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REMARKS  
 ON THE  
**PERNICIOUS EFFECTS**  
 AND  
**FATAL CONSEQUENCES**  
 OF  
**BLOOD-LETTING;**  
 AND  
 Designed by the Author  
 FOR THE  
 PROLONGATION OF THE LIVES  
 OF HIS  
 FELLOW BEINGS.

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BY  
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*For the life of the flesh is the blood.*—Lucretius xvii. 21.

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# REMARKS

ON THE

Pernicious Effects and Fatal Consequences

OF

**BLOOD-LETTING.**

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A LONG time has elapsed since I determined to publish my remarks on the pernicious effects of bleeding, which, not only during that time, but especially at present, is considered as almost an *universal* remedy, and frequently resorted to as a restorative in the slightest indisposition; notwithstanding the direful consequences attendant on such practice, it continues to be the main pillar of the medical profession. Were bleeding and mercury totally prohibited, a great many Physicians would find themselves in the inextricable mazes of a sad dilemma: their time easily disposed of.

It is astonishing to find that so *many* persons, and more so to find so *many* Physicians have fallen into this extravagance. Blood, as the most precious matter for life, is lavishly squandered where there is no necessity; yes, often *without* knowing for what purport.

My remarks shall, therefore, *convince* my fellow citizens, that so far from blood-letting being bene-

ficial, it is productive of the most serious and fatal effects. Should I contribute, by my remarks, to save *more* lives in future, and arrest this cruel practice, I would feel that gratification which arises from the consciousness of having performed a good act.

How much is it to be regretted that such an awful scourge of humanity should exist!

During my residence of fourteen years past, in this happy country of liberty and independence, I am bound to say, that, in all my practice of twenty-seven years as a Physician, never have I seen in any part of Europe such *extravagance* of blood-letting, as I have seen in *this* country, and this practice sanctioned and confirmed by the opinions of *many* Physicians, and alledge:

1. The *climate* of this country. 2. The inhabitants are *accustomed* to be bled. But I will prove that these pretexts are entirely *false* and *groundless*.

How many thousands of our fellow citizens are sent to an untimely grave! How many families deprived of their amiable children! How many husbands deprived of their lovely wives! How many wives of their dear husbands, who have fallen victims to this great extravagance of bleeding: and the same may be said of mercury.

We no more count the loss of blood (by blood-letting) by *ounces*, but by *pounds*! Each headache, each indigestion, each indisposition, is, among *many* Physicians, quite a sufficient pretence to say, "*You must be bled.*" It seems entirely forgotten, that blood-letting, however the greatest, is likewise thereby the most dangerous of all remedies, and that it sometimes introduces a loss which never more can be repaired.

I have, therefore, proposed to myself to show and prove what must be done when it is imperious to draw blood, or when *too much blood* has been taken away.

Two things which are unattended to, and of which alone an exact judgment can be followed in bleeding, viz. :

1. *Attention to the blood.* 2. *Attention to the crisis.*

*In the blood is the human life*; in the *blood* is placed the strength of the whole organic life. *Without* blood there is no heat, no motion of the heart; nor is there any feeling or general motion of the system. Yes, take away from the brain the blood, and the self-cogitative powers will be instantly extinguished. *Without* blood there is not any germination, vegetation, or function of life possible.

Is it not evident that the most robust persons are such, because rich in blood? Certainly it is not such persons who are attacked with nervous weakness, or on whom the nervous system prevails. *Strength* and *blood* stand always in direct relation. He who takes away too much blood, or who takes it too often from patients, takes away not an organ of life, but a part of life itself.

*Attention to the crisis* :—Under crisis is understood, the act of nature whereby all cure arrives: this is to be understood of diseases in general, as well as in particular, of the fevers as of the inflammation. There are called the local crisis *dispersion*, complete, if the crisis was complete; incomplete, if the crisis was incomplete; and the disease takes another form.

The important rule, therefore, is, that it is not

sufficient to raise the present reaction by weakness, but that nature must be kept strong; and that we shall take care not to increase that weakness so as to produce an incomplete crisis. There is no remedy by which it is easier to produce weakness and prevent the crisis *than bleeding*. And it is a fact self-evident, that numerous diseases are themselves no more than a physical crisis. If, therefore, we diminish the strength by too much blood-letting, we also take away the means of recovery, and we make thus the disease a malady, which, devoid of such treatment, would become either harmless or beneficial.

