

# HUMOUR AMONG THE DOCTORS

“I welcome these volumes since their ingredients have been drawn from such authentic and readable sources.”  
Ian Hay.

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HUMOUR  
AMONG THE DOCTORS

BY  
JOHN AYE

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# PREFACE

By Ian Hay

ANECDOTES are the small change of History, but let us not despise them on that account. The threepenny bit is held in no great esteem (outside Scotland), but make a heap of threepenny bits and you have a bank balance.

Similarly, an anthology of personal observations and first-hand experiences in a particular sphere—Parliament, the Theatre, the Services, and the like—judiciously selected and blended, assumes the collective importance of a family archive.

That is why I welcome these volumes, more especially since their ingredients have been drawn from such authentic and readable sources. You may tackle them in two ways: either you may swallow them whole for instruction or peck at them delicately for entertainment; but in either case your reputation as a *raconteur* will be materially increased.

## NOTE

The compiler of this volume desires to acknowledge  
his indebtedness to the following standard work.

“Quacks of Old London”

C. J. S. Thompson.

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“ ‘Is there no hope?’ the sick man said.  
The silent doctor shook his head,  
And took his leave with signs of sorrow,  
Despairing of his fee to-morrow.”

GAY.

“I firmly believe that if the whole materia medica could be sunk to the bottom of the sea it would be all the better for mankind and all the worse for the fishes.”

HOLMES, “Lecture before the Harvard Medical School.”



# I

## THE GOOD BEDSIDE MANNER

THERE is no profession to which the old saying “Manners maketh man” so aptly applies as it does to that of medicine. Provided a doctor has a good bedside manner, he may be deficient in many other things, in medical knowledge even, and his practice will still be a lucrative one. It is almost a truism to say that a merry heart in a physician does more good than medicine, for such is undoubtedly the case. The doctor who can bring with him an atmosphere of cheerfulness has won half his battle directly he enters the sick-room. His very step and tone inspire confidence and hope in the patient, and, with that confidence there comes the desire and the will to regain health. The personal factor in the physician, especially in the case of the family doctor, cannot be overestimated, and it would be well for the community at large if the medical examining bodies had the power to fail any candidate whose manner was not such as to inspire confidence. Although the cult of cheerfulness is receiving much more attention at the present day than it did in the past, there still exists a class of medico whose appearance and bearing are not very much unlike those of an undertaker. The attendance of such a doctor is certainly conducive to hastening the patient’s end.

As a good illustration of how far a good manner will take a doctor there is a story told of Sir Morell Mackenzie, the great throat specialist of the later years of the reign of Queen Victoria. On one occasion he was conducting a small operation in his own consulting-room, when, by one of those thousand-to-one chances that crop up in every doctor’s experience, the patient suddenly died. Though it was in no way the fault of Sir Morell, the deceased man’s brother came along later to give the doctor “a bit of his mind.” So charming and so disarming was Mackenzie’s manner, however, that in the end not only did the angry brother calm down, but he even submitted his own throat for examination and paid the usual fairly heavy fee.

It is difficult to lay down any method by which bedside manner may be acquired, but there is a good deal to be said for the advice once given to a young doctor by a brother medico of great experience, “Try to look as much like an inspired idiot as you can.” Specialists, whose manner is often a big part of their stock-in-trade, have been known to affect all sorts of mannerisms as an advertisement. Some, in an attempt to look supernaturally wise, affect such a

grave air that they have all the appearance of the one-time undertaker's mute. One doctor got a big reputation because he always insisted on all the furniture in the sick-room being changed round. Another school pins its faith to a certain roughness and brusqueness of manner, although this method does not always meet with success. "Well, that is my way," said a doctor of this description to a patient who was complaining of his manner. "Very well, then," replied the sick man, pointing to the door, "may I request that you will make that your way."

The great Abernethy was one of those who believed in brevity and plainness of speech, a course that his high reputation permitted him to adopt. When a lady came to him one day with a wounded finger, this was all the conversation that took place. "Sting or bite?" "Bite." "Cat or dog?" "Cat."

On the whole it may be said, especially in the case of the young practitioner, that the best line to adopt—certainly from the financial point of view—is the cheerfully sympathetic. Two young ladies were once discussing a popular physician of this type. "I wonder," said one, "why he has been so successful?" "Oh," said the other, "that is because he's so frightfully good at comforting the relatives—afterwards you know."

Perhaps the best bedside manner of all, however, was that of Dr. Sutton, at one time a leading pathologist of the London Hospital. He was a genius in his particular line, and, like all geniuses, somewhat erratic, while his methods of treatment were in some respects unorthodox. Coming to the bed of a patient who required stimulating, he would say, "Give him a bottle of John Jameson and a pretty nurse."

One of the most surprising things in the medical profession is the great financial difference that exists between the physician and the surgeon, although their abilities and standing in their respective branches may be equal. While the physician gets nothing but his consultation fee, the surgeon on coming into the case gets his fifty or one hundred guineas for each operation. A distinguished surgeon once informed the world that for the future he had determined to take things more easily, and that he should restrict himself to one operation a day. Nevertheless, as his normal fee was one hundred guineas, his reduced income would still be in excess of thirty thousand a year.

Another curious thing about the profession, and one which often causes the layman to smile, is that the saying "Physician, heal thyself," has no meaning for it, since physicians do not, as a rule, prescribe for themselves or attend their own families. It is said, indeed, that in the neighbourhood of Harley Street there is a doctor whose practice consists almost entirely of attending specialists. Moreover, it is to be feared that the profession does not always practise what it preaches, for when the whole medical profession was engaged,

some years ago, in calling the attention of the public to the gospel of the open window, the *Daily Mail* reported that nearly every window in Harley Street was closed.

A great drawback to the medical profession is that it is the one in which youth is most heavily handicapped. The general public has little use for the young doctor; our healer must come to us sedate, middle-aged and (as we think) experienced. The idea of a younger man in any other walk of life may appeal to us and we say "Youth must be served," but the idea of a young doctor carries with it no such appeal. The young officer is the backbone of the army, the young clergyman may move huge congregations by his earnestness and his eloquence, the young actor may thrill the packed matinées, the young lawyer may influence stolid and unimaginative juries, but the young doctor—no. Young men may defend us, look after our wealth or take care of our souls, but when it comes to our bodies that is a different matter and we call for age and experience, shunning the young assistant or the *locum* and leaving them to attend to the servants or the panel patients. More than one young doctor, when making his first visit, has had the unpleasant experience of hearing some disappointed patient say in tones of deep depression, "Oh dear! you are very young." Few, however, have had the fact so strongly impressed upon them as the young *locum* who, when calling on an old lady, was received by her with the following greeting: "Oh dear! you're very young. I don't like young doctors and you won't understand my case."

Another striking feature of the medical profession is the little extra knowledge which will advance the general practitioner to the ranks of the specialists, bringing in its train increased fees, a less arduous life and less liability to criticism. In many cases, indeed, such promotion is due solely to the possession of sufficient income to enable the newcomer to hold on until his position as a specialist is assured. This diminished liability to criticism seems almost absurd, but the reason for it has been very plainly given by a well-known medical writer. "We expect," he says, "only one kind of knowledge from the specialist, but from the general practitioner we expect an all-round knowledge, and, what is worse, we are often prone to lay upon the latter the non-success of the former. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the general practitioner has to live continually with the results of his handiwork. He is always liable to meet his failures round the corner, and his mistakes may quite easily rent the pew behind him in the Parish Church. The consultant, on the other hand, comes into the family life from afar, and returns again an hour or two later to the seclusion of his private fastness. He has brought down his little bit of extra technical skill or knowledge and used it for good or ill. The results do not follow him, except indirectly, but the general practitioner who called

him in must needs still bear upon his shoulders a large share of the blame that may follow failure.”

It is probably the most common joke levied against the medical profession that many of its members are humbugs, and that they will order bread pills and coloured waters, labelled with learned names, leaving nature to do what they cannot do—effect a cure. But we may ask whether such persons are not so much humbugs as philosophers, who realise that they have to minister to a mind as well as a body, and that if they do not give the patient some harmless thing he will either go to a quack or attempt to prescribe for himself. How many of us know the type of uneducated person who thinks nothing of a medicine unless it has a vile taste and smell? We have to realise that a large part of our ailments are brought about by our own carelessness or neglect of elementary precautions, and that if we refrain from such practices Nature will herself soon restore the balance. There is a good deal of truth in the story attributed to Admiral Dewey, who, on being once complimented on his superb health, smiled and said, “I attribute my good condition to plenty of exercise and no banquets. One-third of what we eat, you know, enables us to live.” “In that case,” said his friend, “what becomes of the other two-thirds?” “Oh,” said the admiral, “that enables the doctor to live.”

It is remarkable how we will hang on to our little pet failings and if possible get medical sanction for them. Every medical man knows only too well the type of person who will ask if “a glass of ale would be of any use to me,” and on receiving the assurance that one glass would do him no harm, will then indulge in his usual manner, telling everyone that he has been ordered by the doctor to drink beer. In such cases there is much to be said for the crude methods of the famous and plain-spoken Dr. Abernethy, who once advised a glutton to keep a great dish beside him at meals, and when he ate anything to put a corresponding portion into a dish and to look in the evening at the contents.

