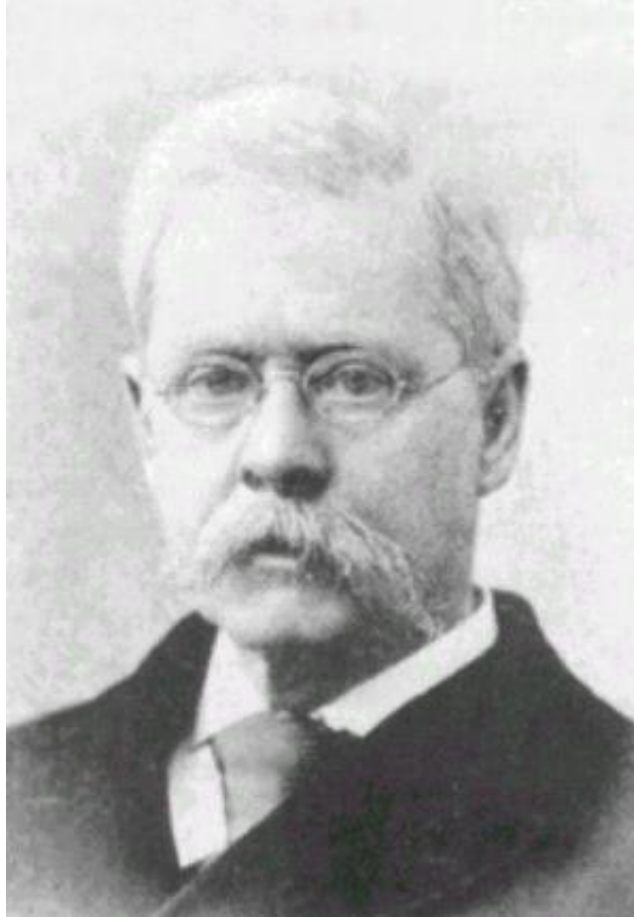


Samuel Arthur Jones



Samuel Arthur Jones (1834-1912)

1898 - A Fragment in re Formica rufa

"One of the pleasures of married life is that it develops and furnishes a garret - that multifarious omnium gatherum - to ransack, which on a rainy day affords a series of never-ending surprises. Happy the boy and the girl who have such a resort! For instance, my own co-partner in the "Infantry" line was beguiled into visiting our garret this very day. Speedily, she descends on me with her spoils; an armful of "truck", which she wishes to know "what on earth it is good for." There is something in the dulcet tone of her enquiry which my prophetic soul tells me "means business;" so I dropped Stephen Paget's "*Ambroise Pare and His Times*" to sort the "stuff." (I may say, in the strictest confidence, I never retreat from a family "engagement" - until I have to - but I am the daisiest of diplomats in keeping out of them. *Verbum sap.*)

Very soon six pages of yellow manuscript engage my attention. It is my own "cacography," as my old writing teacher delighted to call it. It is some thirteen or fourteen years old. I have thought it worth while the transcribing for the RECORDER. Take it for what it is worth, and at your own estimation. It was induced by the reading of an old book; there were no "patients" that afternoon, and I at least "stood off" the devil during the writing of it.

Some two hundred and fifty years ago John French, Doctor of Physick in the realm of Great Britain, committed to the press of Richard Cotes the painfully written (and in that day "painfully written" meant pains-takingly written) manuscript of a learned book bearing the following exuberant title: "*The Art of Distillation, or a Treatise of the choicest Spagyricall Preparations performed by way of Distillation, being partly taken out of the most select Chymicall Authors of severall languages, and partly taken out of the Author's manuell Experience; Together with The Description of the chiefest Furnaces and Vessels used by the Ancient, and Moderne Chymists: Also A Discourse of divers Spagyricall Experiments and Curiosities, and of the Anatomy of Gold and Silver, with the chiefest Preparations and Curiosities thereof, and Vertues of them all.*"

These words which I have put into italic dress Richard Cotes, duly instructed by Dr. John French, printed in red ink, which shineth to-day on the time-stained paper and maketh a piebald page, as a glance thereon will testify to the most incredulous reader hereof.

