

# **WILLIAM ALCOTT**

FORTY YEARS IN THE  
WILDERNESS OF PILLS  
AND POWDERS

William Alcott

**Forty Years in the Wilderness  
of Pills and Powders**

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**William A. Alcott**  
**Forty Years in the Wilderness of**  
**Pills and Powders / Cogitations and**  
**Confessions of an Aged Physician**

**PREFACE**

The present volume was one of the last upon which its author was engaged, the facts having been gathered from the experience and observation of a long life. It was his design to publish them anonymously, but under the changed circumstances this is rendered impracticable.

A short time previous to his death, the writer spoke of this work, and said, in allusion to the termination of his own somewhat peculiar case, – "This *last chapter* must be added." In accordance with this desire, a brief sketch, having reference chiefly to his health and physical habits, with the closing chapter of his life, has been appended.

*Boston, June, 1859.*

## TO THE READER

In the sub-title to the following work, I have used the word "Confessions" – not to mislead the reader, but because *to confess* is one prominent idea of its author. It is a work in which confessions of the impotence of the healing art, as that art has been usually understood, greatly abound; and in which the public ignorance of the laws of health or hygiene, with the consequences of that ignorance, are presented with great plainness. The world will make a wiser use of its medical men than it has hitherto done, when it comes to see more clearly what is their legitimate and what their ultimate mission.

These remarks indicate the main intention of the writer. It is not so much to enlighten or aid, or in any way directly affect the medical man, as to open the eyes of the public to their truest interests; to a just knowledge of themselves; and to some faint conception of their bondage to credulity and quackery. The reader will find that I go for science and truth, let them affect whom they may. Let him, then, suspend his judgment till he has gone through this volume once, and I shall have no fears. He may, indeed, find fault with my style, and complain of my literary or philosophic unfitness for the task I assigned myself; but he will, nevertheless, be glad to know my facts.

Should any one feel aggrieved by the exposures I have made in the details which follow, let me assure him that no one is more exposed – nor, indeed, has more cause to be aggrieved – than myself. Let us all, then, as far as is practicable, keep our own secrets. Let us not shrink from such exposures as are likely, in a large measure, to benefit mankind, while the greatest possible inconvenience or loss to ourselves is but trifling.

Some may wish that instead of confining myself too rigidly to naked fact and sober reasoning, I had given a little more scope to the imagination. But is not plain, "unvarnished" truth sometimes not only "stranger," but, in a work like this, better also, than any attempts at "fiction"?

*The Author.*

*Auburndale, March, 1859.*

## CHAPTER I

### EDUCATIONAL TENDENCIES

I was born in a retired but pleasant part of New England, as New England was half a century ago, and as, in many places, despite of its canals, steamboats, railroads, and electromagnetic telegraphs, it still is. Hence I am entitled to the honor of being, in the most emphatic sense, a native of the land of "steady habits."

The people with whom I passed my early years, though comparatively rude and uncultivated, were yet, in their manners and character, quite simple. Most of them could spell and read, and write their names, and a few could "cipher" as far as simple subtraction. To obtain the last-mentioned accomplishment, however, was not easy, for arithmetic was not generally permitted in the public schools during the six hours of the day; and could only be obtained in the occasional evening school, or by self-exertion at home.

The majority of my townsmen also knew something of the dream-book and of palmistry, and of the influence of the moon (especially when first seen, after the change, over the right shoulder), not only on the weather and on vegetation, but on the world of humanity. They also understood full well, what troubles were betokened by the howling of a dog, the blossoming of a flower out of due season, or the beginning of a journey or of a job of work on Tuesday or Friday. Many of them knew how to tell fortunes in connection with a cup of tea. Nay, more, not a few of them were skilled in astrology, and by its aid could tell under what planet a person was born, and perchance, could predict thereby the future events of his life; at least after those events had actually taken place.

Under what particular planet I was born, my friends never told me; though it is quite possible some of my sage grandmothers or aunts could have furnished the needful information had I sought it. They used to look often at the lines in the palms of my hands, and talk much about my dreams, which were certainly a little aspiring, and in many respects remarkable. The frequent prediction of one of these aged and wise friends I remember very well. It was, that I would eat my bread in two kingdoms. This prediction was grounded on the fact, that the hair on the top of my head was so arranged by the plastic hand of Nature as to form what were called two crowns; and was so far fulfilled, that I have occasionally eaten bread within the realms of Queen Victoria!

According to the family register, kept in the cranium of my mother, I was born on Monday, which doubtless served to justify the frequent repetition of the old adage, and its application to my own case – "Born on Monday, fair of face." I was also born on the sixth day of the month, on account of which it was said that the sixth verse of the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs was, prospectively, a key to my character. It is certainly true that I have dealt out not a little "strong drink to him that" was "ready to perish;" and that few of my professional brethren have furnished a larger proportion of it gratuitously; or as Solomom says, have *given* it.

Whether there was any clear or distinct prophecy ever uttered that I would one day be a knight of the lancet, clad in full armor, is not certain. If there was, I presume it was unwritten. That I was to be distinguished in some way, everybody appeared to understand and acknowledge. I was not only at the head of all my classes at school, in spelling, reading, and writing, but exalted above most of my competitors and compeers by a whole head and shoulders. In ciphering, in particular, I excelled. I understood the grand rules of arithmetic, and could even work a little in the Rule of Three.

That the thought of being a "doctor" did, in a sort of indefinable way, sometimes enter my head, even at that early period, I will not deny. One of my teachers, as I well remember, had medical books, into which bars and bolts could hardly prevent me from peeping. But there were a thousand lions in the way – or at least *two or three*. One was extreme indigence on the part of my parents. They came together nearly as poor as John Bunyan and his wife, or Sydney Smith and his companion. Or

if, in addition to a knife, fork, and spoon, they had a looking-glass, an old iron kettle, an axe, and a hoe, I am sure the inventory of their property at first could not have extended much farther; and now that they had a family of four children, their wants had increased about as fast as their income.

Besides, there was a confused belief in the public mind – and of course in mine – that medical men were a species of conjurors; or if nothing more, that they had a sort of mysterious knowledge of human character, obtained by dealing with the stars, or by reliance on some supernatural source or other. And to such a height as this I could not at that time presume to aspire; though I certainly did aspire, even at a very early period, to become a learned man.

As a means to such an end, I early felt an ardent desire to become a printer. This desire originated, in part at least, from reading the autobiography of Dr. Franklin, of which I was exceedingly fond. It was a desire, moreover, which I was very slow to relinquish till compelled. My father, as we have seen, was a poor laborer, and thought himself unable either to give me any extra opportunities of education, or to spare me from the cultivation of a few paternal acres. Still, in secret, I I clung to the hope of one day traversing the lengths and breadths and depths and heights of the world of science.

But for what purpose, as a final end? for, practically, the great question was, *cui bono*? As for becoming a lawyer, that, with me, was quite out of the question; for lawyers, even thus early, were generally regarded as bad men. All over the region of my nativity the word lawyer was nearly synonymous with liar; and to liars and lawyers the Devil was supposed to have a peculiar liking, not to say affinity. I had never at that time heard of but one honest lawyer; and him I regarded as a sort of *lusus naturæ* much more than as an ordinary human being. My friends would have been shocked at the bare thought of my becoming a lawyer, had the road to that profession been open to my youthful aspirations.

The clerical profession was in some respects looked upon more favorably than the legal or the medical. I was scarcely "three feet high" when an aged and venerable grandmother said one day, *in my hearing*, and probably *for my hearing*, "I always did hope one of my grandsons would be a minister." This, however, neither interested me much nor encouraged me; for (reader will you believe it?), as the doctor was regarded in those days as more than half a sorcerer, and the lawyer three-fourths devil, so the minister was deemed by many as almost half an idiot, except for his learning.

I am not, by any means, trifling with you. It was the serious belief of many – I think I might say of most – that those boys who "took to learning" were by nature rather "weak in the attic," especially those who inclined to the ministry. It was a common joke concerning an idiot or half idiot, "send him to college."<sup>1</sup>

In short, so strongly was this unfounded impression concerning the native imbecility of ministers, and in general of literary men, fastened on my mind as well as on the minds of most people, that I grew up nearly to manhood with a sort of confused belief that as a general rule they were below par in point of good, common sense. One prominent reason, as I supposed, why they were sent to college and wrought into that particular shape, was to bring them up to an equality with their fellows. Hence, I not only repelled with a degree of indignation the thought of becoming a minister, but felt really demeaned by my natural fondness for books and school; and like the poet Cowper, hardly dared, all my early lifetime, to look higher than the shoe buckles of my associates. Still, I could not wholly suppress the strong desire to *know* which had penetrated and pervaded my soul, and which had been nurtured and fed not only by an intelligent mother but by a few books I had read. Perhaps the life of Franklin, already referred to, had as much influence with me as any thing of the kind. For along with the love of knowledge which was so much developed by this book, the love of doing good was introduced. The doctor says, somewhere, that he always set a high value on a doer of good; and

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<sup>1</sup> To illustrate this point, and show clearly the state of the public opinion, I will relate an anecdote. A certain calf in the neighborhood, after long and patient trial, was pronounced too ignorant to be able to procure his own nourishment, or in other words, was said to be a fool. On raising the question, what should be done with him, a shrewd colored man who stood by, said, "Master, send him to college!"



it is possible, nay, I might even say probable, that this desire, which subsequently became a passion with me, had its origin in this very remark.

## CHAPTER II

### MY FIRST MEDICAL LESSON

Straws, it is said, show which way the wind blows; and words, and things very small in themselves, sometimes show, much better than "two crowns," or the "stars," what is to be the future of a person's life. The choice of a profession or occupation, were we but trained to the habit of tracing effects up to their causes, will doubtless often be found to have had its origin, if not in *straws*, at least in very small matters.

When I was ten years of age, my little brother, of only two years, sat one day on the floor whittling an apple. The instrument in his hand was a Barlow knife, as it was then called. The blade was about two inches in length, but was worn very narrow. How his parents and other friends, several of whom were in the same room, came to let him use such a plaything, I cannot now conceive; but as the point was almost square, and the knife very dull, they do not seem hitherto to have had any fears.

Suddenly the usual quiet of the family was disturbed a little by the announcement, "Somebody is going by;" an event which, as you should know, was quite an era in that retired, mountainous region. All hastened to the window to get a view of the passing traveller. The little boy scampered among the rest; but in crossing the threshold of a door which intervened, he stumbled and fell. A sudden shriek called to him one of our friends, who immediately cried out, "Oh dear, he has put out his eye!" and made a hasty but unsuccessful effort to extract the knife, which had penetrated the full length of its blade. The mother hastened to the spot, and drew it forth, though, as she afterward said, not without the exertion of considerable force. Its back was towards the child, and by pressing the ball of the eye downward, the instrument had been able to penetrate to the bottom of the cavity, and perhaps a little way into the bone beyond. The elasticity of the eyeball had retained it so as to render its extraction seemingly difficult.

Most of those who were present, particularly myself and the rest of the children, were for a short time in a state of mental agony that bordered on insanity. Not knowing at first the nature of the wound, but only that there was an eye there, and brains very near it, we naturally expected nothing less than the loss of this precious organ of vision, if not of life. There was no practising physician or surgeon, just at that time, within five or six miles, and I do not remember that any was sent for. We probably concluded that he could do no good.

The child's eye swelled, and for a few days looked very badly; but after the lapse of about two weeks the little fellow seemed to be quite well; and so far as his eyes and brain are concerned, I believe he has been well to this time, a period of almost half a century.

Although we resided at a considerable distance from the village, and from any practising physician, there was near by a very aged and superannuated man, who had once been a medical practitioner. Our curiosity had been so much excited by the wonderful escape of the little boy from impending destruction, that we called on the venerable doctor and asked him whether it was possible for a knife to penetrate so far into the head without injuring the brain and producing some degree of inflammation. From Dr. C. we received a good deal of valuable information concerning the structure of the eye, the shape of the cavity in which it is placed, the structure and character of the brain, etc.

This was a great treat to me, I assure you. It added not a little to the interest which was imparted by his instructions when he showed us, from the relics of better days, some of the bones of the skull, especially those of the frontal region, in which the eye is situated. Of course the sight of a death's head, as we were inclined to call it, was at first frightful to us; but it was a feeling which in part soon passed away. It was a feeling, most certainly, which in me was not abiding at all. Indeed, as the title to the chapter would seem to imply, I received in this dispensation of Providence and its accompaniments my first medical lesson; though without the remotest thought, at the time, of any

such thing. I was only indulging in a curiosity which was instinctive and intense, without dreaming of future consequences.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ELECTRICAL MACHINE

Two years after this, an aged man, a distant relation, came to reside in my father's family for a short time, and brought with him a small electrical machine. He was a person of some intelligence, had travelled much, and had been an officer in the army of the American Revolution. On the whole, he was just such a man as would be likely to become a favorite with children. He was, moreover, fully imbued with the expectation of being able to cure diseases by means of electricity; which in our neighborhood, at the least, was quite a novel, not to say a heterodox idea.

Curiosity alone had no small share of influence in bringing my mind to the study of electricity; but a general desire to understand the subject was greatly strengthened by the hope of being able to apply this wonderful agent in the cure of disease. One of the most interesting phases of Christianity is that the love and practice of healing the bodily maladies of mankind are almost always seen in the foreground of the New Testament representations of our Saviour's doings; and it is no wonder that a youth who reverences his Bible, and has a little benevolence, should entertain feelings like those above mentioned.

The owner of the machine had brought with him a book on the subject of curing by electricity. It was a volume of several hundred pages, and was written by T. Gale, of Northern New York. It had in it much that was mere theory, in a highly bombastic style; but it also professed to give with accuracy the details of many remarkable cures, in various forms and stages, of several difficult diseases; and some of these details I knew to be realities. One or two cases at or near Ballston Springs were those of persons of whom I had some knowledge; and one of them was a relative. This last circumstance, no doubt, had great influence on my mind.

As I had in those days some leisure for reading, and possessed very few books, I read – and not only read but studied – Dr. Gale's work from beginning to end. It is scarcely too much to say, that I read it till I knew it almost "by heart;" and my heart assented to it. I believed a new dispensation was at hand to bless the world of mankind; and what benevolence I had, began to be directed in this particular channel. I do not mean to say, that at twelve years of age I began to be a physician, for I do not now recollect that either our aged friend or myself ever had a patient during the whole year he remained with us.

Eight or ten subsequent years at the plough and hoe, and the absence of book, electrical machine, and owner, did much towards obliterating the impressions on this subject I had received. Still, I have no doubt that the affair as a whole had a tendency to lead my thoughts towards the study and practice of medicine, and even to inspire confidence in electricity as a curative agent. In other and fewer words, it was, as I believe, a part of my medical education.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MEASLES AND POURING DOWN RUM

When I was about fourteen years of age, an event occurred which left a stronger impression on my mind than any of the foregoing; and hence in all probability did more to give my mind a medical bias and tendency.

It was in the month of August. My father, assisted by two or three of his neighbors, was mowing a swamp meadow. It was an unusually wet season, and the water in many places was several inches deep, – in some few instances so deep that we were obliged to go continually with wet feet. To meet, and as it was by most people supposed to remove the danger of contracting disease, a bottle of rum was occasionally resorted to by the mowers, and offered to me; but at first I steadfastly refused it.

At length, however, I began to droop. A feverish feeling and great languor came over me, and I was hardly able to walk. I was not then aware, nor were my friends, that I had been exposed to the contagion of measles, and therefore was not expecting it. I spoke of my ill health, but was consoled with the answer that I should soon get over it. But no; I grew worse, very fast. "Turn down the rum," said one of the mowers, "if you mean to work." But I hesitated. I was not fond of rum at any time, and just now I felt a stronger disinclination to it than ever before. "Turn down the rum," was repeated by the mowers, from time to time, with increased emphasis.