As regards the choice of a doctor—a most difficult thing, since one has usually only more or less untrustworthy local opinion to go upon—the most satisfactory method was undoubtedly that practised in olden days by Ardashir, a king of the Persians. His practice was never to permit a physician to prescribe for him until he had him stung by a viper, and if the physician was able to heal himself, he entered the king’s service.

In considering the qualities that go to form the perfect doctor, it may be laid down as a first essential that he should at one time have himself been a patient in order to appreciate the other man’s point of view. Another point is his conversation. He may have all the learning of Oxford or Cambridge, he

may be able to talk fluently on art and poetry, but this is not what the patient wants. It is “every man to his trade” after all, and what the patient hears with the greatest joy from his doctor is not his ideas on Byzantine art but the fact that he has just had and cured a similar case to his own.

## II THE IGNORANT LAYMAN

THERE is, perhaps, no phase of medical life which contributes so much to the humour of the profession as the layman's ignorance of even the commonest medical terms. This is well portrayed in the queer names given to ailments; in the vocabulary of the ignorant, for example, erysipelas becomes "hairy slippers," St. Vitus' Dance becomes "St. Viper's Dance," and rheumatism, rather aptly, "the screw matticks." "What's the matter with you?" asked a man of an acquaintance who was looking very worn and run down. "Whatever's ailing you? Why, you look like nothing on earth." "Well, I don't exactly know," came the doleful reply, "but the doctor tells me I'm suffering from general ability."

Some very quaint statements of this type are ascribed to doctors by their patients. "The doctor says I've a cistern in my eye," explained one man to an enquiring friend. "I suffer something crool from indigestion," vouchsafed a second, "and the doctor says I shan't massacre my food until I get some false teeth."

It must sometimes be extremely difficult for the doctor to conceal his mirth when his enquiries reveal such ignorance of common words. "Has he had any lucid intervals?" asked a doctor of a patient's daughter when making his morning visit. "Nothing, Doctor, except what you ordered," came the reply.

Even more amusing are the incidents that arise in the attempt to carry out simple instructions. The classic instance of this is the case of the labourer suffering from acute indigestion who was told by the doctor not to bolt his food. Anxious to do exactly as he was ordered, he at once returned home and took the lock off the cupboard.

This was almost equalled by the Irish labourer for whom the doctor prescribed two pills, sending them in a box marked, "The whole to be taken immediately." Calling at the house later, however, he found that they had taken no effect, and on making enquiries of the man's wife as to whether she had given the pills, he got the reply, "Sure and I did, Doctor dear, but maybe the lid hasn't come off yet."

Another brilliant example is the case of the man who followed his instructions to the letter and got into a bath before taking his medicine, since it

had to be taken in water. Another patient swallowed his prescription, evidently under the impression that it contained some magic power. A lifelong non-smoker made himself thoroughly sick by trying hard to smoke a cigar, because his doctor, thinking he had exceeded in that way, had said, "Remember, one cigar only after dinner." One can imagine the disappointment of the patient suffering from a throat trouble, who was told by his doctor to take three or four drops of a certain mixture three times a day "and inhale." "Yes, sir," said the pleased patient, "but be I to take it in mild ale or bitter ale?"

A doctor had labelled his medicine "to be taken in a recumbent attitude." What exactly this meant was a puzzle to the patient's household, and they concluded that it must be some special kind of spoon or dish. Accordingly, they sent round the neighbourhood to try to borrow one. The search was completely unavailing, however, until at length they came to the house of one old lady who had a local reputation for being a knowledgeable woman, and she, in order not to lose her reputation, informed them that she *had* had a very fine recumbent attitude at one time, but she had lent it to someone and they had never brought it back.

Sometimes, however, ignorance results in tragic consequences, as in the following sad story. A doctor had strictly ordered that a certain powder was to be given to a patient, "but only so much as would cover a sixpence." Calling the following morning, he found to his horror that the patient had died during the night, and, on making enquiries as to whether the powder had been duly given, received the reply, "Oh, yes, I gave him the powder and he died soon after; but I'm afraid, Doctor, you made a mistake. You didn't give enough. I only had sufficient to cover five pence."

Errors may arise not so much from lack of education as from the fact that the patient or his attendant has but a partial acquaintance with the English language. A lady staying in an hotel complained bitterly to the management of the noise made each night by the occupant of the room over her head. When enquiries were made, it was found that the offender was a sick foreigner, who, in all good faith, was endeavouring to carry out to the letter the imperfectly understood directions of his doctor to "Take the medicine two nights running and then skip a night."

Here are two good stories of a slightly different sort.

An Irish doctor received from the squire of a village some five miles away the following letter:—"Dear Doctor, will you come to see me in the morning and bring some stuff for the gout with you?" The next morning the medico rode over to the squire's, and, after examining his patient, said, "Why, it isn't gout you have at all, it's rheumatism." "Sure and I know that," was the squire's

reply. "Well, if you knew it was rheumatism," said the astonished doctor, "why did you ask me to bring medicine for the gout?" "Well," replied the unabashed squire, "though we knew it was rheumatism, divil a soul was there in the house that could spell the word, and so we had to put gout."

The other story is told of a messenger employed in a Government office who failed to attend at the office one morning, and sent a letter stating that he was suffering from an injured foot. On the following day, however, he turned up, and was accordingly questioned by his chief. "This looks rather fishy to me, Brown," said the chief. "You wrote in yesterday saying that you could not come to the office in consequence of an injury to your foot, and yet here you are to-day apparently all right. Injured feet don't get better in one day." "Well, sir," replied the culprit, "to tell the truth, I was suffering from diarrhoea, but I didn't know how to spell the word."

Ignorance of medical terms in children often has results which are charming in their freshness and originality. "How is our little patient this morning?" asked the cheery doctor of little Ellen, who was suffering from lung trouble. "Much better, thank you, Doctor," was the reply; "you won't have to telephone to my inside to-day." In a state of almost childlike ignorance, too, was Paddy, who, when the thermometer was taken from his mouth after the usual two minutes, said to the doctor with all solemnity, "I do feel a grate deal better after that, sir."

There are times also when ignorance is feigned in order to score off the doctor. Sidney Smith was given some medicine by a physician whom he had called in, and instructed to take it on an empty stomach. "Whose stomach?" asked the celebrated wit.

Anxious as patients are to purchase the benefit of the doctor's skill, it does not often happen that they wish to purchase his instruments. This, however, happened to one doctor. A man "blessed" with a very talkative wife had brought her to the doctor's surgery and stood quietly by, watching intently all the time that the doctor was taking her temperature. Just as the medico was about to remove the instrument, the man, who had never before known his wife to be silent for so long a period, said, "Doctor, what will you take for that thing?"

A large part of the population, as we know, greatly dislikes seeing "anything wasted," and this is particularly so in the case of medicine among the thrifty working class. No unfinished bottles must be wasted, and the medicine that has been prescribed for father's liver complaint can be equally well worked off in mitigation of grandpa's rheumatism or Aunt Mary's sciatica, on the principle that it can't do any harm and may perhaps do good. In



their eyes a medicine is a medicine and must of necessity possess universal curative powers.

An old Scottish servant packing up for a house removal came across an emetic powder. On the principle that it cost money and must not be wasted, she mixed it up and swallowed it.

Somewhat akin to the person who, through ignorance, refuses to waste anything, is the person who, from an entirely different motive, wants full value for money. In the early days of sick-benefit clubs—and the creation of National Health Insurance has seen the recurrence of this—people of this type were much in evidence, who would frequently make for the doctor's surgery, usually with some imaginary complaint, either in the hope of being put on the club or with the idea of getting something which might do them good. In such cases it was not unusual for the doctor with a large club practice to keep what was known as "the club bottle," a huge vial of coloured liquid with a very pronounced taste or smell, which, while it cost next to nothing, sent the *malade imaginaire* away well content. A well-known physician, Dr. Bell, writing of his first job as an assistant, says, "There was a dispensary connected with the house at which advice and medicine of a sort were given away at the price of twopence a week. It was a very strange infatuation of many of that class (miners and ironworkers), that they must be continually taking medicine, and this, such as it was, they received *ad libitum*. They brought their bottles, generally not half-empty, as they wanted a change of medicine for some reason of their own, and certainly they got it, for there existed a large glass receptacle into which was emptied the contents of all the half-empty bottles returned. This was called the 'stock bottle,' and out of it the change of medicine was given, but what it consisted of no power on earth could possibly guess."

The answers that the doctor receives from the patients themselves are often wonderfully amusing. "What did your father and mother die of?" said a doctor who was going very fully into the history of a case. "Well, sir, I can't say as I exactly remember," came the reply, "but I know as it wasn't nothing serious." "Yes, Doctor," said a second patient, "I know my stomach is all out of order, but ever since I lost my teeth I can't rightly domesticate my food." "I hear from the nurse that you are constipated," said a surgeon to a hospital patient. "It's an infernal lie, Doctor," came the indignant reply; "I've been a Roman Catholic all my life." "What's the matter with Murphy?" asked an anxious friend one day; "I hear he's in a very bad way." "Well," replied the doctor, "I'm afraid it's a case of gangrene." "Gangrene, is it?" exclaimed the patriotic Irish enquirer. "Well, thank Heaven for the colour, anyway."