But our present concern is with p. 199 of Book 4, whereon is to be found the following:

"Kunrath's Famous Water, Called Aqua Magnanimitatis."

"Take of Pismires, or Ants (the biggest, that have the sowrish smell, are the best), two handfulls, spirit of Wine a Gallon, digest them in a Glass vessel close shut, the space of a month, in which time they will be dissolved into a Liquor, then distill them in *Balneo*, till all be dry. Then put the same quantity of Ants as before, digest, and distill them in the same Liquor as before: doe this three times, then aromatize the Spirit with some Cinnamon.

"Note that upon the Spirit will float an Oil, which must be separated. This spirit is of so excellent use to stir up the Animall Spirit in so much that John Casmire, Palse-grave of the Rhene and Seyfrie of Collen Generall against the Turks did always drinke of it when they went to fight, to increase Magnanimity and Courage, which it did even to admiration.

"This spirit doth also wonderfully irritate them that are slothful to Venery.

"It also provoketh urine even to admiration. It doth also wonderfully irritate the Spirits that are dulled, and deaded with any cold distemper.

"This Oil doth have the same effects, and indeed more powerfully. This Oil doth, besides what is spoken of the Spirit, help deafness exceedingly, two or three drops being dropped into the Ear, after it is well syringed, once in a day, for a week together.

"It also helpeth the Eyes that have film growing on them, being now and then dropped into them."

Now, turn, please, to Allen's Encyclopedia, *Sub voce* "Formica Rufa", and read the prover's evidence:

"Mind unusually excited," is one report. "An exhilarated condition, like that produced by drinking champagne." Make a note of that, please. "All day very happy and inclined to be jolly." "During the day remarkably happy and able to study; everything seems easy to be accomplished."

Here are three different witnesses in the nineteenth century, and all in full accord with John Casimir, Palgrave of the Rhine, and Seyfried, of Cologne, as to the statement that the "spirit" of the species *Formica Rufa* can be used "to stir up the animal Spirit."

Hering, whom nothing escaped, gives us, "Exhilarated condition after pain in the vertex had abated." Hering also gives, as a symptom derived *ab usu in morbis*, "Indisposed, forgetful, morose, fearful and apprehensive." Ah! that is not in the proving, says some ardent "purifier" of our *Materia Medica*. True, my carper, but it is most assuredly the *physiological oscillation of the other end of the arc*, without the arc were incomplete; and it is an instance, wherein Hering's knowledge arraigns your ignorance. Hering, in his quiet way, was up to such tricks. We have more than one exhibition of his insight. For instance, he gives us as a clinical symptom derived from cures, "Want of memory; forgetful in the evening." Now does not one prover in the Encyclopedia record this: "*During the day* remarkably happy and able to study?" Couple this statement of time with Hering's finding in a patient, having other symptoms of *Rufa*, "forgetful *in the evening*." How true it is that we can see only that which we have learned to see. Yours is a pitiful hemiopia; you can't see the whole of anything; you discern only the left half of the face, while the distinguishing mole is on the right half. You declare that what you can't see, therefore, is not there!

Moreover, let such as are "slothful to Venerary" turn to the *Encyclopedia* again, *Formica Rufa*, symptoms 163 and 166, and learn how homoeopathically the "Spirit" of the busy ant promises to correct such shameful indolence. Now open Hering's "Guiding Symptoms," Vol. V, p. 347. Clinical symptoms again: It, this same "Spirit" and potentized at that, has cured "Seminal emissions." "Weakness of sexual organs." (isn't it hard to kick against the pricks!)

"It provoketh urine even to admiration," says Dr. John French, and, lo!, one of the modern provers record this: "Double the quantity of urine, even at night (third day); increased for two or three days" - surely, an increase "even to admiration;" and, dear reader, in those days to *admire* meant to wonder.