At length wearied with their importunity; and, not over-willing to be the butt of their mirth and ridicule, I went to the spring, where the bottle of rum was kept, and, unperceived by any one, emptied a large portion of its contents on the ground. The mental agitation of temporary excitement dispelled in part my sufferings, and I proceeded once more to my work.

In a very short time my noisy alcoholic prescribers went to the spring to pour rum down their *own* throats. "What," said they, with much surprise, "has become of the rum?" "Have you drank it?" said they, turning to me. "Not a drop of it," I said. "But it is almost all gone," they said; "and it is a great mystery what has become of it." "The mystery is easily cleared up," I said; "you told me to turn it down, and I have done so." – "Told you to turn it down!" said one of them, the most noisy one; "I told you to drink it." – "No," said I, "you told me to turn it down; and I have poured it down – my part of it – at the foot of the stump. If you have forgotten your direction to turn it down, I appeal to two competent witnesses."

The joke passed off much better than I expected. For myself, however, I grew worse rapidly, and was soon sent home. My mother put me into bed, applied a bottle of hot water to my feet, and gave me hot drinks most liberally, and among the rest some "hot toddy." Her object was to sweat away a supposed attack of fever. Had she known it was measles that assailed me, or had she even suspected it, she would almost as soon have cut off her right hand as apply the sweating process. She would, on the contrary, have given me cooling drinks and pure air. She was not wholly divested of good sense on this point, neither was the prevailing public opinion.

I suffered much, very much, and was for a part of the time delirious. At length an eruption began to be visible, and to assume the appearance which is usual in measles, both to my own relief and that of my parents and other friends. But the mistaken treatment, or the disease, or both, gave a shock to my already somewhat delicate constitution, from which I doubt whether I ever fully recovered. The sequel, however, will appear more fully in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### LEE'S PILLS, AND THE DROPSY

In consequence either of the disease or its mismanagement, I was left, on recovering from the measles, with a general dropsy. I might also say here, that at the recurrence of the same season, for many years afterwards, I was attacked with a complaint so nearly resembling measles that some who were strangers to me could hardly be diverted from the belief that it was the veritable disease itself.

But to the dropsy. This disease, so unusual in young people, especially those of my sanguine and nervous temperament, alarmed both my parents and myself, and medical advice was forthwith invoked. Our family physician was an old man, bred in the full belief of the necessity in such cases of what are called "alteratives," which, in plain English, means substances so active as to produce, when applied to the body either externally or internally, certain sudden changes. Alteratives, in short, are either irritants or poisons.

Our aged doctor was called in to see me; and after the usual compliments, and perhaps a passing joke or two, – for both of which he was quite famous, – he asked me to let him see my tongue. Next, he felt my pulse. All the while – a matter exceedingly important to success – he looked "wondrous wise." He also asked me sundry wondrous wise questions. They were at least couched in wondrous words of monstrous length.

The examination fairly over, there followed a pause; not, indeed, an "awful pause," but one of a few seconds, or perhaps in all of half a minute. "Now," said he, "you must take one of Lee's pills every day, in roasted apple." There were other directions, but this was the principal, except to avoid taking cold. The pills, of course, contained a proportion of mercury or calomel, on the alterative effects of which, as I plainly perceived, he placed his chief dependence.

I took the pills, daily, for about six weeks; but they produced very little apparent effect, except to spoil my appetite. What their remoter effects were on my constitution generally, is quite another question. Suffice it to say, for the present, that for his occasional calls and wondrous wise looks, and his Lee's pills, he made quite a considerable bill. We were, it is true, always glad to see him, for he was pretty sure to crack a joke or two during his stay, and he sometimes told a good story. Nor, after all, were his charges remarkably high. For coming two or three miles to see me, he only made a charge of fifty cents a visit.

It was near the beginning of October, and I was "getting no better very fast." A young physician had in the mean time come into the place, and my friends were anxious to call him in as "counsel." He proposed digitalis, and the family physician consented to it. But it was all to no purpose; I was still a bloated mass, and extremely enfeebled.

At length, after some two or three months of ill health and loss of time, and the expenditure of considerable money on physicians and medicine, our good family doctor proposed a tea made from certain sweet roots, such as fennel, parsley, etc. Of this I was to drink very freely. I followed his advice, and in a few days the dropsy disappeared. Whether it was ready to depart just at this precise time, or whether the tea hastened its departure, I never knew. In any event, one thing is certain; that, either with its aid or in spite of it, I got rid of the dropsy; and it nevermore returned.

But it is one thing to get rid of an inveterate disease, and quite another to be restored to our wonted measure of health and strength. The disease or the medicine or both had greatly debilitated me. I tried to attend school, but was unable till January or February; nor even then was I at all vigorous. I was able in the spring to work moderately; but it was almost a whole year before I occupied the same ground, physically, as before. Indeed, I have very many doubts whether I ever attained to the measure of strength to which I might have attained had it not been for the expenditure of vital power in a long contest with Lee's pills and disease.

One lesson I learned, during my long sickness, in moral philosophy. I allude to the power of associated habits. Thus I was accustomed to take my pills daily for a long time, in combination with the pulp of a certain favorite apple. By degrees this apple, before so congenial to my taste, became so exceedingly disgusting to me that I could hardly come in sight of it, or even of the tree on which it grew, without nausea; and this dislike continued for years. By the aid of a strong will, however, I at length overcame it, and the apple is now as agreeable to my taste, for any thing I know, as it ever was.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE COLD SHOWER-BATH

My long experience of ill health, and of dosing and drugging, had led me to reflect not a little on the causes of disease, as well as on the nature of medicinal agents; and I had really made considerable progress, unawares, in what I now regard as the most important part of a medical education. In short, I had gained something, even by the loss of so precious commodity as health. So just is the oft-repeated saying, "It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good."

It was about this time that I began to reflect on bathing. What gave me the first particular impulses in this direction I do not now recollect, unless it was the perusal of the writings of Dr. Benjamin Rush and Dr. John G. Coffin. My attention had been particularly turned to cold shower bathing. I had become more than half convinced of its happy adaptation to my own constitution and to my diseased tendencies, both hereditary and acquired.

But what could I do? There were in those times no fleeting shower-baths to be had; nor indeed, so far as I knew, any other apparatus for the purpose; and had there been, I was not worth a dollar in the world to buy it with; and I was hardly willing to ask for money, for such purposes of my father.

I will tell you, very briefly, what I did. My father had several clean and at that time unoccupied stables, one of which was as retired as the most fastidious person could have wished. In one of these stables, directly overhead, I contrived to suspend by its two handles a corn basket, in such a way that I could turn it over upon its side and retain it in this position as long as I pleased. Into this basket, when suspended sideways, and slightly fastened, I was accustomed to set a basin or pail of water; and when I was ready for its reception, I had but to pull a string and overturn the basket in order to obtain all the benefits of a cold and plentiful shower.

Here, daily, for almost a whole summer, I used my cold shower-bath, and, as I then thought and still believe, with great advantage. My consumptive tendencies were held at bay during the time very effectually. I was fortunate, indeed, in being able always, with the aid of a coarse towel and a little friction, to secure a pretty full reaction.

This season of cold bathing was when I was about sixteen years of age. I shall ever look back to it as one of the most important, not to say most interesting, of my *experiences*. Indeed, I do not know that in any six months of my life I ever gained so much physical capital – thus to call it; by which I mean bodily vigor – as during these six months of the year 1814.

I may also add here, that it has been my lot all my life long to learn quite as much from experiment and observation as in any other way. The foregoing experience gave me much knowledge of the laws of hygiene. Sometimes, while reflecting on this subject, I have thought of the assurance of the Apostle John, that he who "doeth truth cometh to the light," and have wondered whether the good apostle, along with this highly important truth, did not mean to intimate that the natural tendency of holy living was to an increase of light and love and holiness. And then I have gone a step further, and asked myself whether it was not possible that the doing of *physical* truth as well as *moral*, had the same tendency.

I have alluded to experience, or experiment. It is sometimes said that medical men are very much inclined to make experiments on their patients. Now, although I have a few sad confessions of this sort to make hereafter, yet I can truly say, in advance, that while I have made comparatively few experiments on other people, I have probably, during the progress of a long life, made more experiments on myself, both in sickness and in health, than any other existing individual. Whether I have learned as much in this way as I ought, in such favored circumstances, is quite another question.



## CHAPTER VII

### MY FIRST SICKNESS ABROAD

When I was about half-way through my nineteenth year, a desire to see the world became so strong that I made up my mind to a little travelling. Accordingly, having provided myself with an employment which would, without a great deal of hindrance, enable me to earn my passing expenses, I set out on my journey.

It was in the month of March, and near its close. The weather was mild, and the snow was fast disappearing – but not as yet the mud. In walking all day, my boots became soaked and my feet wet. The era of India rubbers had not then arrived. In truth, I went with my feet wet in the afternoon two or three days.

On the evening of the third day I came to the house of the friends with whom I was desirous of stopping not only for the Sabbath's sake, which was now at hand, but to rest and recruit. The next morning I was quite sick, and my friends were alarmed. It was proposed to send for a physician; but against this I uttered my protest, and the plan was accordingly abandoned.

The next purpose of my kind friends was to bring on a perspiration. They were accustomed in these cases to aim at sweating. This is indeed a violence to nature; but they knew no better. The mistress of the house was one of those self-assured women who cannot brook any interference or submit willingly to any modification of their favorite plans. Otherwise I should even then have preferred a gentle perspiration, longer continued. Yet on the whole, for the sake of peace, I submitted to my fate, and went through the fiery furnace which was prepared for me. More than even this I might say. I was cooler, much cooler, when I got through the fire than when I was in the midst of it!

In three days I was, in a good measure, restored. I was, it is true, left very weak, but was free from fever. My strength rapidly returned; and on the fifth day I was able to set out for home, where in due time I safely arrived.

During this excursion I learned one good lesson, if no more. This was, the danger of going day after day with wet feet. A vigorous person may go with wet or damp feet a little while, in the early part of the day, when in full strength, with comparative safety; but towards evening, when the vital forces are at ebb tide, or at least are ebbing, it is unsafe. The feeble especially should guard themselves in this direction; nor should those who may perchance at some future time be feeble, despise the suggestion.

One important resolution was also made. This was never to use violent efforts to induce perspiration. Such a course of treatment I saw clearly, as I thought, must be contrary to the intentions of nature; and time and further observation and experiment have confirmed me in this opinion. There may of course be exceptions to the truth of such a general inference; but I am sure they cannot be very numerous. What though the forcing plan seems to have succeeded quite happily in my own case? So it has in thousands of others. So might a treatment still more irrational. Mankind are tough, and will frequently live on for a considerable time in spite of treatment which is manifestly wrong, and even without any treatment at all.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LESSON FROM AN OLD SURGEON

Five or six miles from the place of my nativity a family resided whom I shall call by the name of Port. Among the ancestry of this family, time out of mind, there had been more, or fewer of what are usually called natural bone setters. They were known far and near; and no effort short of miraculous would have been sufficient to shake the confidence which ignorance and credulity had reposed in them.

One or two of these natural bone setters were now in the middle stage of life, and in the full zenith of their glory. The name of the most prominent was Joseph. He was a man of some acquired as well as inherited knowledge; but he was indolent, coarse, vulgar, and at times profane. Had it not been for his family rank and his own skill as a surgeon, of which he really had a tolerable share, he would have been no more than at best a common man, and occasionally would have passed for little more than a common blackguard.

I was in a shop one day conversing with Capt. R., when Dr. Port came in. "Capt. R., how are you?" was the first compliment. "Very well," said the captain, "except a lame foot." "I see you have one foot wrapped up," said Dr. Port; "what is the matter with it?" – "I cut it with an axe, the other day," said he, "very badly." – "On the upper part of the foot?" said the doctor. "Yes, directly on the instep," said Capt. R. "Is it doing well?" – "Not very well," he replied; "and I came into town to-day partly to see and converse with you about it." – "Well, then, undo it and let me have a look at it."

Wrapper after wrapper was now taken from the lame foot, till Dr. Port began to scowl. "You keep it too warm," said he. "A wound of this sort should be kept cool, if you don't wish to have it inflame. A slight wrapping is all that is needful." They came at length to the wound. "It does not look very badly," said Dr. Port; "but you must keep it cool. And then," added he with an oath, the very thought of which to this day almost makes me shudder, "You must keep your nasty, abominable ointments away from it. Remember one thing, Capt. R., whenever you have a new flesh wound, all you can possibly do with any hope of advantage is to bring the divided edges of the parts together and keep them there, and nature will take care of the rest."

"Would you, then, do nothing at all but bind it up and keep it still?" said Capt. R. "Nothing at all," said he, "unless it should inflame; and then a little water applied to it is as good as any thing." – "But is there nothing of a healing nature I can use?" said the captain. "I have told you already," said he, with another strange oath, "that you don't want any thing healing on the outside, if you had a cart-load of medicaments. All wounds, when they heal at all, heal from the bottom; and of course all your external applications are useless, except so far as is necessary to protect the parts from fresh injury and keep them from the air."

The crowd around looked as if they were amazed; but it was Dr. Port who said it, and therefore it must be swallowed. I was somewhat surprised with the rest. And I have not a doubt that what he said was to most of them an invaluable lecture. For myself, as a student of *man*, it was just what I needed. It set me to thinking. It was a lesson which I could never forget if I were to live a thousand years.

It was a lesson, moreover, which I have repeated almost a thousand times, in circumstances not dissimilar. Indeed, I believe this very occurrence did much to turn my attention to the medical profession. I saw at once it was a rational thing; a matter of plain common sense; a thing of principle; and not on the one hand a bundle of mysteries, nor on the other a mere humbug.

Dr. Port long ago paid the debt of nature; but not till he had made his mark on the age he lived in. If, indeed, he died as the fool dieth, – and thus it was said he *did* die, – he was at least a means of teaching others to live right. He did great good by his frequent wise precepts, as well as not a little harm by his sometimes immoral example. For myself, I honor him because he was my teacher on

a point of great practical importance, and because he was to thousands of over-credulous people a light and a benefactor.

Although I had not at this time any very serious thoughts of becoming a physician and surgeon, yet I certainly inclined in that direction. My great poverty was the chief difficulty that lay in my way; but this difficulty at that time seemed insurmountable. Besides, I was wedded to my father's farm, and I did not see how the banns could very well be sundered.

## CHAPTER IX

### LEE'S WINDHAM BILIOUS PILLS

I was, at length, twenty-two years of age. I had about fifty dollars in my pocket, besides a few books. But what would this do towards giving me a liberal education? And yet, to an education in the schools, of some sort, either as a means to a profession, or as affording facilities for obtaining knowledge or communicating it to others, I certainly did aspire. But I seemed compelled for the present to plod on in the old way.

There had been, but recently, a gold fever – not, it is true, of California, but of Carolina. The young men of the North, shrewd, intelligent, active, and ambitious Yankees, had flocked by hundreds, if not by thousands, from New England to the Southern States, to sell tin ware and clocks, especially the former. The trade at first had been very lucrative. Though many had been made poor by it, yet many more had been made rich. I do not say how honorably the trade had been conducted. To sell tin lanterns, worth fifty cents each, for silver, at fifty dollars, and tin toddy sticks, worth a New York shilling, for twelve dollars, did not in the final result redound much to our New England credit. Though it brought us gold, it did not permanently enrich us.

