must be varied to meet the symptoms, for what is applicable in one hour may be contra indicated in the next. Woods in his practice corroborates the opinion of Watson on this subject.
in a very striking manner, it is unnecessary, therefore to copy his language. If specifics fail in fever they would in like manner fail in other diseases. This indiscriminate use of medicines is what quacks have ever been striving for, in short it is this to a considerable degree which has ever distinguished the scientific from the more noise or ignorance in medicine. Now I would not be understood to object to specifics if we have such, on the contrary I would be as much pleased with such medicines as any one. My objection is to medicines being used as specifics when they possess no such properties. Divine is nearer to this class of remedies than any other
medicine, (in my humble opinion) with any
and no one is more in favor of that
drug than myself. I maintain that
Each Disease has its pathology essenti-
ally differing from other Classes, and
frequently from those of the same order,
and that the treatment will vary in
the different Types, and many times
in the same Class in consequence of
varied complication idiosyncrasies.

January 21st, 1857

James...