

Benjamin Collins Woodbury



Benjamin Collins Woodbury (1882-1948)

1920 - The Invisible Increment

"The crying need in the medical world to-day is a restatement of ultimate purpose, based upon the invisible increment of faith in the healing power of nature. This is particularly important from the standpoint of the homoeopathist, for it has long been a fact that the atmosphere of faith created in the mind of every follower of Hahnemann, has been the strongest factor in his influence for healing. It is upon this invisible element of power that the very character of the true Hahnemannian depends.

Fifty years ago, the case that was considered incurable by the regular school or by all other methods, in fact, was advised as a last resort to "try homoeopathy." Many did try homoeopathy with the result that striking cures were made, which redounded to its glory and fame.

Not all such cases, to be sure, were thus radically cured, and hence not finding what they sought looked elsewhere for succour. The earnest seeker after truth even though he was not successful in rendering relief to his patient, felt that either his ability was insufficient to find a remedy, no remedy at hand, or the case was an incurable one.

Meantime, in the course of years, under the influence of pathology, the physician's mind, if at all materialistic, was inclined to the belief that whatever is done for a certain class of patients some of these are sure to die. So well grounded has this belief become that it is safe to say that it is thoroughly ingrained in the physician's race-consciousness. Thus, tuberculosis, cancer, Bright's disease, Addison's disease, Hodgkin's disease, and many of the acute, infectious diseases such as plague, cholera, smallpox and yellow fever, are so generally believed to belong to this lethal type that to make a positive diagnosis of many of these disorders is virtually to place the indelible stamp of death upon the innocent and unfortunate patient, who almost we might say becomes victimized by the evil spell of this adamant and inflexible type of pathological mind.

This is the type of medical genius who goes about with his mind steeped in the atmosphere of the hospital, morgue and the dissecting room; to him the blush of health blooms for a day - like some exotic flower, but to be blasted by the next breath from some germ-laden air, or from the chance draught of miasm-infested swamp.

"Alas for him who never sees
The Stars shine through his cypress trees!"

While these advances have been made in pathological fields, the science of mental healing has made rapid strides, and become organized into the powerful phalanx of Christian Science, mental science, new thought, psychotherapy, etc., and the invisible increment which formerly sought relief in homoeopathy as a last resort, now casts its lot with metaphysical healing and behold many of these get well.

Whereas the medical fraternity is wont to classify types of diseases at once as "curable" and "incurable;" to the mind of the metaphysician, staid on the eternal and all-sufficient divinity, there cannot be at the outset any such postulate as that any disease which is due to error or the result of disobedience to the dictates of the Divine mind is not curable. Hence, no diseases are incurable, because to this optimistic (though often blind) philosophy there is no such thing as incurability. Here, then, has been the strength of the metaphysical movement. It is not that it has actually cured any greater percentage of these sufferers than might have been cured by sane and curative medicinal therapy, i. e., homoeopathy, but through the growing credulity of their followers, and the increasing nihilism in general in the medical profession, the majority of these who are impartial, and who by greater manifestation of faith might have been turned to homoeopathy, have been lost to us and have swelled the ranks of the drugless cults. The time should come when as a body of practitioners, standing firmly upon the principles for which our fathers stood, we should say again in one united voice: "There are no diseases;

there are sick people." There are no incurable diseases; though there may be some *apparently* incurable individuals. Why say this? Because there are thousands of well-authenticated cases in which from apparently hopeless illness, sick people have recovered. Let us recruit them again to homoeopathy instead of having the credit of such cures go to metaphysical or drugless methods. If in the spirit of Emerson's famous saying, we are making a better therapeutic mouse-trap than our neighbor - we think we are - a well-trodden path should be worn to our huts in this forest of nihilism and doubt.

It can safely be reasoned that no case is really hopeless, yet some cases are more serious, less hopeful in fact, than others. Let us, therefore, whenever possible, give to even serious cases the benefit of the doubt, and ever bring to the hopeful sufferer that courage which the true Hahnemannian is so well fitted to bestow. Even to the hopeless sufferer, there is the assurance of the Divine protection, into whose care all must eventually be entrusted.

Under favorable conditions the *vis naturae* is all powerful to heal, if we but have the proper element of *faith* to uphold us.

Another factor, in addition to faith, is the will to live, the desire to be healed. To what a minus degree that sinks in the melancholic and the suicidal; who sees in the burdens of life more than his frail strength can withstand. The pathetic status of the suicide is so graphically described by Hahnemann. ⁽¹⁾

"By their unsteady, shy, anxious look," he writes, "by the despondency they display in their words and deeds, by their restlessness, that increases at certain times of the day, by their avoidance of things that were formerly most agreeable to them, and sometimes by their inconsolable lamentations over some slight, corporeal ailments, the patients betray their internal malady."

What a boon to the suffering world of humanity, were it generally known, as Hahnemann teaches that "the smallest dose of pulverized gold attenuated to the billionth degree, or the smallest part of a drop of an equally diluted solution of pure gold, which may be mixed in his drink without his knowledge immediately and permanently removes this fearful state of the (body and) soul, and the unfortunate being is saved."