A much better trade had now, in 1820, sprung up with the South. The North – the great nursery of America – had still a surplus of young men who wanted to go somewhere. A part of them found their way to Carolina and Georgia, and engaged during the winter, and occasionally through the year, in teaching; while another part labored on their canals and railroads and in their shops. This was to furnish the South with a commodity of real value, for which we received in return a fair compensation. Besides, it had a better effect than clock and tin peddling, both on the seller and buyer.

To improve my pecuniary condition, and to acquaint myself with the world, I prepared to embark for the South. My purpose was to teach. It was the beginning of October, and yellow fever was said to be raging in Charleston, where I purposed to disembark. Was it, then, safe for me to go? Should the prospect of doing good, improving my mind, and bettering my condition in many other respects, weigh against the danger of disease; or was it preferable that I should wait?

My numerous friends counselled me according to their various temperaments and prepossessions. The strong and vigorous in body and mind said, *Go on*; the feeble and timorous and trembling interposed their caution. But the vessel was ready and would soon sail; and I saw on board many of my acquaintances. The temptation was before me, and was great; the dangers, though many, were remote – the dangers of the sea excepted. For these, it is true, I was, like everybody else, entirely unprepared, having never before in my life crossed more than a single river. I was moreover exceedingly timid.

One kind friend – kind, I mean, in general intention – who had been many years at the South, amid the ravages of the gold fever, as well as other fevers more or less yellow, whispered me just at this critical moment, "Take with you a box of Lee's Windham Bilious Pills; and as soon as you arrive at Charleston, make it your rule to swallow, every other day, one of these pills. That will prevent your getting the fever. I have often tried it, and always with success."

My friend's words gave me more courage than his pills. I saw that he had been in the midst of sickness and had lived through it. Why might not I? My mind was soon made up to proceed on the journey.

We sailed from New Haven in Connecticut, and were seventeen days on our passage. When we reached Charleston, either the yellow fever had spent itself or it had not recently been there, except in a few rare instances. I found no use for pills of any kind, except *such as grew on fruit-trees* – the apple, peach, orange, persimmon, etc., or such as were the products of the corn, potato, and rice fields; nor

did I ever take any other while I remained in the South. A queer idea, I often said to myself, that of taking poison while a person is well, in order to prevent becoming sick! In any event, I did not do it.

There was sickness in the country, however, if not in the city; and I was much and often exposed to it. But what then? How would one of Lee's pills defend me from it, even for two days? I preferred to eat and drink and sleep correctly, and then trust to my good fortune and to Him who controlled it, rather than to nauseous and poisonous medicine. And I had my choice, and with it a blessed reward. I was in the low country of North and South Carolina and Virginia six months or more, and often and again much exposed to disease, and yet I never had a sick day while I remained there. And yet, as I have before intimated, I never took a particle of medicine during the whole time.

Once, indeed, I was beguiled into the foolish habit of using French brandy with my dinner, under the idea that it would promote digestion. But I did not continue it long; and I verily believe that it did me more harm than good while I used it; for I have at no other period of my life suffered so much from dyspeptic tendencies as during the summer which followed this temporary indulgence of brandy with my dinner.

During my wanderings in the South, I had, much of the time, a fellow traveller, who, though he took no medicine, was less cautious than myself, and less fortunate. Perhaps his very recklessness served as a warning to me. In truth, without being much of a theologian, I have sometimes thought that the errors of mankind were intended in the divine plan – at least in part – for this very end. Happy, then, if this is so, are they who make a wise use of them!

## CHAPTER X

### DR. SOLOMON AND HIS PATIENT

I have said that my fellow traveller was less cautious than myself, and have intimated much more. He was in some respects cautious, and yet in others absolutely reckless. When hot and thirsty, for example, instead of just rinsing out his mouth and swallowing a very little water, he would half-fill his stomach with some of that semi-putrid stuff, ycleped water, which you often find in Virginia and the Carolinas; and when hungry, he would eat almost any thing he could lay hold of, and in almost any quantity, as well as at almost any hours, whether seasonable or unseasonable.

This course of conduct seemed to answer very well for a few months; but a day of retribution at last came. He was then in Norfolk, in Virginia. I had been absent from the place a few weeks, and on my return found him sick with a fever, and without such assistance as was absolutely and indispensably necessary. There were Yankees in the place in great numbers, and some of them were his personal acquaintances and friends; but they had hitherto refused to come near him, lest they should take the fever.

I proceeded to take care of him by night and by day. At the suggestion of an old citizen, in whom I placed great confidence, Dr. Solomon was called in as his physician. There was some bleeding and drugging, and a pretty constant attendance for many weeks; but the young man finally recovered.

If you ask what this chapter has to do with my medical confessions, I will tell you. Dr. Solomon was an old school physician, and made certain blunders, which I am about to confess for him. He prescribed – as very many of us his medical brethren formerly did, for the *name* of a disease rather than for the disease itself, just as it now appeared.

Thus, suppose the disease was typhus fever; in that case he seemed to give just about so many pills and powders every day, without much regard to the circumstances; believing that somehow or other, and at some time or other, good would come out of it. If his patient had sufficient force of constitution to enable him to withstand both the disease and the medicine, and ultimately to recover, Dr. S. had the credit of a cure; not, perhaps that he claimed it, – his friends awarded the honor. If the patient died, it was on account of the severity of the disease. Neither the doctor nor his medicine was supposed to be at fault. Some, indeed, regarded it as the mysterious work of Divine Providence.

Dr. S. attended my young companion in pedestrianism a long time, and sometimes brought a student into the bargain. He probably kept his patient insane with his medicine about half the time, and greatly prolonged his disease and his sufferings. But he knew no better way. He was trained to all this. The idea that half a dozen careful visits, instead of fifty formal ones, and a few shillings' worth of medicine instead of some twenty or thirty dollars' worth, would give the young man a better prospect of recovery than his own routine of fashionable book-dosing and drugging, never for once, I dare say, entered his head. And yet his head was large enough to hold such a simple idea, had it been put there very early; and the deposit would have done much to make him – what physicians will one day become – a rich blessing to the world.

Reader, are here no confessions of medical importance? If not, bear with me awhile, and you will probably find them. We have yet a long road to travel, and there are many confessions to be made in which I have a personal concern and responsibility, and, as you may perhaps conclude, no small share of downright culpability.

## CHAPTER XI

### PHYSICKING OFF FEVER

The eyes of my mind having just begun to be opened to the impotence of a mere routine of medication as a *substitute for nature*, rather than *as an aid to her enfeebled efforts*, I was prepared to make a wise use of other facts that came before me, especially those in which I had a personal concern and interest. Here is one of this description.

On the morning of March 12, 1821, during the very period when I was watching over my sick friend, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, I took from the post-office a letter with a black seal. It contained the distressing intelligence of the death of a much-valued sister and her husband, both of whom, but a few months before, I had left in apparently perfect health.

On a careful inquiry into the particulars, both by letter and, after my return, in other ways, I learned that the Connecticut River fever, as it was then and there called, having carried off several persons who were residing in the same house with my brother, the survivors were advised to do something to prevent the germination and development of such seeds of the disease as were supposed to be in their bodies and ready to burst forth into action. I do not know that any medical man encouraged this notion, the offspring of ignorance and superstition; but my brother and his wife had somehow or other imbibed it, and they governed themselves accordingly.

Both of them took medicine – moderate cathartics – till they thought they had physicked off the disease; and all seemed, for a time, to be well, except that they complained still of great weakness and debility. It was not long, however, before they were both taken with the disease and perished; my brother in a very short time, and my sister more slowly.

My sister, on being taken ill, had been removed to the house of her mother, in the hope that a change of air might do something for her; but all in vain. My mother and a few other friends who were with them as assistants sickened, but they all ultimately recovered. They, however, took no medicine by way of prevention.

Now I do not presume to say, that my young friends were destroyed solely by medicine, for the assertion would be unwarranted. I only state the facts, and tell you what my convictions then were, and what they are still. My belief is, that though they might have sickened had they taken no medicine or preventive, yet their chance of recovery after they sickened was very much diminished by the unnecessary and uncalled-for dosing and drugging.

The notion that we can physick off the seeds of disease, or by our dosing prevent their germination, is as erroneous as can possibly be, and is a prolific source of much suffering and frequent death. The best preventive of disease is good health. Now, physicking off generally weakens us, instead of giving strength. It takes away from our good health instead of adding to or increasing it. As a general rule, to which there are very few exceptions, all medicine, when disease is unusually common or fatal, is hazardous without sound medical advice, and not generally safe even then. It is fit only for extreme cases.

You may be at a loss to understand how such facts and reflections as these could allure me to the study and practice of medicine as a profession. Yet they most certainly had influence. Not that I felt a very strong desire to deal out medicine, for to this I felt a repugnance which strengthened with increase of years and experience. What I most ardently desired was to know the causes of disease, and how far they were or were not within human control. Such a science as that of *hygiene*— nay, even the word itself, and the phrase *laws of health*— was at that time wholly unknown in the world in which I moved. There was, in truth, no way then to this species of knowledge, except through the avenues opened by a course of medical study. Hence it was that I blundered on, in partial though not

entire ignorance, for some time longer, groping and searching for that light which I hardly knew how or whence to seek, except in pills and powders and blisters and tinctures.



## CHAPTER XII

### MANUFACTURING CHILBLAINS

At the period of my life to which we have at length arrived, I was for four or five months of every year a school teacher. This was, in no trifling degree, an educational process; for is it not well known that,

"Teaching we learn, and giving we retain?"

It was at least an education in the great school of human nature.

Every morning of one of these winter sessions of school keeping, Lydia Maynard, eight years of age, after walking about a mile, frequently in deep snow, and combating the cold northwest winds of one of the southern Green Mountain ranges, would come into the schoolroom with her feet almost frozen, and take her seat close to the stove, so as to warm them and be ready for school as quickly as possible. Here she would sit, if permitted to do so, till the bell rang for school.

It was not long before I learned that she was a great sufferer from chilblains. Whether she inherited a tendency to this troublesome and painful disease, which was awakened and aggravated by sudden changes of temperature, or whether the latter were the original cause of the disease, I never knew with certainty. But I was struck with the fact that sudden warming was followed by such lasting and terrible consequences.

And herein is one reason why I have opposed, from that day to this, the custom or habit, so exceedingly prevalent, of rushing to the fire when we are very cold, and warming ourselves as quickly as possible. I have reasoned; I have commanded; and in some few instances I have ridiculed. Every one knows it is hazardous to bring the ears or fingers or toes, or any other parts of the body, suddenly to the fire when really frozen, – that is, when the temperature is lowered down in the part to 32°; and yet, if it is only down to 33°, and the part not quite frozen, almost every one, young and old, will venture to the fire. Can there be such a difference in the effects when there is only a difference of one degree in temperature? No reflecting person will for one moment believe it. The trouble is we do not think about it.

Sudden changes from heat to cold are little more favorable than when the change is in the other direction. Indeed, it often happens that children at school are subjected to both these causes. Thus, in the case of Lydia, suppose that after roasting herself a long time at the stove, she had gone to her seat and placed her feet directly over crevices in the floor, through which the cold wind found its way at almost freezing temperature. Would not this have greatly added to the severity of the disease?

There are, it is true, other reasons against sudden changes of temperature, particularly the change from cold to heat, besides the fact that they tend to produce chilblains; but I cannot do more just now than barely advert to them. The eyes are apt to be injured; it renders us more liable than otherwise we should be to take cold. Occasionally it brings on faintness and convulsions, and still more rarely, sudden death. I will only add now, that sudden warming after suffering from extreme cold, whether we perceive it or not at the time, is very apt to produce deep and lasting injury to the brain and nervous system.

But my main object in relating the story is answered if I have succeeded in clearly pointing out to the reader one of the avenues through which light found its way to my benighted intellect, and led me to reflection on the whole subject of health and disease. Here was obviously one cause of a frequent but most painful complaint. It was natural, perfectly natural, that by this time I should begin to inquire. Have all diseases, then, their exciting causes? Many certainly have; and if many, perhaps all. At least, how do we know but it may be so? And then again, if the causes of chilblains are within

our control, and this troublesome disease might be prevented, or its severity mitigated if no more, why may it not be so with all other diseases?

To revert for a moment to the case of Lydia Maynard. Though I was the cause, in a certain sense, of her suffering, yet it was a sin of ignorance. But it taught me much wisdom. It made me cautious ever afterward. I do not doubt but I have been a means of preventing a very considerable amount of suffering in this form, since that time, by pointing out the road that leads to it.

Prevention is better than cure, was early my motto, and is so still. And from the day in which I began to open my eyes on the world around me, and to reason from effects up to their causes, I have been more and more confirmed in the belief that mankind as a race are to be the artificers of their own happiness or misery. All facts point in this direction, some of them with great certainty. And facts, everywhere and always, are stubborn things.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HOW TO MAKE ERYSIPELAS

My periodical tendency to a species of eruptive disease closely resembling measles, was mentioned in Chapter IV. During the summer of 1823 this affection became unusually severe, and seemed almost beyond endurance. The circumstances were as follows: —

I had in charge a large and difficult school. The weather was very hot, and I was not accustomed to labor in summer within doors. Besides, my task was so difficult as to call forth all the energies of body and mind both; and the "wear and tear" of my system was unusually great. It was in the very midst of these severe labors, in hot and not well-ventilated air, that the eruption appeared. Perhaps it was aggravated by my diet, which, in "boarding around," was of course not the best.

The eruption not only affected my body and reached to the extremities, but was accompanied by an itching so severe that I was occasionally compelled to lie awake all night. My general strength at last began to give way under it, and I sought the advice of our family physician.

He advised me to use, as a wash to the irritated and irritable surface, a weak solution of corrosive sublimate. I hesitated; especially as I believed it to be, with him, an experiment. But on his repeated assurance, that if I would take special care of myself and avoid taking cold, there was no danger, I waived my objections, and proceeded to carry out his plan.

The solution was applied, accordingly, to the letter of the doctor's directions. For many days no change appeared, either favorable or adverse. At length a most distressing headache came on and remained. My sufferings became so severe that I was obliged to postpone my school and return to my father's house.

On the road, I observed that an eruption of a peculiar kind had appeared, particularly about the forehead, accompanied with small blisters. It was not here that I had applied the solution, but on the arms, chest, and lower limbs. Of course the corrosive sublimate, if at all operative, had affected me through the medium of the circulation and not by direct contact.

Our physician came, pronounced the disease erysipelas, and without saying a word about the cause, prescribed; and I followed out carefully his prescription. But the disease had its course in spite of us both, and was very severe. It took away my sleep entirely for a day or two. It proved a means of removing the hair from one side of my head, and of so injuring the skin that it never grew again. Indeed, gangrene or mortification had actually commenced at several points. Suddenly, however, the pain and inflammation subsided, and I recovered.

Now my physician never said that I was poisoned by the corrosive sublimate, probably for the two following reasons: 1, I never made the inquiry. 2, He would probably have ascribed the disease to taking cold rather than to the mercury, had I inquired. I do not believe I took cold, however. How it came to affect me so unfavorably I never knew with certainty; but that it was the medicine that did the mischief I never for one moment doubted. I suppose it was absorbed; but of the manner of its introduction to the system I am less certain than of the fact itself.

But besides the absorption of the corrosive sublimate into the system, and its consequences — a terrible caution to those who are wont to apply salves, ointments, washes, etc., to the surface of the body unauthorized — I learned another highly important lesson from this circumstance. Active medicines, as I saw more plainly than ever before, are as a sword with two edges. If they do not cut in the right direction, they are almost sure to cut in the wrong.

