

RES MEDICA

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Opera Occulta

Collected from the Society's archives by Henry C. Drysdale

Abstract

This simple people [Chayma Indians] have an insuperable dislike to cohabit with any deformed woman. This is indeed common to most savage tribes in a state of Nature, which is a state of great equality. Unless a woman be well formed she is neglected and dies barren. In Europe and wherever artificial manners prevail, ugly and even deformed women marry. The cupid of commercial countries is not the cupid of Pastoral poets.

. . . He speaks too of a gentleman begetting a daughter with eyes and hair differently coloured from any of his children, his wife, or himself, and imagining this arose from his thinking (sub coitu) on a little brunette he had taken a fancy to. It might or might not be from this cause, but I have no idea that hanging the bridal bed with a pall, would tend in the least to produce a Negro child. The sight of a Negro footman might be added without danger; but their contact would be more effectual in changing the colour of a first born. Physiognomy is no doubt varied by causes operational on the mind at or about the time of conception or it may be on the senses, and it is between the Physiognomy of man in its varieties and the variety of colour in domesticated animals that the analogy seems chiefly to exist.

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OPERA OCCULTA

COLLECTED FROM THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES BY HENRY C. DRYSDALE

On the Linear Transmission of Disease (J. R. SCOTT)

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On Typhus (R. F. OSBORNE)

It is recommended by some to bleed from a large orifice in the erect posture or as near it as circumstances will allow "ad diliquium anini." I must confess that if bleeding is to be performed I rank myself among this class—for of all things I think half measures the most abominable. There may be cases that require them but they are comparatively few. . . . I conceive that bleeding performed in this way is one of the most powerful remedies that can be employed in the case of fever. It may be said really to induce a state of the system totally incompatible for the tissue with febrile action, and the quantity of blood lost is so trivial that it rather serves to ease the system of the burthen of its suppressed secretions than to induce that state of alleged debility which the antivene-sectors cry out so much about.

* * *

Blisters—though objected to by a few, seem to meet with the approbation of the generality of Practitioners. It is not easy to say how they alleviate the symptoms for which they are employed. It is said by some to be by derivation, by others, by the fluid which they cause to be secreted, or by both of these ways—and it has even been attributed to the absorption of the cantharides, etc.

It is certain, however, I believe, that they so relieve in general the violent headache and other symptoms for which they are used. They are sometimes in desperate cases applied as general stimulants to rouse the vital principles—but scarcely ever with success. I understand they have been recommended to be placed along the spinal cord to allay the inflammation which is supposed generally to affect its membranes in cases of Typhus.

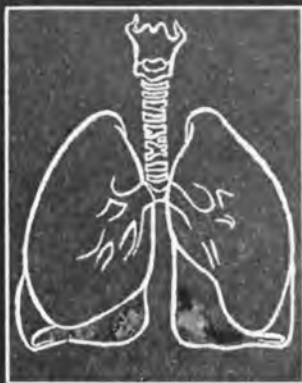
On Paralysis (J. COCHRANE)

Rubefacients, the most particular of which are sulphuric acid and nitric acids interblended with unctuous substances, ammonia, the essential oil of Turpentine, oil of Amber, mustard and Cantharides; seem to be more beneficial when frequently repeated and a moderate stimulus kept up, than when by their long continuance they inflame the part.

On Exercise (A. G. MOLLER)

Speaking of the hypertrophy of muscle with great use . . .
When in uncovering the sad relics of humanity in the hospitals and dissecting rooms of Paris how well and how beautifully marked do we trace in the French subject those well developed muscles the voluntary motion of

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which had once given such peculiar animation to the lively and facetious countenances of that intelligent people.

* * *

Exercise should also be moderate as to its general quantity, and this on account of the mind as well as the body. Moderate exercise invigorates and improves the mind and fits it for its proper offices. Too much devotion to it, indeed to all bodily pleasure, weakens or debases both; and though Socrates disdained not to learn dancing to preserve his health, though the wise and learned queen of Palmyra delighted in the exercise of the chase, though the divine Plato from a "broad-shouldered wrestler" became a philosopher, it will perhaps generally be found that those entirely devoted to such pursuits are men of brutal disposition and incapable of purely mental excitements and enjoyments.

* * *

Exercises should be attended to as it influences the passions of the mind. Hence those exercises should be used which moderately excite the better passions, and those avoided which call forth the worse. For this cause we must disapprove of such exercises as Boxing, Fencing, and others which, however they may be attended with some advantages, are too likely to call forth the violent passions of anger, hatred and revenge. These passions are calculated to produce very bad effects on the bodily health as well as on the moral and intellectual systems. Topical injuries also and even sudden death are very likely to occur during these exercises, either by accident or in consequence of the excitation of those passions.

Enteritis (G. B. WADDELL)

When the ulceration takes place in a rapid manner the intestines are sometimes perforated with holes so that their contents escape into the cavity

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of the abdomen. . . . Dr Baillie remarks that he has seen a communication established in this manner between the Vagina and Rectum in the Female, and between the Bladder and Rectum of the Male, moreover he has observed that connections formed between the Kidney and Intestines, where this morbid state existed. This is a wise provision of nature, by which the purulent matter, that would otherwise have been evacuated into the general cavity of the abdomen, is conveyed off by a ready channel and thus the supervention of peritoneal inflammation which would shortly have destroyed life is prevented.

The Enteric Fever of the West Indies (W. GRAHAM, M.D.)

It may not be irrelevant to add very briefly to the necessity of keeping up the cuticular discharge which is so essentially conducive to a state of health in tropical climates, and in proportions as the pores are open is evinced the superiority of the system to resist the effects of augmented temperature; during violent exercise, or while pursuing a journey, it will be necessary to recruit the exhausted frame by frequent libations of a beverage more renovating and more potent than water. The safety of the practice is proved by the universal adoption of it by the inhabitants of the West Indies, who never experience any of the dreadful effects, which a late author so ingeniously ascribed to indulgence in the Sangaree bowl.

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