A noted toper suffering from the effects of deep and continuous drinking,

and requiring a further supply of medicine, wrote to his doctor as follows:—“Dear Doctor, will you send me another bottle, as I’ve not been *filling* up to the mark for the last week, and oblige.”

Many letters received by doctors are couched in terms which might, to say the least, have been better expressed. The following is an extract from one such letter:—“Now, sir, I send up my dear daughter relying on your great skill, and in God’s mercy perform the operation, and whether she lives or not I shall be equally satisfied.” Another example occurred in a letter from a son and heir to a doctor who had attended his late father:—“Dear Sir, Father passed away last night. Yours gratefully . . .”

Sometimes through ignorance the inmost secrets of the heart are laid bare. A doctor had just finished a complete examination of his patient. “I’m sorry to say,” he said, “that there is something wrong with your heart. To give it a name, it is angina pectoris.” “You’re wrong there, Doctor,” said the patient with a happy but vacuous smile. “Guess again. That isn’t her name at all.”

### III

## “TO MEDICAL ATTENDANCE”

FOR some unaccountable reason there is no profession, with the exception of the legal, so much the subject of banter as regards payment for services rendered as that of medicine. Why this is so is a mystery, when we consider how much splendid and gratuitous work its members perform. We have only to look at our great hospitals to realise at once how much skill, gained at great expenditure of time and money, is being given gratis to the poorest of the population. Here lies the difference between this and other professions. Imagine the gasp of horror that would go up from our leading lawyers if they were asked to devote several hours a day to giving free legal advice to squabbling East End would-be litigants, or, an even better example, if some of our princes of commerce were requested to make the same sacrifice and give advice to small and struggling shopkeepers. This public and gratuitous work on the part of the medical profession is the more striking when we consider that the financial rewards of medicine, compared with those offered in commerce or the other professions, are indeed very small. Though the specialist may get his hundred guineas for an operation that lasts only ten minutes, that is not much compared to the fee paid to a popular K.C., or the thousands made in a few minutes with very little effort by the merchant prince.

For the greatest fee ever paid to a doctor we have to go back to very early days, where we find that Melampus of Argos, having cured the daughters of King Praetus by means of hellebore, baths and charms, was given by the grateful monarch one-third of his dominions and one of his daughters to wife. It may have been that the third of the dominions was a set-off against a very plain daughter, or, on the other hand, that in this huge fee there was not only gratitude but a certain amount of superstitious fear, since, in early days, medicine was in many countries deemed to be a divine profession, and the first physicians were often endowed with divine attributes.

The methods adopted by people to avoid giving the doctor his legal due have been many and weird, and almost certainly cover every known method of evasion. “Sir, I can’t pay you in money for what you have done for me,” once wrote a “grateful” patient, “but I can give you a jolly good tip that’s worth money. I am a chef. Don’t ever take thick soup at an hotel!”

A pedlar once called on a doctor for treatment, complaining of severe pains

in the region of the abdomen. Having obtained the necessary medicine, he announced his inability to pay, but insisted that, to show his *bona-fides* and his gratitude, he would let the doctor have anything out of his pack at half the usual rate. It was in vain that the doctor tried to get out of it by saying that he was quite prepared to put the man on his free list. This the pedlar would not have, and so insistent was he on showing his gratitude by a reduction of fifty per cent. on his goods, that, in order not to hurt his feelings, the doctor finally bought for ten shillings a table-cloth which the pedlar priced at £1. Subsequently he found that the table-cloth was not worth half a crown and that the alleged pains were a pure fiction.

Another doctor was called upon by a stranger, who confessed, after being treated, that he had at the moment no money with which to pay a fee. "However, Doctor," said the patient, "here is my watch, which perhaps you will retain and I will return to-morrow and redeem it. In the meantime, perhaps you will lend me ten shillings; the watch—left me, by the way, by my dear father—is more than of sufficient value to cover both my loan and my bill." Being a good-natured fellow, the doctor did as requested, only to learn later that his visitor was a well-known pickpocket, and that the watch was the property of his own manservant extracted by the patient while he was being shown into the consulting-room.

In attempts to avoid payment the Scots have naturally figured largely. A Scotsman called upon a London specialist, and after obtaining his opinion, deposited half a sovereign on the table as he prepared to leave the room. The specialist looked at the coin with scorn, and then said indignantly, "I don't take fees of half a sovereign." "Thanks," said the Scotsman picking up the coin and making for the door; "I'm sure that's very liberal of you, so I'll take it back. Good morning."

A second Scotsman, having received a specialist's opinion and advice, was departing without making any offer to pay a fee. "Sir," said the doctor, "I think you've forgotten something; I charge three guineas for my advice." "You may," replied the Scotsman, "but I'm no' paying because I'm no' taking it."

In justice to the Scottish people, however, it should be pointed out that while some may have earned fame for themselves in their attempts to avoid payment, many Scots doctors have shown a spirit of generosity to their poorer patients that is beyond all praise. The famous Dr. Abernethy had a terribly brusque manner, but when his help was needed it was given lavishly. On one occasion he was visited by a rich Jew who much objected to Abernethy's large fee of one hundred guineas, but, as it was a case of pay or get out, in the long run the Jew paid up. Abernethy's next visitor was a poor country clergyman,

and it required no great amount of medical science to know that what he wanted was less work, a change and more nourishment. This Abernethy told him, but the poor parson said the whole three were equally impossible. Without delaying a moment, Abernethy put the Jew's bank-notes into the parson's hands, saying, "Go away to the seaside and rest and feed well. I bled a rich Jew for this, and it is fitting that it should go to put blood into a Gentile."

Early in his career he returned his fee of one shilling to a mother with a delicate daughter, saying, "Take it and buy her a skipping-rope"—a gentle way of intimating that the girl wanted exercise.

The palm for colossal "nerve" in the attempt to avoid payment of fees must be handed to the lady who went to see a famous doctor, but found so many other clients waiting their turn that it was obvious that she would not be seen that day. Calling the doctor's manservant on one side, she put a shilling in his hand, and telling him that she would come again on the following day, requested that she might be put first on the list. The next day she arrived early and was in due course shown into the great man's room. Her case was gone into, and all went well until she was leaving, having made no mention of payment, when the doctor said, "And my fee, madam?" "What?" said the lady with well-feigned astonishment and surprise—"your fee? Why, didn't I give the man in the hall a shilling yesterday?"

In the never-ending war that goes on between the doctor and the get-something-for-nothing patient, it happens more often than not that the former ultimately comes out victor. On one occasion a Jew desired to consult a well-known medical man, but before going made enquiries as to the doctor's terms. He was told that it was five guineas for the first visit and one guinea for each subsequent visit. This seemed to be a case where strategy was necessary if money was to be saved, so, after giving the matter much thought, the Jew finally hit upon a plan by which he hoped to cheat the specialist and get the advice cheaply. Accordingly, when he was ushered into the consulting-room he greeted the doctor gaily, as if he were an old-time acquaintance, with, "Good morning, Doctor, here we are again," and at the same time he put down his guinea on the table. In this case, however, the doctor had had some experience of patients anxious to avoid full payment, and, summing up his visitor at a glance, he carefully pocketed the fee and said, "Quite so, and you appear to be getting along very nicely. Just continue the treatment as before and come back and see me again in a month."

A story is told of a patient with more nerve than money who sought the advice of a celebrated doctor. After carefully examining him, the doctor wrote out a prescription, saying as he handed it over, "Get this made up and it will

soon put you right.” The man turned over the prescription in his hands seemingly unsatisfied, and finally said to the doctor, “Would you mind lending me five shillings to get it made up?” Staggered at the unusual request, the doctor was for the moment speechless. Finally, he said, “Just let me see that prescription again for a moment.” Having regained possession of it he read it through carefully, and then, drawing out his fountain pen, struck out one line and handed it back to the patient, at the same time declining to advance the five shillings. Puzzled at the doctor’s act, the patient prepared to leave the room. At the door he turned and asked the medico what amendment he had made in the prescription and why. “Oh,” said the doctor cheerfully, “I had put in something for your nerves, but now I’ve struck it out, as I see you don’t require it.”

Another type of client that exists in large numbers in the poorer parts of some of our large towns is the one who looks on the doctor as in a somewhat similar position to a tradesman, and endeavours to beat him down in his prices. A celebrated Harley Street physician tells of how, early in his career, he acted as *locum* in a poor practice in Shadwell. This was in the days when the doctor’s surgery had usually more of the appearance of a chemist’s shop. One day he was called from his room at the back by an urgent knocking, and, going into the front room, he found a burly labourer hammering on the counter with a shilling and loudly calling, “Shop!” When the doctor appeared he was asked in choice “Shadwellese” if he would take out a tooth for sixpence. The recognised fee at that time in Shadwell being one shilling, the doctor naturally refused. “Well, would he take out the blank tooth for ninepence?” Again there was a refusal to do anything under the usual rate. “Orl rite then, guvnor,” came the disconsolate reply, “ ’eave away then,” and the shilling, being handed over, went into the till, while the patient seated himself on the chair in preparation for the doctor to “ ’eave away.”