I must not close, however, without telling you a little more about the treatment of my disease. After I had left my school and had arrived at home, a solution of sugar of lead was ordered in the very coldest water. With this, through the intervention of layers of linen cloth, I was directed to keep my head constantly moistened. Its object, doubtless, was to check the inflammation, which had become

exceedingly violent. Why the sugar of lead itself was not absorbed, thus adding poison to poison, is to me inconceivable. Perhaps it was so; and yet, such was the force of my constitution, feeble though it was, that I recovered in spite of both poisons. Or, what is more probable, perhaps the lead, if absorbed at all, did not produce its effects till the effects of the corrosive sublimate were on the wane; so that the living system was only necessitated to war with one poison at a time. Mankind are made to live, at least till they are worn out; and it is not always easy to poison a person to death, if we would. In other words, human nature is tough.

Now I do not know, by the way, that any one but myself ever suspected, even for one moment, that this attack of erysipelas was caused by the corrosive sublimate. But could I avoid such a conclusion? Was it a hasty or forced one? Judge, then, whether it was not perfectly natural that I should be led by such an unfortunate adventure to turn my attention more than ever to the subject of preserving and promoting health.

For if our family physician – cautious and judicious as in general he was – had been the unintentional cause of a severe attack from a violent and dangerous disease, which had come very near destroying my life, what blunders might not be expected from the less careful and cautious man, especially the beginner in medicine? And if medical men, old and young, scientific as well as unscientific, make occasional blunders, how much more frequently the mass of mankind, who, in their supposed knowledge of their own constitutions and those of their families, are frequently found dosing and drugging themselves and others?

I do not mean to say that in the incipency of my observations and inquiries my mind was mature enough – well educated enough, I mean – to pursue exactly the foregoing train of thought; but there was certainly a tendency that way, as will be seen more fully in the next chapter. The spell at least was broken, and I saw plainly that if "died by the visitation of God" *never* means any thing, it *generally* does not. And as it turned out that the further I pushed my inquiries the more I found that diseases were caused by transgression of physical and moral law, and hence not uncontrollable, why should it not be so, still farther on, in the great world of facts which I had not yet penetrated?

## CHAPTER XIV

### STUDYING MEDICINE

My thoughts were now directed with considerable earnestness and seriousness, to the study of medicine. It is true that I was already in the twenty-fourth year of my age, and that the statute law of the State in which I was a resident required three years of study before receiving a license to practise medicine and surgery, and I should hence be in my twenty-seventh or twenty-eighth year before I could enter actively and responsibly upon the duties of my profession, which would be rather late in life. Besides, I had become quite enamored of another profession, much better adapted to my slender pecuniary means than the study of a new one.

However, I revolved the subject in my mind, till at length, as I thought, I saw my path clearly. It was my undoubted duty to pursue the study of medicine. Still, there were difficulties which to any but men of decision of character were not easily got removed. Shall I tell you how they were gradually and successfully overcome?

Our family physician had an old skeleton, and a small volume of anatomy by Cheselden, as well as a somewhat more extended British work on anatomy and physiology; all these he kindly offered to lend me. Then he would permit me to study with him, or at least occasionally recite to him, which would answer the letter of the law. Then, again, I could, during the winter of each year of study except the last, teach school, and thus add to my pecuniary means of support. And lastly, my father would board me whenever I was not teaching, and on as long a credit as I desired. Were not, then, all my difficulties practically overcome, at least prospectively?

It was early in the spring of the year 1822 that I carried to my father's house an old dirty skeleton and some musty books, and commenced the study of medicine and surgery, or at least of those studies which are deemed a necessary preparation. It was rather dry business at first, but I soon became very much interested in the study of physiology, and made considerable progress. My connection with our physician proved to be merely nominal, as I seldom found him ready to hear a recitation. Besides, my course of study was rather desultory, not to say irregular.

In the autumn of 1824, having occasion to teach school at such a distance as rendered it almost impracticable for me to continue my former connection as a student, I made arrangements for studying with another physician on terms not unlike those in the former case. My new teacher, however, occasionally heard me recite, especially in what is properly called the practice of medicine and in surgery. His instructions, though very infrequent, were of service to me.

In 1825 I became a boarder in his family, where I remained about a year. Here I had an opportunity to consult and even study the various standard authors in the several departments which are usually regarded as belonging to a course of medical study. So that if I was not in due time properly qualified to "practise medicine and surgery in this or any other country," the fault was chiefly my own.

However, in the spring of 1825, after I had attended a five months' course of lectures in one of the most famous medical colleges of the Northern States, I was regularly examined and duly licensed. *How* well qualified I was supposed to be, did not exactly appear. It was marvellous that I succeeded at all, for I had labored much on the farm during the three years, taught school every winter and two summers, had two or three seasons of sickness, besides a severe attack of influenza (this, you know, is not regarded as a disease by many) while attending lectures, which confined me a week or more. And yet one of my fellow students, who was present at the examination, laughed at my studied accuracy!

One word about my thesis, or dissertation. It was customary at the college where I heard lectures – as it probably is at all others of the kind – to require each candidate for medical license to read before the board, prior to his examination, an original dissertation on some topic connected with his professional studies. The topic I selected was pulmonary consumption; especially, the means of

preventing it. It was, as may be conjectured, a slight departure from the ordinary routine, but was characteristic of the writer's mind, prevention being then, as it still is, and probably always will be, with him a favorite idea. I go so far, even, as to insist that it should be the favorite idea of every medical man, from the beginning to the end of his career. "The best part of the medical art is the art of avoiding pain," was the motto for many years of the *Boston Medical Intelligencer*; and it embraced a most important truth. When will it be fully and practically received?

But I must recapitulate a little; or rather, I must go back and give the reader a few chapters of incidents which occurred while I was a student under Dr. W., my second and principal teacher. I will however study brevity as much as possible.

## CHAPTER XV

### NATURE'S OWN EYE WATER

When I began the study of medicine, my eyes were so exceedingly weak, and had been for about ten years, or indeed always after the attack of measles, that I was in the habit of shading them, much of the time, with green or blue glasses. My friends, many of them, strongly objected to any attempt to pursue the study of medicine on this very account. And the attempt was, I confess, rather hazardous.

What seemed most discouraging in the premises was the consideration that I had gone, to no manner of purpose, the whole round of eye waters, elixir vitriol itself not excepted. Was there room, then, for a single gleam of hope? Yet I was resolutely, perhaps obstinately, determined on making an effort. I could but fail.

Soon after I made a beginning, the thought struck me, "Why not make the experiment of frequently bathing the eyes in cold water?" At that very moment they were hot and somewhat painful; and suiting the action to the thought, I held my face for some seconds in very cold water. The sensation was indescribably agreeable; and I believe that for once in my life, at the least, I felt a degree of gratitude to God, my Creator, for cold water.

The practice was closely and habitually followed. Whenever my eyes became hot and painful, I put my face for a short time in water, even if it were *twenty* times a day. The more I bathed them, the greater the pleasure, nor was it many days before they were evidently less inflamed and less troublesome. Why, then, should I not persevere?

I carried the practice somewhat further still. I found from experiment, that I could open my eyes in the water. At first, it is true, the operation was a little painful, and I raised, slightly, its temperature. Gradually, however, I became so much accustomed to it that the sensation was not only less painful, but even somewhat agreeable. In a few weeks I could bear to open my eyes in the water, and keep them open as long as I was able to hold my breath, even at a very low temperature.

Perseverance in this practice not only enabled me to proceed with my studies, contrary to the expectation of my friends, and in spite, too, of my own apprehensions, but gave me in addition the unspeakable pleasure of finding my eyes gaining every year in point of strength, as well as clearness of sight. My glasses were laid aside, and I have never used any for that specific purpose since that time. Of course I do not mean by this to say that my eyes remain as convex as they were at twenty-five or thirty years of age, for that would not be true. They have most certainly flattened a little since I came to be fifty years of age, for I am compelled to wear glasses when I would read or write. I mean, simply, that they have never suffered any more from inflammation or debility, since I formed the habit of bathing them, even up to the present hour.

The more I observe on this subject, the more I am persuaded – apart from my own experience – that pure water, at the lowest temperature which can be used without giving pain, is the best known eye medicine in the world, not merely for one, two, or ten in a hundred persons, but for all. I recommend it, therefore, at every opportunity, not only to my patients but to others. It may doubtless be abused, like every other good gift; but in wise and careful hands it will often accomplish almost every thing but downright miracles. We may begin with water a little tepid, and lower the temperature as gradually as we please, till we come to use it ice cold.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE VIPER STORY

I was, early in life, greatly perplexed in mind by the oft-recurring question, why it was that in the hands of common sense men, every known system of medicine – even one which was diametrically opposed to the prevailing custom or belief, like that of Hahnemann, seemed to be successful. Not only the botanic practitioner with his herbs, and the homœopathist with his billionth dilutions, but even the no-medicine man<sup>2</sup> could boast of his cures, and, for aught I could see, of about an equal number – good sense and perseverance and other things being equal. And then, again, he that bled everybody, or almost everybody, if abounding in good sense, like the late Dr. Hubbard, of Pomfret, in Connecticut, was about as successful as those who, like Dr. Danforth, once an eminent practitioner of Boston, would bleed nobody, nor, if in his power to prevent it, suffer the lancet to be used by anybody else.

While cogitating on this subject one day, the following anecdote from a surgical work – I think a French work – came under my eye, and at once solved the problem, and relieved me of my difficulty. It may probably be relied on.

When the Abbé Fontana, a distinguished medical man and naturalist, was travelling, once, in some of the more northern countries of Europe, he was greatly surprised to find such a wonderful variety of applications to the bite of the viper, and still more to find them all successful, or at least about equally so. Even those that were in character diametrically opposed to each other, *all cured*. His astonishment continued and increased when he found at length that those who applied nothing at all recovered about as readily as any of the rest.

In the sequel, as the result of diligent and scientific research, it turned out that the bite of this animal, however dangerous and fatal in hot climates, is scarcely dangerous at all in cold ones. Hence it was that all sorts of treatment appeared to cure. In other words, the persons who were bitten all recovered in spite of the applications made to their wounds, and generally in about the same period of time.

Thus, as I began to suspect, – and the reader must pardon the suspicion, if he can, – it may be with our diversified and diverse modes of medical treatment. A proportion of our patients, – perhaps I should say a large proportion, – if well nursed and cared for and encouraged, would recover if let alone so far as regards medicine. And it is in proof of this view, that nearly as many recover under one mode of practice, provided that practice is guided by a large share of plain, unsophisticated sense, as another. And does not this fully account for a most remarkable fact?

Hence it is, too, – and perhaps hence alone, – that we can account for the strange development in Boston, not many years since, during a public medical discussion; viz., that he who had given his tens of pounds of calomel to his patients, and taken from their arms his hogsheads of blood, had been on the whole about as successful a practitioner as he who had revolted from the very thought of both, and had adopted some of the various forms of the stimulating rather than the depleting system.

"Is there, then, no choice between medication and no-medication? For if so, what necessity is there of the medical profession? Why not annihilate it at once?"

My reply is, – and it would have been about the same when these discoveries began to be made, – that there is no occasion to give up the whole thing because it has been so sadly abused. Every mode of medical practice, not to say every medical practitioner from the very beginning, has been, of necessity, more or less empirical. The whole subject has been involved in so much ignorance and uncertainty, that even our wisest practitioners have been liable to err. They have been led, unawares,

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<sup>2</sup> Of the hydropathist at that time I had not heard.



to prescribe quite too much for names rather than for symptoms; and their patients were often glad to have it so. And were the whole matter to come to an end this day, it might well be questioned whether the profession, as a whole, has been productive of more good than evil to mankind. But then, every thing must have its infancy before it can come to manhood. And it is a consolation to believe that the duration of that manhood always bears some degree of proportion to the time required in advancing from infancy to maturity.

Medicine, then, as a science, is valuable in prospect. And then, too, it is worth something to have a set of men among us on whom we may fasten our faith; for, credulous as everybody is and will be in this matter of health and disease, till they can duly be taught the laws of hygiene, they will lean upon somebody; it is certainly desirable that they should rely on those whom they know, rather than upon strangers, charlatans, and conjurors, of whom they know almost nothing.

But I shall have frequent occasion to revert to this subject in other chapters, and must therefore dismiss it for the present, in order to make room for other facts, anecdotes, and reflections.

## CHAPTER XVII

### STRUCK WITH DEATH

Throughout the region where I was brought up, and perhaps throughout the civilized world, the notion has long prevailed that in some of the last moments of a person's life, he is or may be "struck with death;" by which, I suppose the more intelligent simply mean that such a change comes over him as renders his speedy departure to the spirit-world inevitable.

Now that we are really justified in saying of many persons who are in their last moments, that they are beyond the reach of hope, is doubtless true. When decomposition, for instance, has actually commenced, and the vital organs have already begun to falter, it would be idle to conceal the fact, were we able to do so, that life is about to be extinguished beyond the possibility of doubt.

In general, however, it is never quite impossible for the sick to recover even after recovery *seems* to be impossible. So many instances of this kind have been known, that we ought at least, to be exceedingly cautious about pronouncing with certainty, and to encourage rather than repel the application of the old saying, "as long as there is life, there is hope."<sup>3</sup>

I had a lesson on this subject while a medical student, which was exceedingly instructive, and which, if I were to live a thousand years, I could never forget. It was worth more to me in practical life afterward, than all my books and recitations would have been without it. The facts were these: —

My teacher of medicine used occasionally to take his students with him when he rode abroad on his professional visits. One day, it fell to my lot to bear him company. His patient was an aged farmer, a teamster rather, who had been for some time ill of a fever, and had not been expected to recover. Yet his case was not so desperate but that the physician was expected to continue his daily visits.

On our arrival at the house of the sick man, we were met by a member of the family, who said, "Come in, doctor, but you are too late to do us any good. Mr. H. is struck with death; all the world could not save him now."

We entered the room. There lay the patient almost gone, surely. So at least, at the first view, it appeared. It was a hot summer day, and hardly a breath of air was stirring. The friends were gathered around the bed, and there was less freedom of circulation in the air of the sick-room than elsewhere. It was almost enough to kill a healthy man to be shut up in such a stagnant atmosphere; what, then, must have been the effect on one so sick and feeble?

The doctor beckoned them away from the bed, and requested them to open another window. They did it rather reluctantly; but then, *they did it*. The sufferer lay panting, as if the struggle was almost over. "Don't you think he is struck with death, doctor?" whispered one and another and another. Almost out of patience, the doctor at length replied: "Struck with death? What do you mean? No; he is no more struck with death than I am. He is struck much more with the heat and bad air. Raise another window."

The window was raised. "Now," said he, "set that door wide open." It was quickly done. "Now bring me a bowl of water, and a teaspoon." The bowl of water was quickly brought. "Put a little water into his mouth with the teaspoon," said he. "O doctor," they replied, "it will only distress him; he is already struck with death." — "Try it then, and see."

Tremblingly they now moistened his parched lips. "Put a little of it in his mouth, with the teaspoon," he said. They shuddered; the doctor persisted. "Why," said the attendant, "he has not been able to swallow any thing these two hours." "How do you know?" said he. "Why, he has been all the while struck with death." — "Nonsense! have you tried it?" "Tried it? oh, no; by no means." —

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Livingstone, in his work of Travels and Researches in Africa, tells us that during his residence among the Backwains, a tribe in the African interior, two persons who had been hastily buried, perhaps "struck with death" in the first place, returned home "to their affrighted relatives." p. 143.

"Why not?" – "Because we knew it would only distress him. He is too far gone to swallow, doctor; you may rely on it."

The physician's patience was now well nigh exhausted, as well it might have been, and seizing the bowl and teaspoon with his own sacrilegious hands, "I will see," said he, "whether he is struck with death or not."