It may be - and who knows to the contrary - that there is in these susceptible persons - since the use of gold in dental surgery became the vogue - and it is certainly a great safeguard over the wholesale and indiscriminate use of Amalgam - that there is in these susceptible persons a slow and insidious absorption of this element by the action of the fluids of the body, and this self-destructive mania is the result. It has many times been demonstrated that the action of the saliva upon the mercury used in Amalgam fillings has resulted in such a marked form of hydrargyria that its effects have been readily noted by those who have knowledge of its symptomatology, and the removal and proper substitute filling has restored the patient's health.

What has all this to do with the subject under discussion; merely this: conditions and so-called-diseases which were commonly treated twenty or ten years ago, are now not even seen any more. Furthermore, many diseases a few years previously considered wholly incurable, are now rendered either curable by proper methods of hygiene, or medical treatment, or have in the process of nature entirely disappeared.

Or is it the unhappy lust, the perversion of the desire for gold - a noble and perfectly justifiable aim when sought after within its legitimate ends - that drives men mad.

It is obviously the desire for life and the will to live that sustains the majority of human beings in the arduous tragedies of life. Let this innate desire become lowered by illness, misfortune or other vicissitudes, and then unfortunately the desire for death becomes more intense than the will to live, and the unfortunate victim ends the struggle.

The situation is quite different, however, in the case of the unfortunate victim of an incurable disease. This person, on the contrary, has every intention of living, in fact, is fond of life and clings to it long after the physical substance has become so attenuated that often but a thin veil, as it were, separates matter from spirit.

In such highly sensitized individuals (sensitives they are sometimes called, who it is known become, in the spiritualistic sense - mediumistic) the psychic faculties become in many instances keenly acute, and who shall not say, but in this highly receptive state, they actually take on the subtle masques of disease. Many persons have undoubtedly wished themselves ill, when in some state of emotional excitement or disappointment this desire to die becomes more powerful than the will to live. It is a fact well known to those who have made intimate study of psychism that in the trance-state it is possible for the medium or the subject to take on a variety of disease entities, to become obsessed in truth, for the time being with some disease personality, outside their own. Does not the person who is ill, then, vicariously take on as it were a host of disease conditions that are drifting about in their individual psychic atmosphere, when in an especially susceptible state? This may not be so far from the truth as it might seem at first thought.

Thus the earnest and self-sacrificing physician or healer, in the over-zealous desire to minister to those who are ill, may in certain overwrought states of consciousness take upon himself or herself the very condition sought to be cured. Thus, vicariously, perhaps, innocently, the willing healer becomes the self-imposed victim, and the trusting patient goes forth healed. How many persons thus healed are conscious that in their own emancipation, some other soul has made a willing sacrifice of self that they might go forth free.

It is not that we can prove that; nor would we care perhaps to demonstrate its verity. But suppose that it sometimes does happen. It is known that the subjective state or induced mediumship is seldom without its dangers to the subject, which obviously is the remedy against both induced psychism and vicarious healing; obviously the cultivation of a positive mental attitude, and the consciousness of a crystal-mirror; a consciousness from which, when perforce it receives these sluggish earth-bound and disintegrating influences - it can purge itself clean and clear. Then and only then can true mental, spiritual and bodily healing become an accomplished fact. Then will become more evident the meaning and hidden truth of the great injunction - "Physician, heal thyself."

Fear has played a baneful role in the production and perpetuation of disease, and hence the influence of the mind upon the body is now most assiduously and profitably studied.

"Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?" Queried the immortal Shakespeare.

"It is better to die according to the formulas than to recover irregularly," repeats Moliere's pessimistic physician.

Whereas the optimistic "Doctor Love" psychologizes: "The mind exercises a powerful influence over the flesh - my method is first to cure the brain." (2)

Plato is credited with saying: "This is the great error of our day in the treatment of the human body, that physicians separate the soul from the body."

The late Dr. Morris H. Richardson, of Boston, once wrote as follows: "On Telling the Truth to Patients with Serious or Hopeless Diseases:"

"How to tell a patient a disagreeable fact is an art, " but he continues, "there are many ways of breaking bad news gently." ... "Patients differ extremely in their own wishes. No personal consideration should weigh against the patient's interest, whether mental or physical. If the physician is afraid lest his failure to tell the facts be taken as ignorance, he has always the recourse to friends. Indeed, if I have not said so already, let me say here, that whatever is told

the patient, the plain truth should be told the patient's friends." ... "Rather cultivate the art of tactful communications which you will never from any point of view regret. If you cannot be truthful, you can at least preserve silence, and silence needs not always mean to a patient hopelessness." ⁽³⁾

What finally can we offer as an antidote - an universal antidote - to the two cankers upon our modern civilization - of fear and ignorance? Obviously, this finds its best answer in the substitution of *faith* for *fear*, and the enlightenment of knowledge for ignorance.

Then the true man and woman of the future will step forward, out of the shadow of their own timidity and error into the full light of truth and knowledge."

⁽¹⁾ On Uncharitableness Towards Suicide. Lesser Writings, p. 695.

⁽²⁾ L'Amour Medecin.

⁽³⁾ *St. Paul Medical Journal*, August, 1909.

(Benjamin C. Woodbury, M. D., Boston, Mass., The Invisible Increment. Read before the annual meeting of the International Hahnemannian Association, Cleveland, Ohio, June, 1920. The Homoeopathic Recorder vol. 35 (1920), p. 454-459)