It sometimes happens, however, that the fee comes unexpectedly and generously, and great then is the joy of the medico. About forty or fifty years ago there lived in Newcastle-on-Tyne a doctor with a wide local reputation, but who was unfortunately subject to fits of drinking, and when indulging in one of these bouts he would neither leave the house nor see anyone. On one occasion a titled lady, staying at the principal hotel in the city, was taken very ill, and the hotel manager, becoming very alarmed, sent for the doctor. By ill chance it happened that the doctor had just commenced one of his bouts, and a message came back to the hotel that he could not attend the lady. To such a pitch of alarm had the manager now reached that a second and more urgent message was sent, upon which the doctor decided to attend. Going up into the sick-room, he took out his watch, and began to count the lady’s pulse, but

realising that he was unfitted for the task of dealing with the case, he suddenly dropped her hand and with the remark, "Drunk, by gad!" walked out of the room. He was the most surprised man on earth when, on the following day, he received a cheque for twenty guineas with a request that he would say nothing more about it.

While we must sympathise with the doctor in the difficulty he has in obtaining his legitimate dues, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that very often in time past the fraternity were wont to look on the patient as a sheep to be fleeced. A wealthy tradesman, who had been taking the waters at Bath, took a fancy to try the hot springs at Bristol. To facilitate matters he obtained a letter from his Bath physician to a colleague at Bristol, armed with which he set out on his journey. His curiosity got the better of him on the way, and finding that the letter was insecurely fastened, he took the opportunity of reading it. To his amazement and anger he read the following: "Dear Sir, The bearer is a fat Wiltshire clothier. Make the most of him."

Nor must we omit the classic story of the old doctor who had gone away for a holiday, leaving his son, who had just qualified, in charge of the practice. On the old man's return the youngster gave a full account of his stewardship, concluding with the proud announcement that he had cured one lady patient of chronic indigestion from which she had been suffering for the last ten years. "My boy," said the old father, "I'm proud of your abilities, but I'm afraid you'll never make a doctor. It was that lady's indigestion that paid your college fees, and it ought to have been a standing income to me for many years to come."

The subject of doctors' bills has always been a popular one with the professional humourist, and here are a few typical stories.

"Dr. Phillips said he would put me on my feet again in six weeks, and he jolly well did, for I had to sell my car to meet his bill."

"Did the doctor diagnose your case?" "Yes, but it didn't take long because I wore my shabbiest suit."

At the bedside of a well-known humourist three doctors were consulting as to the best means of producing a perspiration. "Send in your bills, gentlemen, and that will do it at once," whispered the patient.

"And were you successful with your first case, Doctor?" "Yes, the—er—widow paid the bill."

"What you need," said the doctor, "is change." "Yes," replied the patient, "I'll need lots of it to meet your bill."

“So Miss Brown has broken off her engagement to the doctor?” “Yes; and he not only requested the return of his presents, but sent her a bill charging her five shillings a visit.”

“Doctor, I’m very much better. Will you let me have your bill?” “Nonsense, my good sir, you’re not strong enough for that yet.”

Perhaps the unkindest cut of all to the profession was the following misprint in a newspaper. “The doctor felt the patient’s *purse* and decided there was no hope.”

Sometimes it is the doctor himself who creates the impression that the outstanding characteristic of the profession is the accumulation of fees. “Do you see anything there?” said a medical student to a celebrated Dublin surgeon who was probing the wound of a rich patient after a severe operation. “I see a hundred guineas,” was the callous answer.

It may also happen that the same impression can be conveyed by some member of the doctor’s family. “I shall send for your father,” said a headmaster to a young delinquent, the son of a doctor, who had been guilty of some gross transgression of the school rules. “You’d better not, sir,” came the witty but rude reply. “He never charges less than two guineas a visit.”

Still, when we consider the uphill task that confronts many young doctors in the years when they are building up a practice, our sympathy must be extended to them. “There,” said a young doctor, sadly gazing after a very pretty woman, “there goes the only woman I ever loved.” “Then why in the world don’t you marry her?” asked his friend. “Can’t afford to,” came the pathetic reply; “she’s my best paying patient.”

There are, however, rare occasions when the fee is not only paid at once but in addition the patient adopts some other method of expressing his gratitude, very often in the quaintest of forms. Among other gifts received by a well-known doctor from grateful patients were the following: three striped woollen petticoats, a gaudy coloured necktie and half a dozen bath towels.

Of all the stories connected with fees and their payment or non-payment there is none to beat the tale of the doctor who was called upon to attend the butler of an aristocratic but impecunious patient. He found the butler in bed, but even a superficial examination soon disclosed that there was nothing at all wrong with the man. “It’s like this, sir,” exclaimed the butler, when accused by the doctor of malingering, “her Ladyship owes me six pounds in wages, so I’m going to stop here until I get it.” “And a darned good idea too,” said the doctor. “Move over and make room. She owes me fifty.”



It is difficult to account for the attitude of the majority of people towards the doctor's bill. As a rule we are prepared to pay highly for what we value most, and although there is nothing dearer to us than health, it is the last thing for which we wish to pay. One cannot but think that our whole system is wrong and that we would do well to follow the practice of the Chinese, who pay the doctor when they are well and cease payment when they are ill. The physician would then have some incentive to get us well again as rapidly as possible, instead of the inducement being in the other direction, as it is at present.

## IV AS OTHERS SEE THEM

PERHAPS the cruellest definition of a doctor that has ever been formulated was that of Sydney Smith, who defined him as "an individual who puts drugs of which he knows nothing into a body of which he knows considerably less."

In attempting to ascertain how the outside world looks on the medical profession, we are forced to the conclusion, if we look at the humour that has appeared in our literature on the subject, that the sole object for which doctors exist is to remove the rest of mankind into a better and happier world without waiting for the ordinary course of nature. This is well illustrated in the story of the Englishman who went to reside in a remote island of the Hebrides, and, falling sick, requested of one of his few neighbours that a doctor might be called. "Oh," was the reply, "it would be very difficult. The nearest doctor is forty miles away." "Then what do you do in cases of illness like mine?" was the not unnatural enquiry; and to his surprise the sick man got the reply, "Oh, we all die a natural death here."

An even better illustration occurred in the case where a man went into an undertaker's shop to order a coffin for an uncle. "I'm very sorry to hear of your trouble," said the undertaker. "I'd not even heard that Mr. Williams was dead. When did he die?" "Oh, he's not dead yet," came the reply, "but the doctor says he cannot last till the morning, and he knows what he gave him."

A further example tells of a doctor making a call upon a patient who enquired of one of the family immediately on his arrival, "Did the medicine I sent last night prove effective?" "Sure and it did, sor," came the reply. "Poor Mick died this morning as quiet as a lamb."

The Press is sometimes unwittingly guilty of conveying the same idea, namely, that the main aim of the medical profession is to remove their patients into another world. The following is an extract from the gossip column of an American paper: "Our esteemed fellow-citizen Abner Brown will go into hospital to-morrow to be operated on for appendicitis. He will leave a wife and two children."

The tendency of the world has always been to jibe at the medico for his failures or his apparent failures, and this is not always in a kindly manner. We forget for the time being the large amount of time and skill which is given

ungrudgingly and gratuitously by the profession. We misuse our bodies in every possible way, and when we have committed injury almost beyond repair, call in the doctor and then sneer at him for his lack of success. No better story to illustrate this could be found than that of the doctor who took a week's leave to go on a short shooting expedition. Shortly after his return to his practice he was met by a friend, who stopped him and asked, "Did you kill much while you were away?" "No," was the reply of the doctor; "I'd real bad luck. I hardly killed anything." "Well, well, that's too bad," replied the candid friend; "you could have done better than that by staying at home and attending to your regular business."

A somewhat similar case was that of a popular Dublin doctor who was also the medical officer to the constabulary. On one occasion he was asked to speak at a public meeting in Dublin in aid of a local charity, and when his name was announced and he advanced to the front of the platform, his opening words were drowned in peals of laughter as there came a voice from the back of the hall, "Three cheers, bhoys, for the doctor. Shure he's killed more policemen than all the Sinn Feiners put together."

It is recorded of a certain famous physician, Dr. Radcliffe, that so fond was he of money that he never paid a bill without undergoing much pain and suffering. He employed a pavior to attend to some faulty paving before his house in Bloomsbury Square, and when the time came for payment, Radcliffe, in the hope of reducing the price, began to find fault with the work. "What!" he said to the workman, "have you the impudence to ask to be paid for such a piece of work? Why, all you have done is to spoil my pavement and then to cover it over with earth to hide the bad work." "Well, if it comes to that, Doctor," replied the man dryly, "mine is not the only bad work that the earth hides."

History records one classic instance in which the doctor got in a telling reply to such a thrust, and in this case the person who suffered was a royal personage. Frederick the Great of Prussia, anxious to introduce inoculation into his kingdom, sent to Dresden for a famous English physician, Dr. Baylies. On the doctor's arrival at the palace in Berlin he was greeted by the king with the customary pleasantries that he used to members of the profession. "Well, Doctor, how many people have you despatched to the other world?" "Not so many as you, sire," replied Baylies in a quiet and courteous voice.

One of the cruellest stories told against the profession is that of the two men who determined to commit suicide. When the time came for them to put their plans into action, they both found that they were too cowardly to carry out their intentions. They determined, therefore, that they would be killed by

someone else, and accordingly No. 1 lay down in front of a South-Eastern express train—and died of starvation. No. 2 got out of his difficulty by calling in his panel doctor!