He not only wetted his lips and tongue, as they had partially done before, but gradually insinuated a few drops of Nature's best and only drink, into the top of his throat. At last he swallowed! The doctor's hopes revived; while the family stood as if themselves struck, not with death, but with horror. At length, he swallowed again and again. In half an hour, he opened his eyes; before we left him, he had become quite sensible, and, had we encouraged it, might have spoken.

To make my story as short as possible, the next day he could swallow a little gruel. The third day, he could be raised upon the bed. The fourth, though still weak, he was dressed and sat up an hour. In a fortnight, he was once more driving his team; and for ought I know to the contrary, unless debarred by reason of age, he may be driving it at this very moment!

Going home together from our visit, already so fully described, the conversation turned on the silly notion which so extensively prevails about being struck with death. We talked of its origin, its influence, and its consequences. It had done no good in the world, while it had been the means, we could not doubt, of indirectly destroying thousands of valuable lives.

Of its Origin. – How came the notion abroad that a person can be struck with death, so affected that there is no possible return for him, to life and health? Struck! By whom? Is there a personage, spiritual but real, that strikes? Is it the Divine Being? Surely not. Is it an arch enemy? is it Satan himself?

"No day, no glimpse of day, to solve the knot."

The doctor and I had, however, one conjecture concerning it, which, if it should not instruct the reader, may at least, afford him a little amusement. It certainly amused us.

You have seen the old-fashioned New England Primer. It has been in vogue, I believe, a full century; perhaps nearer two centuries. It has done not a little to give shape to New England character. In its preliminary pages is a sort of alphabet of couplets, with cuts prefixed or annexed. One of the couplets reads thus: —

"Youth forward slips,  
Death soonest nips."

While at its left, is the representation of a skeleton, armed with a dagger, and pursuing a youth – a child rather – with the apparent intention of striking him through. Now I cannot say how this picture may have affected others, but to my medical teacher and myself, as we mutually agreed, it always brings up the idea of striking down a youth or child prematurely, and sending him away to the great congregation of the dead.

Nor am I quite sure that this representation, innocent as may have been its intention, has not been the origin of a relentless and cruel superstition. I know certainly, that my own early notions about being struck with death, had, somehow or other, a connection with this picture; and why may it not be so with others?

But the *influence* and *consequences* of this superstition must be adverted to for a moment. I said they affect and have affected thousands; perhaps I ought to have said millions. Under the confused and preposterously silly idea that Death, the personification of Satan or some other demon, has laid hold of the sick or distressed, and that it would be a sort of useless, not to say sacrilegious, work to oppose, or attempt to oppose, the grim messenger, we sometimes leave our sick friends in the greatest extremity, to suffer and perhaps die, when the gentle touch of a kind hand, a mere drop of water, or a breath of fresh air, might often bring them back again to life and health and happiness and usefulness.

If this chapter should not be deemed a confession of medical impotence, it is at least a practical confession of medical selfishness or ignorance. If duly enlightened themselves, medical men ought

long ago, to have rid society of this abominable superstition; and if not sufficiently enlightened to perceive its existence and evil tendency, they ought to have abandoned their profession.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### EFFICACY OF COLD SPRING WATER

An aged man not far from where I was studying, had an attack of dysentery which was long and severe. Whether the fault of its long continuance lay in his own bad habits, or the injudicious use of medicine, or in both, we can inquire to better advantage by and by. I was not, however, very much acquainted with his physician, so as to be able in the premises to form a very correct opinion concerning him.

The greatest puzzle with me, at that time, was why he should live so long after the disease appeared to have spent itself, without making any advances. The physician used to call on him day after day, and order tonic medicine of various kinds, all of which was given with great care and exactness. Every thing in fact, seemed to be put in requisition, except what were most needful of all, pure air and water. The former of these was, as is usual in such cases, neglected; the latter was absolutely interdicted.

For this last, as not unfrequently happens at this stage of acute diseases, the poor man sighed from day to day as though his heart would break. But, no; he must not have it. The effect on his bowels, he was told, would be unfavorable. And such at that day was the general *theory*. It was not considered that a very small quantity at first, a few drops merely, would be a great relief, and might be borne, till by degrees a larger quantity would be admissible.

After repeated efforts, and much begging and crying for a little water to cool his parched tongue, the old gentleman, one night dreamed that he drank from a certain cold spring, which really flowed at a remote corner of his farm and was a great favorite both with him and his whole family, and that it almost immediately restored him. Delighted with his dream, he no sooner fairly awaked than he called up his eldest son and sent him with a bottle, to the spring. He did not now *plead*, he *commanded*. The son returned in due time, with a bottle of water. He returned, it is true, with great fear and trembling, but he could do no less than obey. The demands and commands were peremptory, and the father was almost impatient.

"Now, my son," said the father, "bring me a tumbler." It was brought, and the father took it. "Now," said he, "pour some of that water into it." Samuel could do no other way than submit to the lawfully constituted authority, though it was not without the most painful apprehensions with regard to the consequences, and he kindly warned his father of the danger. Nor were his sufferings at all diminished when the father, in a decided tone of voice, ordered him to fill the tumbler about half full.

Whether he had at first intended to drink so large a draught and afterwards repented, is not known; but instead of swallowing it all at a draught, the son's distress was greatly mitigated when he saw that he only just tasted it, and then set down the tumbler. In a few minutes he drank a little more, and then after a short time a little more still. He was about half an hour drinking a gill of water. When that was gone, he ordered more; and persisted in this moderate way till morning. By ten o'clock, when his physician arrived, he had drunk nearly a quart of it, and was evidently better. There was a soft, breathy perspiration, as well as more strength.

The physician no sooner saw him than he pronounced him better. "What have you been doing?" he said, rather jocosely. The sick man told him the simple story of his rebellion from beginning to end. The doctor at first shook his head, but when he came to reflect on the apparent good consequences which had followed, he only said: "Well, I suppose we must remember the old adage, 'Speak well of a bridge that carries you safe over,'" and then joined in the general cheerfulness.

The patient continued to drink his spring water from day to day, and with increasing good effects. It acted almost like a charm; it was not only food and drink to him, but also medicine.

Doubtless his great faith in it was not without its efficacy; still it was not to be denied that the water did him great and positive good.

He soon found his newly discovered medicine not only more agreeable to his taste, but cheaper also than Huxham's tincture and quassia. He also found that his son's daily visits to the spring cost him less than Dr. Physic's daily rides of three or four miles. So that though he was greatly delighted to see the smiling face, and hear the stories and jolly laugh of the latter, he was glad when he proposed to call less frequently than he had done and to lay aside all medicine.

He recovered in a reasonable time, and lived to a very advanced age. A friend of his and mine, found him in his eighty-sixth year, mowing thistles barefooted. Two or three years still later, I found him – it was during the cold month of January, 1852 – in the woods with his hired man far from his house, assisting in cutting and loading wood; in which employment he seemed to act with much of the energy and not a little of the activity of his earlier years.

I do not of course undertake to say that he owed his recovery from his long sickness, above described solely to drinking cold water, there are so many other circumstances to be taken into the account, in settling all questions like this, that such an assertion would be hazardous, not to say foolish. His fever at the time of making his experiment, had already passed away; and having great tenacity of life, it was but reasonable to expect nature would ere long, rally, if she *could* rally at all. It is also worthy of remark, that though his physician was one of those men who place their chief reliance on the medicine they give, rather than on the recuperative powers of the system, yet to his credit be it said, he had in this instance departed from his usual routine, and given comparatively little.

Perhaps we may explain the phenomenon of his recovery, as follows: nature long oppressed, yet by rest partially restored to her wonted energy, was now ready to rally as soon as she could get the opportunity; this the moderate draughts of water by their effects on the circulation enabled her to do; then, too, one consideration which I forgot to mention in its place, deserves to be noticed. When the sick man began the use of water, he laid aside (without the knowledge of his physician) most of what pills and powders and tinctures were prescribed him. And finally he had great faith in the water, as you have already seen; whereas he had lost all faith in drugging and dosing. And the efficacy of faith is almost sufficient in such cases, to work a cure, were this our only reliance. Of this we shall have an illustration in Chapter LXXVI.

But though the water, as I now fully believe – and as I more than half believed when I heard of the facts at the time, – was fairly indicated, there is great hazard, in such circumstances in its use. Had this gentleman taken a large draught at first, or had he swallowed more moderate draughts with great eagerness, and a quick succession, it might have produced an ill effect; it might, even, have provoked a relapse of his dysentery and fever. Many a sick patient in the same circumstances, would have poured the cooling liquid into an enfeebled throat and stomach without the least restraint. And why did not he?

I will give you one reason. He was early taught to govern himself. He told me, when eighty-eight years of age, he had made it a rule, all his life long, never to eat enough, but always to leave off his meals with a good appetite. He did not indeed, follow out with exactness the rule of the late Amos Lawrence: "Begin hungry and leave off hungrier," but he came very near it. He managed so as always to have a good appetite, and never in the progress of more than fourscore years, whether by night or day, to lose it. Such a man, if his mind is not too much reduced by long disease, can be safely trusted with cold spring water, even during the more painful and trying circumstances of convalescence from acute disease.

Another thing deserves to be mentioned in this connection. He had not kept his bowels and nervous system, all his life long, under the influence of rum, tobacco, opium, coffee, tea, or highly seasoned food. He did not it is true, wholly deny himself any one of these, except opium and tobacco; but he only used them occasionally, and even then in great moderation. Nor was it from mere indigence, or culpable stinginess that he ate and drank, for the most part in a healthful manner. It

seemed to be from a conviction of the necessity of being "temperate in all things;" and that such a course as he pursued tended to hardihood. As one evidence of a conviction of this kind, I have known his children and their school teacher to carry to the schoolroom for their dinner, a quantity of cold Indian cake – ycleped Johnny cake – and nothing else; nor was there an attempt at the slightest apology. Such a man would not be very likely to have an ulcerated alimentary canal, or bad blood; or to be injured by swallowing every five minutes a table-spoonful of cold water; no, nor to sink as quickly as other people under the depressing tendency of irritating or poisonous medicine.

This last-mentioned fact concerning the use of water, – for it is a fact on which we can rely, and not one of those statements which Dr. Cullen was accustomed to call "false facts," – was to me exceedingly instructive. It taught me more concerning the human constitution and the laws of health and disease than I had ever before learned from a single case of mere disease, in my whole life; and I endeavored to make a wise use of it – of which as I trust, I shall give some evidence in the very next chapter.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CHEATING THE PHYSICIAN

It was by no means an uncommon thing with me, while studying medicine, to take long walks. One day, in the progress of one of these rambles, I came so near the family mansion of a young man with whom I had formerly been acquainted, that I thought I would, for once, go a little out of my way and make a call on him. And judge, reader, if you can, of my surprise, when I found him exceedingly sick. For residing, as we did, only a few miles apart, why had I not heard of it? Most people, in truth, would have called on some of the young doctors – for there were three or four of us together, – to take care of the sick man, especially by night. Young doctors, I grant – and this for various reasons which might be named, were it needful – are usually the very worst of watchers and nurses of the sick; but the public often appear to think otherwise, and even to prefer them.

I found him under the care of an old school physician; – one who, though he otherwise prescribed very well, gave quite too much medicine; and like the old physician mentioned in the preceding chapter, mortally detested cold water; at least he detested its use in bowel complaints. The young man's case, however, was as yet wholly unlike that of the elderly gentleman of the foregoing chapter; and cold water at first, was not particularly needed; nor perhaps quite safe.

Some few days afterward, I called again. Found my young friend rather less feverish, but no better; in fact, he was much worse, and was most obviously running down. I continued after this to call on him daily, till he too, like the old man before mentioned, began to beg for cold water. But his physician said, "No, not a drop," and with a good deal of emphasis.

One day, while I was at his bedside, he turned to me, and with a most imploring look begged to know whether I believed a very little cold water would really hurt him. I told him no; but that a good deal doubtless would, and might even prove the means of his destruction. "Simple a thing as water is," I said, "it is to you, in circumstances like yours, a sword with two edges. If it should not cut away the disease, it would probably cut in the other direction, to the destruction of your health, if not of your life."

My remarks had both awakened his curiosity and increased his desires for the interdicted beverage. I found I had gone too far, and I frankly told him so. I told him it was not in accordance with medical etiquette, nor even with the rules of good breeding, for one medical man to prescribe for another's patient without his knowledge. But this explanation did not satisfy him. Water was what he wanted; and as I had opened the budget and removed some of his fears, water he must have. He was willing, he said, to bear the responsibility.

Water, then, in exceedingly small quantity at a time, was permitted; but it was to be given by stealth. The physician was not allowed to know it, or, at all events, he was not to know under whose encouragement he acted. His friends were very careful in regard to the quantity, and I had the happiness of finding him, in a few days, very much better. But, as I said in reflecting on the recovery of my aged friend before mentioned, it is not quite certain, after all, how much was effected by the water, and how much by the recuperative efforts of Nature herself. She might have been long waiting for that opportunity to rally, which the judicious introduction of the water, and the partial or entire discontinuance of other medicine, greatly facilitated.



## CHAPTER XX

### THE MEDICINAL EFFECTS OF STORY TELLING

My aged father sickened about this time, and remained in a low condition many months. I was at a distance so great, and in circumstances so peculiar, that I could not see him often enough to become his medical adviser. Besides, in my then unfledged condition as a disciple of Galen, I should not have regarded myself competent to the discharge of so weighty a responsibility, had I even been at home with him. The result was that he employed his family physician as usual, and went through, as might have been expected, with the whole paraphernalia of a dosing and drugging campaign.

Among other troubles, or rather to cap the climax of his troubles, he was exceedingly low-spirited. Confined as he had been to the house almost all winter, and seeing nobody to converse with, – no new faces, I mean, – was it very strange that his mind turned, involuntarily, to his complaints, and preyed upon itself, and that he was evidently approaching the deep vortex of hypochondria? Medicine did him no good, and could do him none. It is true he had, after three months, almost left off its use; but the little to which he still clung was most evidently a source of irritation.

My own occasional visits, as I soon found out, did him more good than any thing else. This gave me a needful hint. Near him was an old Revolutionary soldier, full of mirthfulness, and a capital story teller. Unknown to my father, and even to the family, I employed this old soldier to visit my father a certain number of evenings in each week, and tell stories to him.

Sergeant K. complied faithfully with the terms of the contract, and was at my father's house three evenings of each week for a long time. This gave the old gentleman something else to think of besides himself, and it was easy to see, did him much good. During the progress of the fourth month his improvement became quite perceptible; and in another month he was nearly recovered.

But, as I have repeatedly said of cold water, and indeed of all other remedial efforts or applications, whether external or internal, and whether moral, mental, or physical, too much credit should not be given, at least hastily, to a single thing. The opening spring was in my father's favor, as well as the story telling. The bow, so long retained in an unnatural position, on having an opportunity, sprung back and resumed its wonted condition. Still, I could never help awarding much credit to the Revolutionary soldier.

Most persons must have observed the effects which cheerfulness in a medical man has on his patients. The good-natured, jolly doctor, who tells a story now and then, and cracks a joke and has occasionally a hearty laugh *with you*, or *at you*, about something or nothing, will do you much more good, other things being equal, than the grave, staid, sombre practitioner, who thinks it almost a sin to smile, especially at the sick-bed or in the sick-room.

I think story telling, as an art, should be cultivated, were it only for its good effects in sickness. But this is not all. Its prophylactic or preventive tendencies are much more valuable. Few people know how to tell a story of any kind; while others, in some few remarkable instances, such as I could name, will make a story of almost any thing, and bring it to bear upon the precise point or end they wish to accomplish. It is yet, in reality, a mooted point, which could make the deepest, or at least most abiding, impression, Daniel Webster by a Congressional oration, or Jacob Abbott by a simple story. If this is an indirect or incautious confession of medical imperfection or impotence, let me say as Patrick Henry once did, in Revolutionary days, "then make the most of it."