*In burning fevers* it is by numerous experiences proved, that the most simple fevers, by too much bleeding, become nervous and putrid fevers, of which I can attest many such instances.

The same is observable by experience, that too much bleeding in burning fevers, easily produces purples and petechial fevers.

*In pure gastric fevers* bleeding is always pernicious; it does not vacate the diseased matter which is situated in the intestine canal, and can only be removed by gastric remedies, while bleeding in such cases vacates a part of that strength which is necessary to be acted upon, in order to expel the disease.

*In inflammations* bleeding may be very noxious; whereas, it removes a part of the strength necessary to effect a crisis, namely, *dispersion* and *resorption*. We can convince ourselves clearly, in external inflammations, of the injurious effects of blood-letting or leeches; indeed, the redness and pain were diminished, but a hardening remained. How doubtful the efficacy of bleeding is in external inflammations of the gout, experience has frequently shown,

and this demands a particular consideration: ordinarily we are disposed, in every attack of the gout, to remove the pain by leeches, and think this the best treatment.

I desire it not to be forgotten, that in regular gout, podagra, chiragra, the inflammation is nothing else than a *crisis*, a local metastasis by which a dangerous stuff from the internal parts is thrown to the external: the best cure as well for the whole as for the local, such is, to let the critical proceeding entirely finish, which, even by the inflammation of this local fever arrives: nothing takes more of the necessary strength away than bleeding, and the conclusion is, either the attack of the gout disappears directly, and the disorder is thrown internally, or to some dangerous part—the head, the lungs: hence arise inflammation of the lungs, or apoplexy, or an inflammation of the stomach. I have seen in such cases three sudden deaths to be the result. Finally, we make the wholesome or regular gout, irregular, the nature loses its strength, and the gout afterwards sets outwardly; then arises pains of inwardly disease; it remains after easy, a chronic sickness, a stiffness; and instead of an external evil, a chronic is the consequence.

The rule, therefore, is, in external attacks of the gout, to avoid bleeding. I except the cases when youth, plethora, a true general inflammatory diathesis, or the danger of a noble part. For example of the eye, bleeding is required; for inwardly gouty inflammations, of an inflammation of the stomach, or of an inflammation of the lungs, of a podagra being stopped, it is a different case.

What I have said of the gout may be equally said of rheumatism. The rheumatism is the same, not a clear inflammation, but a specific; yes, not a true

inflammation of the blood, but a serous. Here the almost always accompanying serous tumour, the defective suppuration, there should not consequently be blood-letting, but a serous deliverance by sweat, blisters, the true crisis, then the stuff of the disease is serum. Here operate blisters by entertaining a suppuration.

*For the nervous disease*, for the *true* nervous disease, bleeding is likewise no remedy. The nervous affection itself has, from its nature with the blood and blood system, nothing common; on the contrary, it arises from a defect of the blood, and of weakness.

I have seen, during my residence of nine years in Philadelphia, many ladies with nervous affections, and of such, four highly respectable ladies whose Physician I had the honour to be: their former Physician, in all slight indispositions, ordered them *to be bled*, whereby they became more and more nervous, and those had no nervous attacks when I stopped the bleeding, and they were well when I left the city of Philadelphia. I treated, in a similar manner, a very respectable lady in Philadelphia, who was attacked with a very severe Pleurisy, and I saved her *without* bleeding, which, to many in that city, was very astonishing. She is highly respected for her merit, and is of one of the most distinguished families in Philadelphia.

In the city of New-York, where I now reside, and since three years past established there, I flatter myself in having received the confidence of a great number of respectable families in this great and distinguished city. I have been so fortunate as to convince a great many persons how *noxious* the extravagance of bleeding is; and have been so happy as to save a great many in diseases, who would have fallen victims by continuing bleeding;



and likewise many respectable ladies with nervous complaints, whose health is now vigorous since they have stopped bleedings : all facts which I can satisfactorily prove.

The ruling custom, and in the slightest indisposition, is directly to be bled, which certainly is one of the principal reasons why there are at present such numerous hysterics, hypochondrics, and nervous attacks. Is it not very common, that women who have a strong menstruation are nervous sick, but not so during the state of pregnancy, nor when the periodical flux is entirely stopped, at 45 or 50 years of age? Have we not often seen, after this period, the most weakly or hysteric women become strong and healthy? Many such cases are known to me.

It is one of the most certain diagnostic signs of a nervous chance, if bleeding much deprave, wine, and other stimulants much improve. Never should bleeding be employed for a nervous disease, if a special indication does not require it; if a true plethora of inflammatory character, or suppressed bloody fluxes, the nervous disease has removed reasons to give cause or augment it. Here bleeding can be beneficial, not to cure the nervous disease, but only for setting aside the remote cause.