Strangely enough, in every profession there is some one topic on which the outside world always hangs more or less unkind jokes, reflecting on the ability or skill of the members of the profession in question. In the Crown services it is adherence to regulations and a love of red-tape and circumlocution, among the clergy the length of the sermon, on the stage the desire to obtain applause, in the law the ability of counsel to obtain a conviction—when he appears for the defence—and among the doctors the ability to fill a cemetery. “I must say,” complained a doctor one day, “that the world is very ungrateful towards my profession. How seldom one sees a public memorial erected to a doctor!” “How seldom?” queried a friend. “I don’t see how you can say that. Just think of our cemeteries.”

Finding a lady reading *Twelfth Night*, a facetious doctor asked, “When Shakespeare wrote about ‘Patience on a monument,’ I wonder if he meant doctors’ patients?” “I don’t think so,” replied the lady; “you find them under the monuments, not on them.”

A committee had been formed to erect a monument over the grave of a very popular Dublin physician. When the committee met, suggestions were asked for with regard to the inscription, whereupon a witty citizen suggested the famous allusion to Sir Christopher Wren on St. Paul’s: *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice* (If you seek his monument, look around you. If you doubt his merits, behold his works).

The idea that the medical profession is the only one where payment does not depend on results is probably the reason why some parents put their sons into the profession. It is doubtless an extension of the doctrine of “Safety first.” “So you intend to make your boy a doctor when he grows up?” said a visitor, referring to the son of the house. “What made you decide on the medical profession?” “Well,” replied the cautious father, “he’s inclined to be lazy and he hasn’t too many brains, and after looking round I came to the conclusion that a doctor is the only man that keeps on getting paid whether his work is satisfactory or not.”

It sometimes happens that the patient whose nerves are more or less worn by pain and suffering will utter an opinion which, from the doctor’s point of view, had better have been left unsaid. “You mustn’t give up hope in this way,” said a doctor to an ill-tempered patient; “your case is not incurable. Three years ago I had exactly the same illness.” “Yes,” replied the patient gloomily, “but not the same doctor.”

Another physician was reproving an elderly patient for not taking proper care of himself, especially as regards diet and exercise. In the course of his reproof he took occasion to remark that it was the duty of every man to learn to know his own body, adding that at forty a man is either a fool or a physician. "Yes, and sometimes both!" was the comment of the patient.

In the bad old duelling days a witty Dublin barrister was once consulted by an irate physician who considered that he had been grossly insulted by a third person. "I shall call him out," said the angry medico. "Don't call him out," said the lawyer; "get him to call you in and have your revenge that way."

Attempts to do a good turn to a doctor or to pay him a compliment sometimes have results which were scarcely intended, as these two stories show. "Ah!" said one lady to another, "I'm sure it would be a great kindness if you gave the new doctor a trial. I'm very sorry for him. He had a heap of patients when he came here first, but now they're all dead."

An old Irishwoman had transferred her patronage from one doctor to another. "Well, Mrs. Murphy," said the favoured one, "so you prefer my medicines to those of Dr. Fergusson?" "Yes, indade, Doctor dear," replied the old lady; "you're a dale better than that *other* ould humbug and impostor."

However much we are inclined to make fun of the medical profession, our sympathies cannot but go out to the young medico who sets out to make a practice fresh from hospital. It is told of Dr. Arbuthnot, who finally became one of our greatest physicians, that early in his career he went down into Devonshire to practise as a physician, but the neighbourhood was so healthy that he could get little or nothing to do. One day an acquaintance met the doctor riding furiously towards Exeter. "Hello, Doctor!" he exclaimed, "where are you riding in such a hurry?" "Out of this vile county," cried Arbuthnot in a rage, "in which a man can neither live nor die."

Another point on which the general public errs a good deal is in the incorrect use of the term "Doctor." They insist upon giving it to the M.R.C.S. or L.R.C.P. and yet call the Doctor of Laws or Doctor of Science merely "Mr." "Excuse my ignorance," said a sweet young thing to one doctor, "but ought I to call you Dr. Squills or Mr. Squills?" "Oh, call me anything you like," replied the medico; "some of my friends even call me an old fool." "Ah!" replied the young lady sweetly, "that's only the people who know you intimately."

## V

# WHEN THE DOCTOR SCORES

SPEAKING generally, the medical profession cannot be described as a humorous one, and where humour is found to exist it is largely of the dry and pawky variety. This is instanced by the reply of the physician who, when he was asked what was his favourite quotation, grimly replied, "Dead men tell no tales." Regrettable as this absence of humour is, it is no doubt due to their training, as is shown in the gradual but inevitable transfer from the noisy, practical-joking medical student to the staid family physician with a good bedside manner.

It is doubtful whether there is any profession which so marks a man as that of medicine. Whereas the lawyer, even after years of practice, may still be the life and soul of the dinner table, as may also be the cleric, the sailor or the soldier, the doctor and the civil servant are more or less silent members where wit and humour reign. This is no doubt due to the fact that the doctor's life is lived amidst pain and sorrow, and the civil servant's amidst cast-iron regulations and stereotyped precedents that sooner or later cramp all tendency to adventure into the realms of fancy.

The outstanding characteristic of doctors' humour is that it is for the most part found in those cases where, for some reason or other, the medico has become indignant and wishes to hit back, and in consequence it is largely of the sledge-hammer variety. Dr. McCarthy, a well-known physician, at one time attached to one of our largest hospitals, used to stalk round the wards in an abstracted silence buried in his own thoughts. This was much resented by the students, who wished to hear his observations on the various cases, and one of them, bolder than the rest, decided to get a rise out of the doctor. On the next occasion that they accompanied McCarthy round the hospital, the student asked a question, but received no answer. "Did you hear me, sir?" he asked, returning to the charge; "you made no answer." For a moment McCarthy looked up and then quietly said, "Did Balaam?"

A similar story is told of a professor who was lecturing a class of students, the majority of whom were only too anxious to get away to a cup final. At last the clock pointed to the hour at which the class was usually dismissed, and there was at once a general rising from seats and a collecting of books. "One minute, please, gentlemen," expostulated the lecturer—"one minute, please.

Keep your seats. I have still one more pearl to cast.”

More than anywhere else is this sledge-hammer humour in evidence when the patient is one whose ailments are largely imaginary or caused by his own excesses. A gentleman known for his convivial tendencies went to consult his doctor, having previously dined and wined well. “I’ve got an awful pain, doctor,” he complained. “Do you by any chance think the trouble is in the appendix?” “No, I certainly do not,” said the doctor grimly; “I’m perfectly satisfied that the trouble is in the table of contents.”

Another hypochondriac, calling on a doctor, admitted that his health and digestion were perfect, that he had not an ache or a pain, but the trouble was that he couldn’t sleep at night. “If that is the case,” replied the doctor, “I suggest that you consult your spiritual adviser rather than me.”

In a similar case the patient complained of a pain in his chest. “Every now and again,” he said, “something seems to rise up inside me and then settle back.” The doctor looked at his visitor in disgust. “You haven’t swallowed a lift, have you?” he asked savagely.

In the following case also the doctor’s retort was equally crushing. The patient had long been known for his alcoholic excesses, and in spite of the doctor’s repeated warnings he had continued in his course, until at last Nature had stepped in and made him pay the penalty. A friend had called upon the doctor to make enquiries. “Don’t you think, Doctor,” he said, “that it’s a case of water on the brain?” “No, I don’t,” said the doctor derisively; “water is a thing he’s had very little acquaintance with for the last twenty years.”

Of the same type is the story concerning the man who gave full rein to his passion for both food and drink, and who found himself suffering from severe abdominal pains. He sent for the doctor, and on his arrival plaintively said, “I think I’m going to die; I believe I have gout in the stomach.” “You have nothing of the kind,” said the doctor in exasperation; “it is merely duck swimming about in port wine.”

To another patient who had too much appetite and too much money with which to satisfy it, Abernethy is reported to have given his famous advice, “Live on sixpence a day, and earn it.” Direct and crushing as he was with the over-feeder or over-drinker, Abernethy was equally hard on the *malade imaginaire*. On one occasion he was consulted by a lady of this type, who complained that she thought she had swallowed a spider. “Very well,” said the celebrated doctor in his curt way, “put a fly in your mouth and the spider will come up and catch it.”

A class which always succeeds in provoking the doctor’s crushing wit,

consists of the patients who make everyone around them suffer also. "I understand," said a friend once to a doctor, "that Brown is a martyr to dyspepsia." "Yes," replied the doctor, "he is dyspeptic, but it is his wife who is the martyr."

"You can never talk to Miss Smith," complained another person to a doctor, "but what she gives you a full catalogue of her ailments." "Yes," was the reply, "you might almost call it an organ recital."

A very natural cause of indignation on the part of the doctor is any attempt to lower the dignity of his profession. Whistler, the famous painter, once called in Sir Morell Mackenzie, the great throat specialist of the Victorian era, and when Mackenzie arrived at the painter's house he found that he was expected to treat a sick French poodle. Naturally he was none too pleased, but he saw to the dog, took his fee and went away. A little while later Mackenzie sent for Whistler urgently, and when the latter arrived greeted him with, "Oh, I'm glad you've come; I just wanted to ask you about having my front door painted."