While on this topic of story telling, I must not forget to allude to its moral effects. Lorenzo Dow, the eccentric preacher, is not the only pulpit occupant who has acquired the art of "clinching the nail," in his discourses by a well told story. It was quite a habit, in former times, with certain preachers of certain denominations of Christians, whose sermons were chiefly unwritten, to tell stories occasionally. And I appeal to Father Waldo, late chaplain in the United States Senate, to see

whether the effects of these discourses were not as deep and as lasting, to say the least, as many of our modern sermons, which, while they smell much more of the lamp, fall almost lifeless upon the sleepy ears of thousands of those whom Whitfield by his more practical course would have converted.

## CHAPTER XXI

### OSSIFIED VEINS

While I was studying medicine with my new or second master, I had several excellent opportunities for studying health and disease through the medium of the doctor's patients.

One of them was a swaggering man of wealth, about sixty-three years of age. He had long lived very highly, had eaten a good deal of roast beef, and drunk a good deal of wine, and had almost swum in cider. He was in short, one of that class of men who "go off" in very many instances, at the grand climacterical period, some of them very suddenly.

"Doctor," said the general, exhibiting himself in full size and the boldest relief, "I want to be bled." – "What do you want bleeding for?" said the doctor. "Oh," said he, "bleed me, and you will see. You will find my blood in a very bad state." – "Your blood, general, was always in a very bad state," said the shrewd son of Galen, with a sardonic grin. "None of your fun, doctor," was the prompt reply; "I must be bled. I have headache and giddiness half the time, and must have some blood taken." – "Very well," said Dr. S. "It shall be as you desire. Here, my son, bring me a bowl."

An older student assisted, while I, glad of the privilege, kept aloof, and at a distance. The general's brawny arm was mauled a long time; and even then not much blood was obtained. At last the attempt was given up, and the man returned home, though not, as might have been expected, very well satisfied.

When he was gone, I inquired of Dr. S., as modestly as I could, what serious difficulties he had to encounter in his attack on Gen. Upham's arm. "Why was it," said I, "that you could get no more blood?" "For the plainest reason in the world," he answered; "his veins were all ossified."

I was quite satisfied at the time, with this answer; for I knew so well the habits of Gen. U. that I stood ready to believe almost any thing in regard to him, especially when it came from a highly respectable source. Yet I have often suspected since that time, that there was a serious mistake made. Ossified or bony arteries, even at this great distance from the heart, in such a man, ought not to excite surprise; but these would hardly be met with in attempting to open a vein, since the arteries are much more deeply imbedded in the flesh than the veins are. And as for ossified veins themselves, especially in the arm, they are seldom if ever heard of.

You may wonder why I did not satisfy my curiosity at the time, by making diligent inquiry at the proper source of information; and I almost wonder too. But, in the first place, my curiosity did not rise so high on any occasion whatever, as it has since done. For, though I was hungering and thirsting for knowledge thirty years ago, my solicitude to know has so increased with increasing years that my present curiosity will admit of no comparison with the former. Secondly, I was exceedingly diffident. Thirdly, my mind was just then fully occupied with other things. And lastly, whenever I was in the company of Dr. S., both while I remained in the office and subsequently, it was only for a very short time, perhaps a single half hour, at best; and we had always so many other things to talk about, that Gen. U. and his *ossified veins* never entered our minds.

However, it was not many years afterward that I heard of the old general's death. Of the manner of his exit except that it was sudden, I never heard a word, up to this hour. It is by no means improbable that there was ossification about his heart, for he was a very fit subject for ossification of any parts that could be ossified. I do not know, indeed, that a post mortem examination was ever made; the family would doubtless have opposed it. The uses of the dead to the living are in general very little thought of.

Such cases of disease are, however, a terrible warning to those who are following in the path of Gen. Upham. They may or may not come to just such an end as he did, but of one thing we may be well assured; viz., that the wicked do not live out half their days, or, in other words, that sins against

the body, even though committed in ignorance, can never wholly escape the heaven-appointed penalty of transgression. "The soul that sins must die." For no physical infraction of God's holy, physical laws, do we know of any atonement. We may indeed, be thankful if we find one in the moral world or anywhere else.

## CHAPTER XXII

### HE'LL DIE IN THIRTY SIX HOURS

In the autumn of 1824, while a severe sickness was sweeping over one or two towns adjacent to that in which I resided, and considerable apprehension was felt lest the disease should reach us, the wife and child of my medical teacher, and myself, suddenly sickened in a manner not greatly dissimilar, and all of us suffered most severely.

It was perfectly natural, in those circumstances, to suspect, as a cause of our sickness, the prevailing epidemic. And yet the symptoms were so unlike those of that disease, that all suspicions of this sort were soon abandoned. Besides, no other persons but ourselves, for many miles around, had any thing of the kind, either about that time or immediately afterward. I have said that the symptoms of disease in all three of us were not dissimilar. There was much congestion of the lungs and some hemorrhage from their organs, and occasionally slight cough, and in the end considerable tendency to inflammation of the brain. The last symptom, however, may have been induced at least, in part, by the large amount of active medicine we took.

When the news of my own sickness reached my near relatives who resided only a few miles distant, they were anxious to pay such attention to me as the nature of the case appeared to require. But they soon tired; and it was found needful to employ an aged and experienced nurse to take the general charge, and under the direction of the physician, assume the entire responsibility of the case.

This nurse was one of those conceited people whose aid, after all, is worth very little. He was as far from affording the kind of assistance I required as could possibly be. And yet his intentions were in the main excellent.

The selection of physician was equally unfortunate. My teacher had nearly as much as he could do to take care of his wife and child. At his request, and in accordance with the wishes of my friends, their and my former physician were called in. When the danger became more imminent, a third was occasionally consulted. It was supposed, no doubt, that in the midst of counsellors there was safety.

The counsels of our third man, or umpire, may have had influence; but his manners were coarse, and in many respects objectionable. He was in favor, also, of a highly stimulating treatment, which appeared to me to add fuel to the flame, for I soon began to be at a loss when called upon to recollect things and circumstances. He saw the tendency, and, partly by way of "showing off" his powers of diagnosis, as well as in part to gain applause should a case so desperate turn out favorably, said, in the hearing of my nurse, "He'll die in just thirty-six hours."

Now, whatever his intentions were, and however honest his declaration, my nurse swallowed it at once, and was restless till he had an opportunity to divulge what he regarded as an important secret. It is by no means improbable that he entertained the usual impressions that a special preparation should be made for death, and that it was needful I should know my danger and attend to the subject before it was too late.

In one of my most lucid intervals, therefore, he said to me, "Do you expect to recover from your disease?" – "Most certainly I do," was the reply. "Do you know what Dr. Thornton thinks about it?" – "Not certainly; but from his cheerful manner, I suppose he thinks favorably." – "Do you think you could bear to know the truth? For if it was unfavorable, would it not be too much for you in your enfeebled condition?"

My heart was in my mouth, as the saying is, at this broad hint; and with a strong and earnest curiosity, I begged to know the worst, and to know it immediately. My attendant saw, in my agitation, his error, and would doubtless have receded had it been in his power; but it was too late; the die was cast; my curiosity was all on tiptoe, and I trembled, as a sailor would say, from stem to stern. "Well,"

said he, at length, putting on a face which of itself was enough to destroy some very feeble persons, "he says you cannot live more than thirty-six hours."

My friend, in divulging what he deemed an important secret, doubtless felt relieved; but not so with me. My philosophy had disappeared with the progress of my disease, and I was now, in mind, a mere child. In short, I was so much agitated by the unexpected intelligence, that I sank at once under it, and remained in this condition for several hours. When I awoke from this delirium, the symptoms of my disease were more favorable, and from that day forth I began to recover.

But the risk was too great for my enfeebled and diseased frame, and should not have been incurred. Dr. Thornton, though a physician of much reputation, was nevertheless a man of very little principle, and though respected for his medical tact and skill, was beloved by very few. He died, moreover, not many years afterward, as the fool dieth; viz., by suicidal hands. Nor do I know that as a man – a mere citizen – he had many mourners.

The reader will pardon me, perhaps, for saying so many times, and with so much emphasis, that "it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good." But I must be allowed to repeat the saying here, and to observe that while I entirely disapprove of the course my attendant took in the present instance, I am by no means sure that the delirium into which I was thrown by his tattling propensity was not safer for me than a restless apprehension of danger would have been, especially when long continued; nor that it did not contribute, indirectly, to bring about my recovery.

I was confined to the house by my sickness about five or six weeks, or till it was midwinter. And yet, all covered as the earth was when I first ventured forth, no Paradise could ever appear more beautiful to any son or daughter of Adam than did this terrestrial abode to me. And if ever I shed tears of devout gratitude to my Father in Heaven, it was on this very occasion.

It was a long time, however, after I got out of doors, before I was strong enough, in body or mind, to attempt to perform much labor. At the time of being taken sick, I was teaching a public school; and as soon as I began to be convalescent my patrons began to be clamorous about the school. They were hardly willing to wait till my physicians and myself deemed it safe to make a beginning. Indeed, notwithstanding all my caution, I was hurried into the pedagogic chair quite too soon.

But it is time for me to inform my readers what were the probable causes of my sickness; for I have already said, more than once, that to be able to do this is a matter of very great importance, both as it concerns ourselves and others; and it is a thing which can be done, at least to a considerable extent, whenever parents and teachers shall be wise enough to put their children and pupils upon the right track. I am well acquainted with a minister of the gospel, now nearly sixty years of age, who says he never had any thing ail him in his whole lifetime of which he could not trace out the cause.

For some months before my sickness I had been curtailing my hours of sleep. I had resolved to retire at eleven and rise at four. But it had often happened that instead of retiring at exactly eleven and rising exactly at four, I had not gone to bed till nearly twelve, and had risen as early as half-past three. So that instead of sleeping five full hours, as had been my original intention, I had often slept but about four.

How far this abridgment of my sleep had fallen in with other causes of debility, and thus prepared the way for severe, active disease, I cannot say. I was at this time tasking my energies very severely, for I was not only pursuing my professional studies with a good deal of earnestness, but at the same time, as has been already intimated, teaching a large and somewhat unmanageable district school. If ever a good supply of sleep is needful, whatever the quantum required may really be, I am sure it is in such circumstances.

But then it should be remembered, in abatement of all this, that the symptoms of disease, in all the three cases which I have alluded to, as occurring in the family with which I was connected, were very much alike; whereas neither the mother nor the child had suffered, prior to the sickness, for want of sleep. Must we not, therefore, look for some other cause? Or if it is to be admitted that

sleeplessness is exceedingly debilitating in its tendencies, must there not have been in addition some exciting cause still more striking? We will see.

During the latter part of the autumn which preceded our sickness, the water of the well from which we were drinking daily had a very unpleasant odor, and a fellow student and myself often spoke of it. As it appeared to give offence, however, we gradually left off our remarks and complaints about the water, and only abstained, as much as we could conveniently, from its use.

In the progress of the autumn, the well became nearly dry, and the offensive odor having become troublesome to others no less than to ourselves, it was very wisely concluded to draw out the water to the bottom, and thus find and remove the impurities. The task was exceedingly trying, but was at length accomplished.

Besides other impurities, there were found at the bottom of the well, several toads in a state of putrefaction, and so very offensive that it was difficult to approach them, or even to approach the top of the well that contained them. They were of course removed as soon as possible, and every practicable measure was adopted which was favorable to cleanliness. This final clearing of the well was about two months before the sickness commenced.

Now whether there was a connection between the use of this water and the sickness which followed, is a curious, and at the same time, a very important question. Against this belief, at least apparently so, is the fact that our disease resembled in no trifling degree, the prevailing disease in certain neighboring towns. Another fact is also worthy of consideration. The rest of the family drank freely of the water, why did not they sicken as well as we?

But as a deduction from the force of these facts, it is to be observed that nobody else around us for several miles had the prevailing epidemic unless it was ourselves. And then as to the objection that only a part of the family sickened, it is to be recollected that in the case of some of them who sickened there might have been, nay, probably were, other debilitating causes in operation previously, to prepare the way; such as, for example, in my own case, the want of sufficient sleep.

Thus far, then, though we arrive at nothing positive, we yet find our suspicions of a poisonous influence emanating from the putrid reptiles remaining. Indeed, it were impossible wholly to suppress them, and I will ask the candid reader's attention for a few moments to certain analogical evidence in the case, which, it is believed, will greatly aid the mind in coming to a right decision on the subject.

An eruptive disease broke out in two families residing in a house in Eastern Massachusetts, a few years ago, which was observed to affect more or less, every member of the two families who had drunk water from the common family well, except two; and these last had drunk but very little. On cleaning the well, the same species of reptiles which I have already mentioned, were found in it, in a state of decomposition, and highly offensive. No eruptive complaints of the same general kind prevailed at the time in the neighborhood, and those which I have mentioned disappeared soon after resuming the use of pure water.

Another instance occurred in this same region, a few years afterward. In the latter case, however, the putrid animals were rats and mice, and the eruption, instead of having a diffused or miliary appearance, partook largely of the character of the common boil.

Forty years ago a sickness broke out in Litchfield county in Connecticut, in a neighborhood where the wells were all very low; and the water which remained being in a cavity of rock, and continuing unchanged or nearly so, had at length become putrid. It was late in the autumn when the disease broke out, and it disappeared as soon as the wells were duly filled for the winter. It is true, I never heard in the latter case, any thing about putrid animals, but their existence and presence under such circumstances, would be natural enough.

It has, I know, been sometimes said that putrid animal substances, however unpleasant their odor might be, were not poisonous. But this opinion is doubtless unfounded; and, for myself, I find it difficult to resist the belief that in all the foregoing cases, except the last, and very possibly in that too, animal putridity had influence.

The practical lessons to be derived from the developments of the foregoing chapter are exceedingly numerous. I shall direct your attention for a few moments, to some of the more important.

First, we learn the necessity of keeping our wells in a proper condition. Could it be even proved that dead reptiles never produce disease, it is at least highly desirable to avoid them. No reasonable person would be willing to drink water highly impregnated with their odor, even if it did not reach his own seat of sensation.

Secondly, we should avoid the use of stagnant water, even though it should be free from animal impurities. Especially should we be cautious where there is a liability, or even a possibility, to impurity and stagnation both. Either of these causes may, as it is most fully believed, produce disease; but if so, what is not to be expected from a combination of the two?

Our wells should be often cleaned. It is not possible, of course, to say with exactness, how often, but we shall hardly err in the line of excess. Very few wells are cleaned too often. Once a year, in ordinary cases, cannot be too much; nor am I quite sure that twice would be useless.

It seems to me quite possible to exclude animals from our wells, would we but take the necessary pains; and this, too, without covering them closely at the top. I can not see how any toad, unless it be the tree-toad so called, could climb a well-curb three feet high. Other animals, however, might do so, and therefore I would keep a well as closely covered as possible.

Many, I know, believe it desirable that the surface of the water in a well should be exposed to the air. I do not believe there is any necessity for this, though it is certainly desirable to avoid stagnation of the air at the bottom. Motion is essential, I might even say indispensable. I have sometimes thought the modern endless or chain pump as perfect a fixture as any other.

Thirdly, we may learn from the details of the foregoing chapter, the necessity of having in our sick-chambers the right sort of nurses or attendants. There should be a class of persons educated to this service, as a profession; and most happily for the prospects of the great human family, such efforts are now being made; it is hoped and believed they will be crowned with success.