I could mention many more cases to demonstrate how pernicious too much bleeding can be; but I shall be content provided impartial readers will influence society to desist in future from so destructive a practice. I am certain, that by diminishing such practice, a great number of lives will be saved every year. A great many, to my knowledge, have fallen victims, to say the least, to so scandalous and foolish a mode of treatment; and I am fully convinced such numbers would not have died, had they

not been bled, or fallen into the hands of such extravagant blood-letters.

I have now given my reasons why I differ from many other Physicians, in every little disease and indisposition. I do not commence *my* treatment directly by bleeding. If my remarks can be refuted, I am willing to be instructed, but by *principles* like those I have communicated. A great many Physicians in this country have objected to me, that I am an enemy to bleeding, and that I shall employ the same treatment in all cases of disease, commencing with a child in the cradle, until the age of eighty.

The reasons why Physicians employ the aforesaid mode of treatment are :—

1. The *climate* of this country requires, in all indispositions, to be bled.
2. The people of this country are *accustomed* to be bled.

Let us now examine these reasons. How it comes to pass that, during my residence of fourteen years in this country, I can prove, by a great number of persons who have been treated by me during that time, and in the *same* diseases in which such persons were treated by Physicians of this country, who employed *calomel* and *jalap* in great quantities, blisters and blood-letting in *great* abundance, cupping and leeches to supererogation; and of all those persons who have not fallen victims to such treatment, their convalescence was very long before they could obtain a little strength. Ladies who were very nervous, tormented with hysteric spasms, the former recovered by my treatment in a very short time, and the latter, as I dispensed with the use of bleeding, lost their spasms and became directly

better; all which I can satisfactorily prove. Where I have not employed bleeding, such persons recovered by *my* treatment in a very short time. If now the climate of this country should require in all indispositions directly to commence with bleeding, and I have *neglected* it, all these persons were inhabitants of *this* country and climate; all these should have died? but they recovered *sooner*. Is, therefore, the reason that the climate of this country requires it in all indispositions, and in all diseases directly to be bled, not entirely false and groundless?

That people in this country are *accustomed* to be bled; this is a true, a very true verity. What is the true reason of it? Whether is it the patient or the physician? I believe, to speak with justice, it is the latter. What does the patient know of what is convenient for him? He complains of headache, cramps in the stomach, colick, dyspepsia, indigestion, &c.; he sends for his Physician; the patient very likely has confidence in his Physician; he thinks that all that is ordered him will be convenient for him; and the doctor, after feeling his pulse a little strong, declares to him his severe sentence, "*You must be bled;*" and thus is a habit of bleeding established; a pound of blood is perhaps wasted; sometimes, the next day, a dose of *calomel* and *jalap*, the third day cupping, leeches, or bleeding, &c. I know very many cases wherein a Physician has accustomed his patient to be bled *four* times in *one* day! but time proved the result of such treatment by the death of a great number of such patients. I am certain that all such persons who have been bled a great many times in their lives, their constitution must become weaker every year; but their repentance will in future be too late. My intention is not to extinguish bleeding entirely, for there are cases which indicate it, but such cases a Physician of discernment can easily

distinguish ; such cases, however, differ widely from every little indisposition and disease, which is directly treated by bleeding ; nor can it be denied that such a treatment is very flourishing in this country.

The duty of a true Physician, who is not an *egotist*, is to the confidence of his patient to answer, to recover him as soon as he can, and not by weakening remedies to prolong the treatment, which is probably the principal cause why a great many Physicians employ such treatment, especially if the patient is *able to pay*, thereby to inscribe to him a great number of visits, and the patient, by this intention, afterwards falls a victim to the avariciousness of the Physician. How many patients have, perhaps, been treated by such an intention ?

If the Physician can persuade his patient to be bled freely, if he do not soon die under such treatment, nevertheless his constitution is enfeebled and becomes weaker every year, and thus the patient is obliged frequently to call for his doctor, and the doctor has the pleasure again, at the end of the year, to have a great many visits inscribed to his patient in his book, and this is the way to become rich.

Such a treatment I shall never undertake, notwithstanding different Physicians would persuade me to do it ; the quickest recovery of my patients shall always be my greatest satisfaction.