Tommy Openshaw (the late Mr. Thomas Horrocks Openshaw, C.B., C.M.G., etc., one of the consulting surgeons at the London Hospital) once went into a ward to see how a patient he had operated on two days before was getting on. It was visiting day, and the patient had his friends by his bedside and was telling them all about it. As he passed up the room, Tommy heard one of the friends say, "These surgeons are very careless; I've been told they sometimes leave a sponge in a fellow." "Yes," said a second friend, "and I've heard of them leaving forceps in you." At this point Dr. Openshaw boiled over. "Sister," he shouted loudly to the nurse, "have you come across my walking-stick? I had it here two days ago and I've lost it."

In view of the large amount of gratuitous work that is done by the profession, there is one type of individual who will quickly arouse the doctor's ire and bring the crushing weight of his humour into play, and that is the type which is always trying to get something for nothing. One of this fraternity met a doctor one day, and in the hope of getting a little advice at no cost, said, "If I am a long way from home and feel very seedy and worn-out generally, what ought I to take?" Like a pistol-shot came the curt reply, "A taxi."

Another patient, with the idea of giving the impression that he was very poor and thus obtaining advice for next to nothing, turned up at the surgery of Sir William Wyld, an eminent Dublin surgeon, dressed almost in rags and tatters. The doctor saw through the manœuvre, however, and, with a world of sarcasm in his tone, greeted his patient as follows: "Now, my friend, when you have worn that suit a little longer on Sundays, I think you might take it for every day."



A doctor going on his round was stopped by a friend whose meanness was a matter of common knowledge. After the usual greetings, the friend entered into a long dissertation on his symptoms, and finally wound up by asking the doctor what he should take. "Advice," said the latter, as he hurriedly turned away.

In such cases, however, it is essential that if he is to score, the doctor's answer should be in terms that admit of no question. Neglect of this once gave a mean patient an excellent opportunity of getting in a counter-thrust. He had, in the usual way, started a friendly conversation, and in the course of it got in his query, "Doctor, what should a fellow do when he's got bronchitis?" At once the doctor was on his guard. "In such a case," he said with marked emphasis, "he ought to consult a good physician!" "Thanks, Doctor," said the sufferer, as he turned to walk off. "That's what I'll do, then."

The rivalry that always exists in a certain degree between the various professions has also furnished many good stories. A celebrated preacher, the Rev. Dr. Channing, had a brother, a medico, whom he very much resembled. A gentleman meeting the doctor one day and mistaking him for his brother, said, "You preached a fine sermon on Sunday, Doctor." "I'm afraid you're mistaken," came the quick but apt reply. "I'm not the brother that preaches, I'm the one that practises."

Another good story relates to a doctor in Wicklow who stood as candidate for the vacant post of dispensary doctor. In his candidature he was opposed by the parish priest, who worked strenuously against him, but, in spite of this clerical opposition, he was elected. Unfortunately, however, the priest did not allow his antagonism to die with the election, but, being a member of the Dispensary Committee, hit on the plan of worrying the doctor by issuing to all applicants red or "immediate" tickets. No matter how trivial the illness or how late the hour, each applicant arrived at the doctor's house with an urgent ticket requiring immediate attention. At length the doctor tumbled to the priest's game, and accordingly said to each patient, "You are very ill and must see the priest at once." Finding he had got as good as he gave, the priest discontinued the use of the red tickets, and in the end the two became great friends.

Characteristic of the profession is the keenness of its members to score off another member. Mr. Soloman Richards, a leading Irish surgeon, was said to be the biggest and fattest surgeon in the United Kingdom. One day he was returning from an operation at a village outside Dublin, accompanied by Dr. Olre, a physician in good practice who happened to be very small and lean, when the carriage was stopped by a highwayman, who failed to notice Olre, but relieved Richards of his purse, watch and instruments. As the highwayman

was going away, Richards called his attention to Olre, whereupon he in turn was relieved of money and jewellery. As the highwayman with a word of thanks turned away again, Richards said, "My instruments are of great value to me, but you couldn't get ten shillings for them. Won't you leave me them?" "Well," said the highwayman, "as you've been a sportsman in calling my attention to your friend, I'll let you have them." "And what about my watch?" said Richards. "It was a present from my father!" "Here it is," said the highwayman, and handing it over, he rode off. Directly he had gone, Olre began to complain of Richards's action in drawing the highwayman's attention to him. "Do you think," said Richards, "that I was going to allow you to boast in the club to-morrow that you got off while Richards was robbed. Oh no, if I was to be robbed, you must be also!"

Perhaps most forcible of all, is the indignation of the doctor when his time is taken up by some trivial ailment which could well have been averted had only a minimum of attention been given to the laws of health and cleanliness. A doctor, whose practice lay in a very poor part of London, was once visited by a mother, bringing in her arms a child sadly in need of soap and water, a need which was equally noticeable in the mother. After listening to a long and garbled account of the child's fretfulness, etc., the doctor said very solemnly, "The child seems to be suffering from hydropathic hydrophobia." "Oh, dear," said the mother, bursting into maudlin tears, "is it as bad as that? Oh, Doctor, Doctor, whatever shall I do for the poor little thing?" "Wash its face," replied the doctor brusquely; "the disease will come off with the dirt." "Wash its face, indeed!" said the mother, now roused to fury. "Wash its face, you dirty pill-pedlar! What next, I'd like to know?" "Wash your own, madam—wash your own," said the doctor as he opened the door for the woman's exit.

## VI WHEN THE DOCTOR TRIPS

ALTHOUGH there is no profession, with the possible exception of the law, where we expect to find such exactitude of expression as in medicine, strangely enough it is one where the members frequently give themselves away and turn the laugh against themselves. This may perhaps be due to the large number of Irishmen it contains, with their well-known partiality for Irish bulls. "Oh, Doctor," complained a very sick patient, "I'm getting worse rapidly. I'm afraid I'm at death's door." "Don't you worry about that, my dear sir," came the reply from the cheery but tactless doctor; "I'll pull you through."

"Yes, Doctor," complained another patient, "my one great trouble now seems to be my breath. Somehow or other it hurts me to breathe." "That's a mere nothing," replied the doctor gaily; "I'll soon give you something to stop that."

"Oh, Doctor," said the patient, "I must apologise for sending for you, but I've been terribly ill. I felt I wanted to die." "In that case," replied the young medico, "you certainly did right in sending for me at once."

A lady found it necessary to telephone for the doctor to come at once, and at the same time apologised for the distance she was bringing him. "Don't mention it," said the kindly medico, smiling into the receiver in his best bedside manner; "I happen to have another patient in the neighbourhood on whom I must call, and I might as well kill two birds with one stone."

A man, who was the unfortunate possessor of a mother-in-law who did her best to make his life a misery, asked the doctor how she was progressing. "She's doing splendidly," replied the unthinking physician. "In fact, I think I may say she is quite her old self again." The sigh that went up from the son-in-law spoke volumes.

A certain firm of doctors were suing on a long overdue account and one of the partners was giving evidence. "But I suggest to you," said the defending solicitor, "that many of these charges were made for visits that were entirely unnecessary, and that your partner continued these visits long after the patient was out of danger." "Indeed, no," came the indignant reply; "in my opinion, the patient was in very grave danger so long as my partner continued his visits."

A peculiar feature of the medical profession is that it is one in which any sign of hesitancy or doubt is often fatal to success, and it is necessary that at all times the doctor should speak in a definite and authoritative manner. A young doctor with brilliant degrees once set up in a country town, and was called in late one night by the squire, whose only child was unwell. Pleased at the opportunity of getting the principal man in the neighbourhood on his books, the doctor hastened to the house, but on his arrival all that he could find the matter with the child was a slight feverish attack which would probably pass off before the morning. Instead of saying so, he informed the anxious father, "I don't know what's the matter with the child." Fearful at these words that something terrible would happen to the little one, and that the doctor had not the knowledge to grapple with the situation, the squire called in another doctor, who, wiser in his generation, gave the child a soothing draught and said very little. Needless to say Doctor No. 2 attended the squire's family in the future, while it was some years before No. 1 could live down the unfortunate impression he had created.

On occasions when the slip is one of the pen rather than of the tongue, the consequences are often even more disastrous. One doctor was complaining very much of the falling-off in his practice. "Yes," he confessed to a friend, "it was all owing to one little slip that my patients began to leave me." "Indeed," said his friend, "and what was the slip?" "Well," was the sad reply, "in filling in a death certificate for a patient who had died, I absent-mindedly signed my name in the space headed 'Cause of Death.' "

Over-eagerness may also sometimes be the cause of the doctor tripping. A young doctor had started to build up a practice in a new district, which was apparently a very healthy one, as, after waiting some weeks, not a patient had come to him. At length, looking through the window one morning, he saw a well-dressed man making for the door. Thinking to himself, "Ah! here at last is a patient and apparently a well-to-do one at that," he hurried to the door, and, without giving the caller time to state his business, ushered him into the surgery. Arrived there, he turned to his visitor and said, "What can I do for you?" "Well, sir," replied the caller, "I belong to a debt-collecting agency, and I've just called to see if we can take over the collection of some of your bad debts."