One thing more may, as I think, be inferred from the story of my sickness as above: – the folly of multiplying physicians. In the present case, when the physician's own family was in a condition to demand a large share of his attention, if not to absorb all his energies, it may have been desirable to call in an additional medical man as counsellor. But the multiplication of counsel, besides adding to the danger of too much dosing and drugging, brings with it a host of ills too numerous to be mentioned in this place, and should be studiously avoided. My full belief is, that Dr. Thornton was a principal agent in creating the dangers he deprecated, and which came so near effecting my own destruction.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### ABOUT TO DIE OF CONSUMPTION

I have already mentioned more than once, – or at least done so by implication, – that I hold my existence, on this earth by a very feeble tenure. Consumption, by right of inheritance, made very early claims; and its demands, as I approached manhood, became more and more cogent, in consequence of measles, dropsy, Lee's Pills, and the injudicious use of medicine and many other errors. My employment, too, as school teacher had been far enough from favorable to health. While thus engaged from winter to winter, and sometimes from year to year; I was accustomed to have cold upon cold, till at length especially towards the close of winter and at the opening of the spring, I was often apparently on the verge of a rapid decline. A ramble up and down the country, with a summer or part of a summer on the farm or garden, did indeed for a time partially set me up again, so that I could return to my favorite employment of teaching in the autumn and during the winter; and thus time with me went on.

A course of medical lectures which I heard in 1825-6, left me, in March, 1826, in about as bad a state of health as school keeping usually had done. However I was too indigent, I might even say too destitute, to be idle. Scarcely was my license to practise medicine and surgery fairly in my pocket, than I found myself turning towards the district school again. Yet I did not continue it many weeks before my old enemy returned upon me with renewed strength; till I was at length compelled to abandon the school entirely. I had as much as I could do, in attempting to keep up a successful war with cough, night-sweats, purulent expectoration, and hectic fever.

This was one of the darkest periods of my life. Destitute of money, and even somewhat in debt, yet too proud or self-relying to be willing to ask my friends to aid me; my hopes of usefulness defeated in two favorite fields of activity, teaching and medicine; and practically given up to linger out a year or two and then die, how could I avoid discouragement? Was it strange even, if I approached at times, the very borders of despair?

For some time prior to this crisis – indeed at certain seasons all my life long, – I relied not a little on medicine, in various forms, especially in the shape of tonics. Strange that I should have done thus, when my general impressions were so unfavorable to its exhibition; and yet such inconsistencies have been, and may be again. Huxham's tincture, quassia, ale, and other bitter infusions and tinctures, had been successively invoked, and I still clung to ale. I also used some wine, and I attached a good deal of importance to a stimulating diet. But it was all to no purpose, the disease was marching on steadily, and appeared destined to triumph; and that, too, at no very distant period.

In these circumstances, I repeat, what could be done? Nature's extremity is sometimes said to be God's opportunity. But without assuming that there was any special providence about it, I will say, that I was driven to desperation, nay almost to insanity or madness. I deemed myself on the very verge of a mighty precipice, beneath which yawned a gulf unfathomable. I must make a last mighty struggle, or perish irretrievably and forever.

It was July 4th, the anniversary of American Independence; I sought and found a few moments of calm reflection, and began to interrogate myself. Why was I so dependent on the physician and the apothecary's shop, and so tremblingly alive to every external impression of atmospheric temperature, or purity? Why must I, at the early age of twenty-eight, be doomed to tread the long road of decline and death? Why can I not declare independence of all external remedial agents, and throw myself wholly on nature and nature's God? I know, full well, the laws of my being. If trust in these, and faithful and persevering obedience will not save me, nothing will. Thus I mused; but alas! it was to muse only. Though almost ready to take the critical step, – I will not say make the desperate plunge, –

the fourth of July finally passed away, and found me still lingering, to use a Scripture expression, "between the porch and the altar."

July the fifth at length arrived. And is it all over? I said to myself. Has the "glorious" *Fourth* gone by and I have not acted up to the dignity of a well-formed and glorious resolution? Must I, alas! now go on to woe irretrievable? Must I go down to the consumptive's grave? Must I perish at less than thirty years of age, and thus make good the declaration that the wicked shall not live out half his days?

A new thought came to me. "One of the South American provinces celebrated her Independence to day, the fifth. I will take the hint, – I will yet be free. I will escape from present circumstances. I will fly from my native home, and all that pertains to it. I will fly from myself, – It is done," I added, "and I go with the first conveyance."

I could indeed walk a little distance, but it either set me to coughing, severely, or else threw me into a profuse perspiration which was equally exhausting. One favorable symptom alone remained, a good appetite and tolerable digestion. Had there been, in addition to the long train of troublesome and dangerous symptoms above mentioned, a loss of digestive power and energy, with colliquative diarrhoea, my hopes must have been forever abandoned.

But I had made my resolution, and was prepared to execute it, let the consequences be what they might. With little more than a single change of clothing, I contrived to find a conveyance before night, quite beyond my immediate neighborhood. Fatigued, at length I stopped, and without much delay, committed myself to the friendship of Morpheus.

On the top of a considerable eminence, in the very midst of a mountain range, one of the most delightful in all New England, only a few miles from the place of my lodging, was a tower some sixty or seventy feet high, which commanded a view of the surrounding country. I had often wished to enjoy the prospect which this tower afforded. Was there, now an opportunity? I had the leisure, had I the needful strength? Could I possibly reach it? And by what means?

I rested for the remainder of the day and the night following, at the foot of the eminence, in order to prepare myself for the excursion of the following morning. It was as much as I could do, that night to take care of my irritable and irritated lungs. At length, however, I slept, and was refreshed. The only drawback upon my full renewal, was my usual night – or rather as I ought to say morning – perspiration, which was quite drenching and exhausting; though not much worse after all my fears than usual.

God is good, I said to myself, when I saw from my chamber window the top of the hills I wished to climb, and perceived that the first rays of the morning sun were already falling upon them. By the middle of the forenoon I was at the foot of the mountain, and prepared to ascend it. After a little rest, I wound my way to the tower, and finally to its top, when I took a survey of what seemed to me like a new world. Here I renewed my declaration of independence with regard to those earthly props on which I had so long been wont to lean, and of dependence on God, and on his natural and moral enactments.

Here, too, I formed my programme for the day and for the week. Distant from the point which I occupied not more than eight miles was a most interesting educational institution I had long wished to see; and near it was an old acquaintance, with, whom I might perhaps spend the Sabbath, which was now approaching. Could I carry out my plan? Had I the needful strength?

My resolution was at length made; and no sooner made than begun to be executed. The public houses on the way were miserable things; but they were better far than none.

They gave me a temporary home, such as it was. I reached the institution, had a partial view of it, and, half worn out with my week's labor, was glad to rest the seventh day, "according to the commandment," in the house of an old acquaintance.

Monday morning came, and with the aid of the intervening Sabbath, brought to my attenuated and almost sinking frame a new recruit of strength. With a new object of interest some fifteen miles distant, I was once more on the road. I could now walk several miles a day without greatly increasing

my cough, or ride in a stage coach many miles. Nor was the nightly perspiration, nor even that which was induced by exercise, any more distressing than it had been, if indeed it was as much so.

In due time I reached my point of destination, and curiosity became fully gratified. What next? A few miles distant was a high mountain which I greatly desired to climb. I reached its base; but the heat was great, so dog-days like, that my courage failed me. I had the necessary strength, but dared not use it for such a purpose. Perhaps I acted wisely.

Twelve miles in the distance still was my father's house, now grown from a few patrimonial acres to full New England size; viz., a hundred acres or more, and well cultivated. My wandering abroad had given me a little strength and very much courage. Why should it not? Was it not truly encouraging that while I was making a long excursion, chiefly on foot, in the heats of midsummer, my cough and hectic and night sweats should become no worse, while my muscular strength had very much increased?

My mind's eye turned towards my father's house as a place of refuge. In a day or two I was in it; and in another day or two I was caparisoned as a laborer, and in the field. It is true that I did not at first accomplish a great deal; but I held the implements of husbandry in my hands, and spent a certain number of hours every day in attempting to work. Some of the workmen laughed about me, and spoke of the vast benefits to be derived from having a ghost in the field with them; but I held on in spite of their jokes. I had been accustomed of old to the labor of a farm, which greatly facilitated my efforts. Habit is powerful.

Not many weeks passed ere I was able to perform half a day's work or more in a day. My consumptive tendencies, moreover, were far less exhausting and trying. In a word, I was better. The Rubicon was already passed. I did not, indeed, expect to get entirely well, for this would have been a hope too big for me. But I should not die, I thought, immediately. Drowning men, as you know, catch at straws; and this is a wise arrangement, for otherwise they would not often be saved by planks.

One point, at least, I had gained. I was emancipated from slavery to external forms, especially medicated forms. But I had not only declared and found myself able to maintain independence of medicine, but I had acquired much confidence in nature and nature's laws. And this faith in the recuperative powers of nature was worth more to me than worlds would have been without it.

Much was said, in those days, not only in books but by certain learned professors, about shaking off pulmonary consumption on horseback. Whether, indeed, this had often been done – for it is not easy, in the case of a joint application of various restorative agencies, such as air, light, full mental occupation etc., to give to each agency its just due – I am not quite prepared to say. But as soon as I was able to ride on horseback several miles a day, the question was agitated whether it was or was not advisable.

In prosecuting this inquiry, another question came up. How would it do, thought I, to commence at once the practice of medicine? But difficulties almost innumerable – some of them apparently insurmountable – lay in my way. Among the rest, I had no confidence in my medical knowledge or tact; I was a better school-master. But teaching, as I had every reason to fear, would bring me down again, and I could not think of that: whereas the practice of medicine, on horseback, which at that time and in that region was not wholly out of date, might, as I thought, prove quite congenial.

Besides being "fearful and unbelieving" in the matter, I was still in the depths of poverty. I had not even five dollars. In fact, during my excursion already described, I had lived on a few ounces of solid food and a little milk or ale each day, in order to eke out my almost exhausted finances; though, by the way, I do not know but I owed my partial final recovery in no small degree to this very starvation system. However, to become a practising physician, money would be indispensable, more or less. What could be done without it? My father had credit, and could raise money for me; but *would* he? He had never wholly approved of my medical tendencies and course; and would it be right to ask him to aid me in an undertaking which he could not conscientiously approve?

Just at this time our own family physician wanted to sell, and offered me his stand. His practice, he said, was worth a thousand dollars a year. He had an old dilapidated house and a couple of acres of miserable land, and a horse. These, he said, he would sell to me for so much. I might ride with him as a kind of apprentice or journeyman for six months, at the expiration of which time he would vacate the field wholly.

The house, land, and horse were worth perhaps one-third the sum demanded, but probably not more. However, the price with me, made very little difference. One sum was much the same with another. For I was so anxious to live, that I was willing to pay almost any price which might be required by a reasonable man, and till that time, it had not entered my heart that a good man would take any serious advantage of a fellow being in circumstances so desperate. And then I was not only anxious to live, but very confident I should live. So strong was my determination to live on, and so confident was I in the belief that I should do so, that I was willing to incur a debt, which at any other period of my life would have discouraged me.

There was another thing that tended to revive me and restore my courage. The more I thought of commencing business, and talked about living, the more I found my strength increasing. That talking about dying had a downward or down-hill tendency, I had long known; but that the tendency of talking up-hill was exactly the reverse, I had not fully and clearly understood.

My father tried to dissuade me from a hasty decision, but it was to no purpose. To me, it seemed that the course I had proposed was my only alternative. "I must do it," I said to myself, "or die;" and life to me, as well as to others, was sweet. But although it was a course to which I seemed shut up, and which I must pursue or die, it was a step which I could not take unaided. I had not the pecuniary ability to purchase so much as a horse, or, had I needed one, hardly a good dog.

It was at length proposed by my medical friend, the seller, to accept of a long credit for the amount due for the place and appurtenances, provided, however, I would get my father or some other good man to be my endorser. But here was a difficulty almost or quite insurmountable. My father had always said he would endorse for nobody. And as for asking any one else to endorse for me, I dared not.

But I cannot dwell at this point. My father at length became my endorser, and the bargain was signed and sealed. It was indeed, a desperate effort, and I have a thousand times wondered how I could have ventured. Why! only one or two years before, I was miserable for several days because I was in debt to the extent of only two dollars for a much-needed article, and actually procured the money with considerable difficulty, and went and paid the debt to get rid of my anguish; whereas now, without much pain and without being worth fifty dollars in the world, I could be willing to contract a debt of from twelve to fifteen hundred dollars, and involve my good old father in the consequences besides. How entirely unaccountable!

But mankind love life, and fear death. The scheme proposed was, as I believed, not only a dernier but a needful resort. It was a wrong step no doubt, but I did not then think so. I believed the end "sanctified" or at least sanctioned the means. How could I have done so? "What ardently we wish, we soon believe." I had most ardently wished, I now began to believe!

My consumptive tendencies now receded apace, even before I was astride of my horse. The stimulus of the hope of life with a forgetfulness of myself, were better tonics than Huxham or ale or rich food. There was the expectation of living, and consequently the beginning of life. Mind has great power over even inert matter; how much more over the living animated machine!

## CHAPTER XXIV

### MY JOURNEYMANSHIP IN MEDICINE

Journeyman in medicine, though without the full responsibilities of the profession, have yet their difficulties. I had mine; and I had not only the ordinary complement of ordinary men, but some which were a little extra.

For example, I was no horseman at all, and people around me knew it. At the first attempt to mount a new horse, and ride out with the old physician, of whom I had purchased my stand, to see his patients, I made an exhibition of my horsemanship which I shall not soon forget, and which I am sure certain wags and half-buffoons and common loungers who witnessed the scene *never* will.

My horse stood at the post all caparisoned, while I made ready. In setting off, I knew well I must submit to the ordeal of being gazed at and commented on by a crowd assembled in an adjoining store. It was a rainy day, and the crowd would doubtless be much larger than usual. Now my love of approbation was excessive; so great as at times to defeat entirely its object. So in truth, it proved on the present occasion.

When I was ready to go forth on my journey, I mounted my horse and attempted to place my right foot in the stirrup. At this critical instant the gaping multitude in the grocery, presented themselves in quite a formidable column at the door to see the young doctor on his new horse. Their appearance threw my mind off its balance to an extent that prevented me from well-balancing my body, and with every possible exertion I could not get my feet firmly fixed in the stirrups. To add to my trouble, my horse was in haste and trotted off high and hard before I could muster presence of mind enough to check him. I rolled this way and that, till at length, down I came headlong. My hat went one way, and my whip another. A great shout was at once raised by the spectators, but being cured by this time, of my excessive diffidence, and not at all hurt, I could soon join in the laugh with the rest. I could most heartily adopt my old maxim, "It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good;" and I had learned by my fall at least, one thing, at least for the moment; viz., my excessive regard to human approbation. Thenceforward, I rode as I pleased.

But before I enter upon the details and particular confessions of my professional career, it is needful that I should say something of those changes which were made about this time in my physical habits, by means of which I gained at least a temporary victory over my great enemy, the consumption. For it must not be supposed that because I could sit on a horse and ride six, eight, ten, or twelve miles a day, or work in the field or garden half the day, I was out of danger. I had, indeed, gained important victories, but there remained very much land yet to be possessed.

Of my abandonment of all medicine, I have already told you. But I had also greatly changed my dietetic habits. During my excursion of the fifth of July, and subsequently, I had lived almost wholly on what might have been denominated the starvation system. The case was this: I started with less than five dollars in my pocket, and with too much pride to borrow more. That my money might hold out, therefore, though I took care to secure a good, clean bed by nights, even at the full market price (except when I was entertained occasionally, by particular friends), I almost went without food. Many a time was I satisfied, because I was determined to have it so, with a tumbler of milk and a couple of crackers for my breakfast, or even my dinner; and as for supper, I often dispensed with it wholly; and all this too, strange though it may seem, not only without the loss of strength, but with a slow, yet steady, increase.