As for deafness, we have no direct hint in the *Encyclopedia*, but following other symptoms indicating *Rufa*, Hering has cured "Difficult hearing; deafness" with this remedy.

"It also helpeth the eyes that have the film growing over them," avereth Dr. John French; and, sure enough! one of our modern provers says: "Appearance when looking at objects as if seen through mist." Clinically, Hering records: "Dimness of sight." "Nebula; leucoma; pterygium."

Really, thou that wert John French, it seemeth unto me that thou didst testify to the truth in thine "Art of Distillation;" and at no distant day I will reprint thine "Anatomy of Gold" for modern eyes to read. "But, thou that wert John French hast met thy revered Master in the Beyond? By the term "anatomy of gold" I know thou wert a Paracelsian; hast met him *There*?

How many moderns will know what the "anatomy of gold" means? Paracelsus "uses common words in new signification without giving any indication of the change which he introduced. Thus *anatomy*, in the writings of Paracelsus, signifies not the dissection of dead animals to determine their structure, but it means the nature, force and magical designation of a thing!"

(1) Then, reader, keep an eye open for Dr. French's "anatomy of gold" - it will make a neat little addendum to Dr. Burnett's instructive booklet on the metal that peoples Perdition by the lust for it.

(1) Thomson's History of Chemistry, Vol. I, p. 151. Edinburg. 1830.

Thus far went the MS. from the garret, but while it was slumbering there a delightful English naturalist's book led me to try *Formic acid* as a remedy in a case of pulmonary tuberculosis - alas, in vain!

But there is the hint that led me try it: "Possibly we may yet use ants or some other clever insects to find out the origin of the fatal parasite which devours the consumptive. Some reason exists for imagining that this parasite has something to do with the flora, for phthisis ceases at a certain altitude, and it is very well known that the floras have a marked line of demarcation. Up to a certain height certain flowers will grow, but not beyond, just as if you had run a separating ditch round the mountain. With the flora the insects cease; whether the germ comes from the vegetation or from the insect that frequents the vegetation does not seem known. Still it would be worth to make a careful examination of the plant and insect life just at the verge of division. The bacillus may spring from a spore starting from a plant or starting from an insect. Most of England had an Alpine climate once, and some Alpine plants have been stranded on the tops of our highest hills and remain there to this day. In those icy times English lungs were probably free of disease. *Has formic acid ever been used for experiments on bacilli?* It is the ant acid; they are full of it, and it is extracted and used for some purposes abroad. Perhaps its strong odour is repellant to parasites." (2)

(2) Jefferies. "Field and Hedgerow," p. 207. Longman's Green and Co. 1890.

Ah, it was but a forlorn hope; and that patient sufferer did not need the "spirit" of the ant to give her that cheerful courage with which she trod the path to dusty Death.

To be sure, I snatched at a surmise and fruitlessly; but see how suggestive Hering's observations are as recorded in his "Guiding Symptoms:"

"Hoarseness with sore throat; tedious and long-lasting cough; cough aggravated at night; cough with an aching in the forehead and a constrictive pain in the chest; all night dry throat, woke her out of sleep; disagreeable sweat during the night, awoke with clammy skin; general lassitude and prostration; pleuritic pains; inner chest and lungs."

Is not this category, gathered at random, sadly significant of work done in the territories that the fell destroyer notably affects; does it not give a strange impressiveness of the fancy of the naturalist (who himself perished from a tubercular devastation) and to the suggestions regarding the sphere in which *Formica Rufa* is operative?

Reviewing at this late day the work of an idle hour in the long-ago, the reflection comes to me that the truths in our pathogeneses are "surrounded with witnesses," amongst whom is he that was Dr. John French, now sleeping in some long-forgotten grave, but testifying from the pages that remain to also testify to the workmanship of him that was Richard Cotes. Peace be theirs and the blessing that attends all honest work!"

(Samuel A. Jones, A Fragment in re *Formica rufa*, The Homoeopathic Recorder vol. 13 (1898), p. 193-198)