Another doctor, who afterwards rose to eminence in his profession, once created a very bad impression in consequence of his absent-mindedness. He was attending at the time an elderly gentleman with a malignant disease, and at length it became his painful duty to tell the patient and his relatives that there was no hope of recovery. As he was leaving the house, escorted by several of

the relatives, he noticed on passing through the hall some very fine old chairs. Being a collector of this sort of article, for the moment the collector triumphed over the doctor, and to the amazement of the relatives he said, "I shall be obliged if you will let me know when the sale takes place."

Here are two stories in which the doctor's parrot plays the principal role.

A Harley Street doctor was giving a dinner party, and it happened that his favourite parrot, which usually lived in his consulting-room, was on this occasion in the dining-room concealed behind some curtains. During the meal one of the lady guests was conspicuous for her volubility, it being almost impossible, indeed, for anyone else to get in a word. At length, however, she ran to a standstill, and in the silence that followed a sepulchral voice demanded from behind the curtain, "May I see your tongue, please?"

A doctor had given his parrot away to the local clergyman. Soon after the parrot's arrival at its new home, a meeting of lady workers was held at the vicarage, the Vicar presiding. During the course of the meeting he took the opportunity of telling his lady workers something concerning the recent visit of the Bishop of the Diocese and the compliments his Lordship had made to Mrs. Vicar on the condition of the parish. "Yes," said the Vicar, "the dear Bishop was most cordial. You would scarcely believe it, but during my short absence from the room he was most charming to my wife and said——" Before he could get any farther, the voice of the parrot broke in, "Just let me feel your pulse."

Although the members of the medical profession in the main are very free from what is known as "swank" in regard to their professional knowledge, it sometimes happens that a young doctor (or even in some cases one old enough to know better) will, in his desire to impress a patient with his skill, run himself into a very absurd position. "Are you sure I shall recover?" once asked a very anxious patient of his doctor. "I have heard that doctors sometimes give wrong diagnoses and have treated a patient for pneumonia who afterwards died of typhoid fever." "Let me tell you, sir," said the medico indignantly, "that you have been woefully misinformed. It very rarely happens that a diagnosis is wrong; and as for myself, if I treat a man for pneumonia, he dies of pneumonia."

Speaking of diagnoses, there is a story told against the profession, of a doctor who was out of joint with all the world. "What on earth is the matter?" said his friend. "You look awfully mad." "I should think so, too," was the angry reply. "Here have I been treating a patient for three years for yellow jaundice and I've only just found out that he's a Chinaman."

A medical student in a hospital was asked to examine a man's eye and give a full report upon what he found. Proud of his knowledge, the youngster got out his ophthalmoscope, and, after adjusting it, made a long and searching examination of the man's left eye. The result was most surprising. "You are the most extraordinary case I have ever come across," he said to the patient. "In the whole of my experience I have never seen such an eye. I am very much afraid you have some eye disease which is at present unknown to the medical profession. Have you ever had a specialist's opinion upon it?" "No," said the man quietly; "but the man who put it in said it was a bit of very fine glass!"

Sometimes it will happen that checkmate to the doctor comes from a child, which, in its unexpectedness, is the more overwhelming. "Put out your tongue, Mary," said the doctor. The little one extended it about half an inch. "Come, come," said the medico, "I want more than that. Put out all of it." "But, Doctor, I can't," said the little one; "it's fastened at the other end."

There is an excellent story of a somewhat ill-tempered doctor who was once travelling by train when a burly navvy got into the carriage. Pulling out his pipe, the navvy filled up with a particularly foul and noxious kind of shag. It was not long before the smell and smoke were too much for the doctor, so, leaning forward, he tapped the man on the shoulder, saying, "You will pardon me, but I am a medical man, and my twenty years' experience in that profession has taught me that nearly all the worst cases of cancer of the tongue come from smoking bad tobacco." "Well," said the navvy, removing his pipe and looking at his adviser, "I've been a navvy for thirty years, and my experience in that profession has taught me that all the worst cases of black eyes and bloody noses come from interfering with other people's business."

Lastly comes the type of remark, more or less common to all professions, which is an undoubted bull of the best Hibernian breed. "To have no children," said a celebrated Irish doctor, "is a great misfortune, but I have noticed that it is hereditary in some families."

## VII

# QUEER PATIENTS

It is quite certain that no profession gives such an opportunity of meeting the eccentrics of the world as does that of medicine. Rich and poor, wise and foolish, grave and gay, stolid and frivolous, all must sooner or later come into the doctor's hands, and often, in their weakness and their pain, they lay their very souls bare before him.

Strange to say, some of the queerest patients, at any rate in the matter of their desires, are those whose time on earth is drawing to a close. A well-known physician tells a story of attending a man suffering from an incurable but comparatively painless disease. In due course it became his painful task to tell his patient that he had only about a fortnight to live, but this did not appear to interest him much. The sick man was then asked if he would like to see any of his relatives, but he replied that he had seen enough of them already. He then asked if there was time for him to take a little trip to the country before he died, and on being told that there was not, said quite quietly and cheerfully that he didn't think there was anything else he wished for "except a little more salt in his beef tea."

"I have found," said the same authority, "a similar indifference to death in my hospital. Patients there about to die are greatly interested in what hymns shall be sung at their funerals and who shall have their bed when they are gone, but not in much else."

The doctor's examination often discloses intimate secrets of the home life of their patients. A man turned up at a surgery once complaining of being very lame. "Good gracious," said the doctor, after he had made his examination, "how long have you been going about like this?" "Two weeks," was the reply. "Two weeks!" said the astonished doctor. "Why, man, do you know that your ankle is broken? How you have managed to get around is a marvel. Why didn't you come to me before?" For a moment or two the man looked embarrassed. "Well, Doctor," he said at length, "I know I should have done, but every time I say anything is wrong with me, my wife says I shall have to give up smoking."

A newly but much married man came to a doctor complaining of feeling out of sorts, and put it down to the fact that his wife had made him discontinue his evening whisky and soda. "Doctor," he said at length, coming to the real

object of his visit, "can't you order me to take whisky?" The doctor demurred. "No," he said, "I'm afraid I can't conscientiously order it unless I think you require it. What are your symptoms?" "Oh," said the visitor cheerfully, "I'm not particular. What symptoms do you suggest?"

Another type of queer visitor who sometimes honours the doctor with a visit is the gentleman who exists upon the dole plus what he can secure of his wife's earnings, and, living a life of no exercise beyond the walk to and fro to the nearest public-house, soon finds himself with what is commonly known as a "liver." A gentleman of this description, making his way into a doctor's surgery, was asked the usual question as to what was the matter with him. In husky and beer-laden accents he sadly replied, "Debility, Doctor, that's what's the matter with me. Domestic trouble." The last was added as a sort of explanation. "Dear, dear," said the doctor, "I hope it's not serious." "Twins," came the gloomy reply. "Second lot I've had in eighteen months, and I think it's run me down."

A gentleman of the same type visited a doctor and complained also of feeling run down. "Well, what is exactly the matter with you?" asked the doctor. "Just give me your symptoms." "Well, it's like this, guv'nor," came the reply. "I eats well, I drinks well and I sleeps well, but when I sees a job of work I goes all of a dither."

Possibly one of the queerest patients a doctor has ever had is the one told of by a well-known physician of the present day. There was practically no hope for him, and accordingly the doctor suggested that he might like to see a clergyman. "Send for a clergyman!" said the patient. "Let me tell you, Doctor, that I'm not afraid to die, if that is what you are thinking about." "Why are you not afraid?" said the doctor in an attempt to get to the mind of the man. "Because," came the startling reply, "I know the burial service off by heart."

The variety of patients that flit across the hospital stage is weird and wonderful, one of the principal ways in which they show their eccentricity being in the matter of personal cleanliness. One patient absolutely refused to use a tooth-brush, because he'd done it once "and it gave him the jor ache." Another refused to have a bath on the ground that to uncover all the body at one and the same time would be such a shock to his system that it would kill him. A third refused to wash "because it was such a dirty world he would always have to be at it once he started." Another wanted to be washing all the time, because all the furniture, and in fact everything in the room, was so covered with germs that when he touched anything his hands were covered with them. Another, after washing himself, always insisted on swallowing a piece of soap in order that his inside might be properly cleansed.



There is a type of patient whom the very sight of surgical instruments sends into a paroxysm of terror. A man of this description met his match, however, in the person of a celebrated doctor. He had been taken down to the operating theatre, where a minor operation was to be performed on him, but at the sight of the surgical instruments he leaped from the table, rushed shrieking down the corridor and finally locked himself in a room. The doctor was not to be baulked, however, and being a big, powerful man, he rushed after the coward, burst open the door, and half-dragged and half-carried his struggling patient back to the table, where he successfully performed the necessary operation.

A class of patient whose eccentricities frequently give rise to laughter is the one which, while obeying the strict letter of the hospital regulations, takes little heed to the spirit of such regulations. Such a man on one occasion was warned by the nurses that he must not eat his breakfast on the following morning, as he was to be operated upon shortly afterwards. He obeyed the letter of the law by not eating his own breakfast, but that of the man in the bed next to him.