These dietetic changes, though they were a necessity, were continued and extended from principle. I had known, for a long time, what the laws of digestion, respiration, circulation, cleanliness, exercise, etc., were, but had not fully obeyed them. But I now set myself obeying them up to the full extent of my knowledge. I do not mean to affirm that my obedience was perfect and entire – wanting

in nothing; but only that I made an attempt at sinless perfection. However, I speak here, of course, of the physical code; for to moral obligation, at that time, I do not mean, now, to refer.

My diet was exceedingly plain and comparatively unstimulating. It consisted chiefly of bread, fruits, potatoes; and, once a day of salted meats. These last should have been exchanged for those which were not pickled, and which are of course less stimulating; but at that time I was not fully aware of their tone and tendency. My drink was water and a little tea; for cider I had long before abandoned.

I paid particular attention to purity of air, and to temperance. Fortunately I resided in a house which from age and decrepitude, pretty effectually ventilated itself. But temperature, as I well knew, must be carefully attended to, particularly by consumptive people. While they avoid permanent chilliness, and even at times, the inhalation of very cold air on the one hand, it is quite indispensable that they should breathe habitually as cool an air as possible, and yet not be permanently chilly. This, by means of a proper dress, by night and by day, and proper fixtures for heating my room, I contrived to secure.

Cleanliness, too, by dint of frequent bathing, received its full share of my attention. It was a rule from which I seldom if ever departed, to wet my body daily with cold water, and follow it up by friction. At home or abroad, wherever I could get a bowl of water I would have a hand bath.

Need I say here that a medical man – one who rode daily on horseback – paid a proper regard to the laws of exercise? And yet I am well persuaded that not a few medical men exercise far too little. Riding on horseback, though it may sometimes shake off consumption, is not so good an exercise for the mass of mankind – perhaps not even for consumptive people themselves – as an alternation of walking with the riding. This, also, I took good care to secure.

Physicians are usually either very greatly addicted to the habit of dosing and drugging for every little ill, real or imaginary, or particularly hostile to it. I have seldom found any such thing as a golden mean in this respect, among them. My feelings, saying nothing at present of the sober convictions of my head, led me almost to the extreme of no medicine, if extreme it can be called. I did not even retain my daily tumbler of ale.

Though I began my medical career as an apprentice or journeyman, merely, and went abroad chiefly as the associate of my predecessor, I was soon called upon in his absence, and in other circumstances, to take the whole charge of patients; or at least to do so till a longer experience was available. Thus I was gradually inducted into an important office, without incurring a full and proportionate share of its responsibilities.

## CHAPTER XXV

### MY TEMPERANCE PLEDGE

The subject of Temperance, in its present associated forms, had, at this time, just began to be agitated. At least, it had just begun to receive attention in the newspapers which I was accustomed to see. It could not be otherwise than that I should be deeply interested in its discussion.

I had been brought up, as I have before intimated, to a pretty free use of cider and tea; but not of ardent spirits or coffee. Neither of these was regularly used in my father's family; though both occasionally were. But I had abandoned cider long before this time, because I found it had a tendency to produce, or at least to aggravate, those eruptive diseases to which I was greatly liable. Temperance, then, in the popular sense of the term, was, to me, an easy virtue.

And yet as a temperance man – in the circle of my acquaintance – I stood nearly alone. No individual around me was ready to take the ground I occupied. Of this, however, I was not fully apprised, till a patient attempt to recruit the temperance ranks convinced me of the fact. But I will give you a full account of my enterprise, since it has a bearing on my subsequent history and confessions.

With the aid of a Boston paper which I habitually read, I drew up the customary preamble, declaration, and pledge of a temperance society. It involved the great idea of total abstinence from spirituous liquors; though by the term spirituous liquors, as used at that day, was meant chiefly *distilled* spirits. Having first affixed my own name to the paper I went to the most influential of my patrons and friends and asked them to sign it likewise. But, reader, – will you believe it? – not a single subscriber could I obtain far, or near. They all, with one consent, made excuse.

The elder deacon of the most evangelical church in the place where I resided, had for his apology that he suffered seriously from a complaint for which his physicians had prescribed the daily use of gin, "Now," said he, "though there is nothing in the pledge which goes to prohibit the use of spirits in a case like my own, yet as some might think otherwise and charge me with inconsistency, I must on the whole be excused from signing it."

His son, who was also a deacon in the same church with the father, excused himself by saying he was young, and without influence, and it would be far better for the old people to put their names down first. "Perhaps," said he, "I may conclude to sign the paper by-and-by. I will consider well the matter, and if I conclude to sign it, I will let you know."

Other leading men in the church as well as in the town affairs, refused to sign the pledge, because Deacon H. and son would not. It belonged to the deacons in the church, they said, to take the lead in all good things, and not to them. When *they* had put *their* names to the document, others would not long hesitate to follow.

In short nobody would consent to sign the paper, and it remains to this day, just as it was when I drew it up; and it is now more than thirty years old. There it is, with my name attached to it, as large as life. I have been President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and "all hands too," of my would-be Temperance Society, from that day to this. I doubt whether many societies can be found which in thirty years have made so little change as the one under consideration.

For about four years from the time of getting up the above-named temperance society, strange as the assertion may seem, I retained the right to use a little beer and a good deal of coffee. But in May, 1830, I abandoned all drinks but water, to which custom I have ever since adhered and in which I shall probably die.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### TRIALS OF A YOUNG PHYSICIAN

The poet Cowper, in his delineations of a candidate for the pulpit, prescribes, as one needful condition or qualification,

"That he is honest in the sacred cause."

So, when I entered upon the medical profession, which I regarded as next of kin to sacred, I deemed honesty quite a high recommendation; and whatever in the abstract appeared to me to be right, I endeavored to pursue through the routine of every-day life. Alas, that I should ever have had occasion to doubt the policy of common honesty!

I was called to see Mrs. —. The case was an urgent one. There was no time for deliberation or consultation. I understood her case but very poorly; yet I knew that in order to success I must at least *seem* to be wise. Besides, what was to be done must be done quickly; so I boldly prescribed. My prescription was entirely successful, and I left the house with flying colors. I left, moreover, with the full consciousness of having acted in the main like an honest man.

A few days afterward I was sent for by Mrs. —, who immediately filled my ears with the most piteous complaints, the sum total of which was that she was exceedingly *nervous*, and I told her so. Of course I did not complain of culpability or crime. But I told her, very plainly, that she needed no medicine — nothing but plenty of air and exercise, and less high-seasoned food. My great frankness gave offence, and impaired my reputation. She employed, in my stead, Dr. Robinson, who continued to attend her till his bill amounted to a sum sufficient to buy a good carriage and harness, and till his credit for skill was advanced in a degree corresponding.

Mr. B.'s child was sick, and his wife besides. He came for my predecessor; but, not finding him at home, — though he still remained in the place, — he was compelled to Hobson's choice — myself or nobody; Dr. Robinson lived at too great a distance. I was accordingly employed, and was soon on the spot. The child was very sick; and for some little time after my arrival I was so much occupied in the performance of my duties that I paid no attention to any thing else. But having prescribed for both my patients, I sat down quietly to look over the newspaper.

Presently I heard from Mrs. B. a deep groan. I was immediately at her bedside, anxious to know the cause. "Oh, nothing at all," she said, "except a momentary feeling of disappointment because Dr. — did not come." I said to her, "You can send for him now, madam, as soon as he returns. Do not think yourselves compelled to adhere to me, simply because you have been obliged to call me once. I will yield most cheerfully to the individual of your preference."

Mrs. B. apologized. She knew I had done as well as I could, she said; and perhaps no one could have done better. "But little Leonora," said she, "is dreadfully sick; and I do very much want to see Dr. B. He has had more experience than you. These young doctors, just from the schools, what can they know, the best of them?"

I saw her difficulties; but, as I have already intimated, I did not look so wise as Dr. B., nor had I so grave a face, nor so large an abdomen. I could neither tell so good a story, nor laugh so heartily; I could not even descend to that petty talk which is so often greatly preferred to silence or newspaper reading, not only by such individuals as Mrs. B. and her friends, but by most families. A physician must be a man of sympathy. He need not, however, descend to so low a level as that of dishonesty; but he must come down to the level of his people in regard to manners and conversation. He must converse with them in their own language. He must not only *seem* to be devoted, unreservedly, to



their interests, but must actually *be* so. This confession is most cheerfully and sincerely and honestly made; and may he who reads it understand.

On a certain occasion I was called to prescribe in a family where the disappointment was so great that the patient was actually made worse by my presence, and an unfavorable turn given to the disease. It may be said that people ought not to yield themselves up to the influence of such feelings; and it is certainly true that they ought not. But sick people are not always rational, nor even judicious. Dr. Johnson says: "Every sick man is a rascal;" but we need not go quite so far as that. Sickness changes us, morally, sometimes for the better, but much oftener for the worse; and in general it makes us much less reasonable.

But it is far enough from being my intention to present a full account of the trials incident to the life of a young medical man; for, in order to do this, I should be obliged to carry you with me, at least mentally, to places which you would not greatly desire to visit. Physicians can seldom choose their patients; they are compelled to take them as they find them. They will sometimes be called to the vilest of the vile and the filthiest of the filthy.

Their office is indeed a noble one; but is noblest of all when performed honestly, in the fear of God, with a view to do good, and not merely to please mankind and gratify their own ambition. Above all, they should not practise medicine for the mere love of money. A physician should have a heart overflowing with benevolence, and should feel it incumbent upon him, at every step in his professional life, not only to do good to his patients, but to all around him. He should be a guide to mankind, physically, for moral ends. He should let his light so shine, that they, seeing his good works, may be led to glorify the Father who is in heaven. His object should be to spread, by the good he performs, the everlasting gospel, just as truly as this should be the object of him who ministers in holy things at the altar. Such a physician, however, at first, I was not. Such, however, I soon aspired to be; such, as I trust, I at length became. Of this, however, the reader will judge for himself, by-and-by. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A DOSING AND DRUGGING FAMILY

For several months of the first year of my medical life, I was a boarder in a family, all of whom were sickly. Some of the number were even continually or almost continually under the influence of medicine, if not of physicians. Here my trials were various, and some of them severe.

But I must give you a particular description of this family; for I have many things to say concerning it, some of which may prove instructive.

Mr. L. had been brought up a farmer; but being possessed of a delicate constitution, had been subsequently converted into a country shop-keeper, – a dealer, I mean, in dry goods and groceries. As is usual in such cases, he was in the habit of keeping a small assortment of drugs and medicines. The circumstance of having medicine always at hand, and often *in* hand, had led him, as it has thousands of others, into temptation, till he had formed and confirmed the habit of frequent dosing and drugging his frail system. But as usually happens in such cases, the more medicine he took, the more he seemed to require, and consequently the more he swallowed. One thing prepared the way for another.

With Mrs. L. matters were still worse. In the vain belief that without a course of medication, *she could never have any constitution*, as she was wont to express it, her mother had begun to dose and drug her as early as at the age of twelve or fourteen years. And what had been thus early begun, had been continued till she was twenty-four, when she married Mr. L. But she was feebler, if possible, at twenty-four, than at fourteen, and believed herself under the necessity of taking medicine in order to be able to sit up a part of the day and perform a little light, but needful, family labor, such as sewing, mending, etc.

When I first had a seat at their family table, it was by no means uncommon for Mr. and Mrs. L. to begin their meal, as soon as "grace" was over, with Stoughton's bitters, or some other supposed cordial, or strengthener of the appetite. As I not only refused to join them, but occasionally spoke a kind word against the custom into which they had fallen, the bitters at length fell into disuse; and it was found that their meals could be digested as well without the stimulus, as with its aid.

But I was much less successful in preventing the torrent of medicine from producing its wonted – upon this family, at other times and seasons; for which Mr. L.'s business furnished such facilities. But you must not think of Mrs. L. as a mere tyro in this business of compounding medicine, nor in that of administering it, especially to herself. From the apothecary's shop of her husband, as well as from other sources, she selected one thing after another, not merely for the time, but for permanent purposes, till it was almost difficult to say which had the best assortment, she or her husband. And she not only had it on hand, but she took it, as freely, almost so, as her food and drink.

More than even this should be affirmed. Had she at any time flagged in this work of self-destruction, she would have been brought up again to the line by her mother. For though the latter resided at a considerable distance, she paid Mrs. L. an occasional visit, and sometimes remained in the family several weeks. Whenever she did so, little was heard of in the usual hours of conversation, – especially at the table, – but Sarah's stomach, Sarah's nerves, and what was good for Sarah. It was enough to make one *sick at the stomach*, to witness the conversation even for a single day; and above all to be compelled to join in it.

She was there once, in the early spring, and remained until the ground was fairly settled. No sooner could she get into the woods, and come to the naked surface of the earth, than the whole country around was laid under tribute to furnish roots "good for the blood." These were put into a beer to be prepared for Sarah. It was supposed by many, – and by this wondrous wise old lady, among the rest, – that the efficacy of these medicinal beers in cleansing the blood, must ever be in due proportion to the number of their respective ingredients. Thus, if twenty articles, "good for

the blood," could be procured and boiled in the wort, the result would be a compound which would be worth twenty times as much, or at least be *many* times as useful, in accomplishing its supposed specific purpose, as if only one kind of root had been obtained.

It was a long time before I could break in upon this tissue of error, to any practical purpose. For so deeply imbedded in the human brain is the idea of purifying the blood by some such unnatural means, that one might almost as well think of building a railroad to the moon, as of overcoming it. They never thought – perhaps never knew – that the blood of the human body of to-day, will be little more the blood of the body to-morrow, than the river which flows by our door to-day will be the river of to-morrow; and that the one can no more be purified independently of any and all things else, than the other.

But it is said to be a long road which never turns. Some good impressions had been made on this family, as we shall see hereafter. Not, indeed, until there had been much unnecessary suffering, and many an unwilling penalty paid for transgression, as well as much money uselessly expended for physicians and medicine. For though I was somewhat a favorite in the family, I was as yet young and inexperienced, and many a wiser head than mine was from time to time invoked, and much time and money lost in other ways, that might have been saved for better and nobler purposes.

Among the items of loss, as well as of penalty, was that of offspring. These were generally still-born. One, indeed, lived about two weeks and then perished. The parents seemed to be written childless. Or rather, they seemed to have written themselves so. They seemed destined moreover, to follow their premature children, at no great distance, to an untimely grave. For nothing was more obvious – I mean to the medical observer – than at an age when everybody ought to be gaining in bodily no less than in mental and moral vigor, they were both of them growing feeble as well as irresolute.

As a boarder, I left the family some time afterward, though I did not lose sight of it wholly; nor did they entirely forget or disregard the numerous hints I had given them. They made some progress every year. At length, however, I lost sight of them entirely, and only kept up a faint recollection of them by means of an occasional word of intelligence from the place where they resided, showing that they were still alive.

One day, after the lapse of about eight years, as I was passing through a charming New England village, the stage-coach stopped to let the passengers dine, when, to my great surprise, on stepping out of the coach, whom should I see but my old friend Mr. L.? He was equally surprised, and perhaps equally rejoiced, to see me. The interview was utterly unexpected to us both.

"How do you do?" said he, grasping my hand. I returned the compliment by inquiring after his own health and that of Mrs. L. It turned out that he had failed in his business a few months before, and that, as a consequence, he had been compelled to remove to the place where he now was, and engage in an employment which brought his skin into contact with the air, and his muscles into prolonged and healthful activity. It appeared also that both he and his family had long since banished the use of medicine. "And now," said he, "thank God I know what it is, once more, to enjoy health; I can not only eat, but work."

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