It is flattering to the Author to have the honour of being acquainted with many distinguished Physicians in this city, for whom his respects shall not be obliterated ; he, therefore, hopes that those gentlemen will not consider that he means to class all in the same grade, but only those, of whom it can be proved, that their treatment and knowledge in general induce them to treat every disease and indisposition by

commencing with bleeding and mercury: nor can it be denied that such a treatment is very flourishing among a great number of Physicians, whose judgment shall never have any effect on my practice. Let them consult their own consciences, and the consequences of their system of treating patients, which has been ruinous indeed.

But it is quite otherwise of regularly *graduated* Physicians of *long standing and practice*, and who are known as Physicians of merit, to *whose tribunal*, and that of the *public in general*, the Author confidently appeals.

When I have the happiness to be an inhabitant of a country in which the liberty of speaking, writing, and publishing, (especially when speaking what is true,) is equally permitted to poor and rich; a country wherein enormous wealth does not constitute the soul of merit, but where honesty and knowledge can advance him whose only claim to preferment is founded on such a basis; a country where *stars* and *orders* do not, like childish toys, furnish glittering gewgaws whereon to build nobility, respect, and science, but where American honesty and independence is his true nobility; a nation which, of all others, a man may proudly boast of being a *citizen*. Now more than half a century, liberty and independence were nobly wrested from the tyrants' grasp by the blood of Americans; yes, the blood of an immortal *Washington* and *Lafayette*; an independence the basis of whose pillars never can be shaken by any European despotic government. For the welfare and continuance of this happy country, and for the welfare of the great human family, the Author writes these few pages; and he is proud to say that his most distinguished title is, a *Citizen of the United States*; and the letters with which he was honoured by our late venerable **Ex-Presidents**

of the United States, *Thomas Jefferson*, *John Adams*, *James Madison*, and of our distinguished, honourable, and cherished *General Lafayette*, shall be for ever for him his most precious treasure.

In this country, during a great many years, there has been no blood shed by wars, notwithstanding by a *nonsensical* and *foolish* treatment, it is a pity so much has been shed, as it is the most noble balm of life.

I presume a great many of my readers will object that it is difficult to extirpate an opinion as to his mode of treatment, which is so deeply rooted, while some others wish to keep up an old opinion rather than hearken to what the new to them is of the utmost utility. Respecting this objection, I shall be allowed to add a few words more.

We ordinarily say of a person who dies, "*His time was destined.*" We cannot be so unjust as not to commend divine Providence, in all its dispensations, as to sickness or health, life or death; as *Holy Writ* tells us, "*It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.*" Very true; but has not the same divine Providence created the necessary helps, physical and metaphysical, for the body as well as for the soul: for the former, herbs and other remedies; for the latter, *Holy Writ* and other spiritual helps. For the one, Physicians, whose preparatory time is, or should be, spent in the necessary qualifying studies and pursuits for such profession; like the minister of the gospel, who should be duly qualified and adequate to such an arduous obligation.

It is self-evident that we should obey the will of that divine Being who created us, and employ the necessary or ordinary means for the preservation of

our lives. The Physician has a *double* duty to perform: to obey the divine Legislator, and likewise to employ all his science and knowledge (especially if he has such) for the welfare of the public; and not by *eagerness of gain* to contribute to the ruin of his patient; as such practice is decidedly against all principles of religion.

Let the public now judge for themselves. It will be flattering to me if any remarks of mine should contribute to the preservation of the public health, or the prolongation of human lives; and if my fellow citizens convince themselves of the veracity of that which I have made public.

My communication contains nothing more than what we daily witness; for in the blood the human life exists. It would be desirable to alter a treatment so *repugnant to common sense*; a thing doubly difficult; first, respecting those who have been of opinion till now, that such a treatment is good and useful to them; and secondly, to refute many Physicians.

The *first* class will, I have no doubt, convince themselves daily of the veracity and utility of my publication; and when, by experience, they shall have done so, the *second* class will be easily subdued if the former will be *constant*; and would I could contribute to *both*, which, for the benefit of the public, has long been the ardent wish of

THE AUTHOR.

P. S.—The Author feels it a duty to render his grateful acknowledgments to the public, for the confidence with which a great many respectable families, and other persons, have honoured him; and it cannot be otherwise than highly complimentary to him, to find his practice daily increasing. He will, in future, as much as professional business admit, be, from 12 till 2 o'clock, and from 5 to 10, each evening, at his Office, No. 108, Spring-street, near Broadway.

✉ All Letters for consultation, and other Letters to the Author, must be *post paid*.