Another type of queer visitor is the one who seems unable for some reason or other to use even the small amount of brain with which Nature has endowed him. On one occasion an Irish doctor was awakened in the wee sma' hours by a knocking at his front door, and on looking out he saw a man of the peasant class standing there. "What's the matter, my good man?" he asked. "'Tis me old mother that's took bad, Doctor," came the reply. "Have you been long here?" queried the doctor. "Shure and I have, yer honner." "Then why on earth didn't you ring the night bell?" asked the doctor. "Shure and I was afraid I'd disturb yer honner," was the typically Irish reply.

But such a visitor is almost welcome compared to the one who at 2 a.m. bawls up the speaking-tube, and when the doctor, awakened from a refreshing sleep, asks, "What is it?" receives the reply, "First of April!"

Of all the strange visitors to come to the surgery or the hospital, the most pleasant to deal with is the man who in no circumstances loses his sense of humour. One such man, admitted to hospital with an injured leg, was informed by the doctor that it would be necessary to amputate the limb. The next time the sister made her rounds she found that this man's boots were missing, and on making enquiries learned that he had sold them to the man in the next bed, as he himself had no further use for them.

Although medical science has reached a very high level, it is doubtful whether it could do anything in the following case: A white woman entered a doctor's surgery carrying a chocolate-coloured infant. "Me husband's a coloured gentleman, sir," she explained, "but I wondered if you might be able

to do something for the baby.”

## VIII IN THE CONSULTING-ROOM

THERE can be no place where life in all its aspects can be studied better than in a doctor's consulting-room. In this respect it surpasses even the confessional-box, for whereas the statements made in the latter are more or less personal, and given with a certain amount of natural reticence, when it comes to the consulting-room there is no such holding back, and life as the patient knows and lives it is laid bare before the doctor. There, perhaps for the first time for years, secret histories and youthful escapades long hidden from sight come once more to light, and every day the doctor learns more and more the truth of the old saying that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives.

The following story is illustrative of the primitive conditions under which some people still exist to-day. A "lady," hailing from somewhere in the East End, had called on a doctor for the treatment of what was apparently a nasty bite on her cheek. "I can't make out what sort of an animal has bitten you," said the medico, after a careful examination; "it's too small for a horse's bite and too big for a dog's." "Animal, be blowed," came the answer in tones of almost withering contempt; "it wasn't any bloomin' animal, it was another lidy."

Sometimes also the answers of the patients will disclose most delightful fragments of family history.

A Galway landlord of the old school had come over to London to consult a famous specialist. "I should like to know," said the doctor in the course of his questioning, "whether your family has been what one might call a long-lived one?" "My family," came the typical Irish reply, "is a West of Ireland one, and if you know that part of the country you will realise that the age of my ancestors has always depended entirely on the judge and jury who tried them." This little story is confirmed by the other one concerning an Irish jury to whom the usher of the court said, "Take your usual places, gentlemen," whereupon the twelve good men and true filed dutifully into the dock.

The examination before acceptance for insurance is the source of many good stories. "Have you ever had a serious illness?" asked one doctor of a candidate sent to him for examination. "No, Doctor," was the reply. "Ever had

an accident?" "No, Doctor." "You must be an exceedingly lucky man. Do you mean to say you've never had an accident in all your life?" "Never, except last month, when a bull tossed me over a fence." "Well, don't you call that an accident?" "No, sir, I don't; the bull jolly well did it on purpose."

A man who had been turned down by one company on account of a bad family medical history was warned by the agent of a second company, to whom he had offered himself, to say nothing about his father, who had died of tuberculosis. In due course he came before the second company's doctor. "How old was your father when he died?" asked the medico. "A hundred and three, Doctor." "A hundred and three!" said the startled doctor; "of what did he die?" "Fell off a polo pony," came the unblushing reply.

There is an amusing story of an absent-minded lady who had insisted upon being operated on for appendicitis. Some time after her recovery she turned up at the consulting-room and asked the doctor if he would mind telling her what he had found in her appendix. "Well," said the doctor, "I may as well admit to you that yours was the most extraordinary case I have ever handled. I never found anything like it in an appendix before. You will hardly believe it, but I found several small hard seeds in it." "Oh," said the lady, "that accounts for our having no sweet peas this year. I must have sown the pills."

The answers received by the patient when he visits the consulting-room are not always quite to his liking. One gentleman who had had a pretty hectic time with some companions went to see the doctor, and asked for a medical certificate to send to his employers. This was given him, and to his surprise he found that the doctor had certified him as suffering from "syncope." Arrived home, he consulted the dictionary as to the meaning of this word, and found it given as "an uneven movement from bar to bar."

There have been strange cases reported of operations carried out rapidly and successful cures made in a short space of time in consulting-rooms, but it is doubtful if any can equal the following authenticated instance. On one occasion a doctor was visited by a Scotswoman with a terrible squint, so bad in fact that it seemed as if her eyes were looking into each other. For a time the case looked hopeless, and then the doctor was seized with a brilliant idea. Calling for two large whiskies, he held the two glasses in front of the woman's nose. Next he slowly drew them apart, moving one to the right and the other to the left. The plan succeeded as he had anticipated. With one eye the woman followed one glass, and with the other eye the second glass, until at length both optics regained their correct position.

It is in the consulting-room also that the question of fees comes once more to the fore. A patient had called on a certain doctor, but before giving the

medico any particulars about his case he asked if he might be given some idea as to the doctor's charges. "Well," said the doctor, "they vary according to what is required. For example, if I call on you I charge one pound for a visit, if you come to me it is ten shillings for each visit, and five shillings if I give advice over the telephone." "Oh," said the patient, as he made for the door, "and what do you charge a fellow for passing you in the street?"

## IX

# HUMOUR IN THE HOSPITAL

THAT humour and sorrow stand ever in close connection is nowhere more clearly shown than in our hospitals. There the light of laughter and the darkness of sorrow unutterable are to be found standing out in stark contrast. It is a world of extremes, of light and shade, of joy and sorrow, of laughter and tears, a world where the soul, under the influence of pain, is laid bare of the artificialities of civilisation and primitive human emotions come to the surface.

One of the most prolific contributors to the humour of the hospital is the medical student, and his influence can be felt over a wide area, from the Irish student who was asked what he would do in a case where a man was blown up with gunpowder, and replied, "Wait until he came down," to the student from India, who was told by the house-surgeon to watch a serious case through the night and keep a full report of the patient's progress. His sheet next morning read as follows:

- 11 p.m. Patient very dangerous.
- 1 a.m. Patient in the sink.
- 3 a.m. Patient flitting.
- 5 a.m. Patient fled.

It would be possible to fill pages with a description of the medical student, his dress, habits, pursuits and conversation, but this has been already ably done by Charles Dickens in the pages of the immortal *Pickwick*, where, in the persons of Mr. Benjamin Allen and Mr. Bob Sawyer, he has created characters that will live for all time. What can be more delicious than the following description?

"'Wery good, sir,' replied Sam. 'There's a couple o' sawbones downstairs.'

"'A couple of what!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, sitting up in bed.

"'A couple o' sawbones,' said Sam.

"'What's a sawbones?' enquired Mr. Pickwick, not quite certain whether it was a live animal, or something to eat.

"'What! don't you know what a sawbones is, sir?' enquired Mr. Weller. 'I

thought everybody know'd as a sawbones was a surgeon.'

"'Oh, a surgeon, eh?'" said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"'Just that, sir,'" replied Sam. 'These here ones as is below, though, ain't reg'lar thoroughbred sawbones; they're only in trainin'.'

"'In other words they're medical students, I suppose?'" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Sam Weller nodded assent.

"'I am glad of it,'" said Mr. Pickwick. 'They are fine fellows—very fine fellows; with judgments matured by observation and reflection; and tastes refined by reading and study. I am very glad of it.'

"'They're a-smokin' cigars by the kitchen fire,'" said Sam.

"'Ah!'" observed Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his hands, 'overflowing with kindly feelings and animal spirits. Just what I like to see.'

"'And one on 'em,'" said Sam, not noticing his master's interruption, 'one on 'em's got his legs on the table, and is a-drinkin' brandy neat, vile the t'other one—him in the barnacles—has got a barrel o' oysters atween his knees, which he's a-openin' like steam, and as fast as he eats 'em, he takes a aim with the shells at young drosy, who's a-sittin' down fast asleep, in the chimbley corner.'

"'Eccentricities of genius, Sam,'" said Mr. Pickwick."

"Mr. Benjamin Allen was a coarse, stout, thick-set young man, with black hair cut rather short, and a white face cut rather long. He was embellished with spectacles, and wore a white neckerchief. Below his single-breasted black surtout, which was buttoned up to his chin, appeared the usual number of pepper-and-salt coloured legs, terminating in a pair of imperfectly polished boots. Although his coat was short in the sleeves, it disclosed no vestige of a linen wristband; and although there was quite enough of his face to admit of the encroachment of a shirt collar, it was not graced by the smallest approach to that appendage. He presented, altogether, rather a mildewy appearance, and emitted a fragrant odour of full-flavoured Cubas.

"Mr. Bob Sawyer, who was habited in a coarse, blue coat, which, without being either a greatcoat or a surtout, partook of the nature and qualities of both, had about him that sort of slovenly smartness, and swaggering gait, which is peculiar to young gentlemen who smoke in the streets by day, shout and scream in the same by night, call waiters by their Christian names, and do

various other acts and deeds of an equally facetious description. He wore a pair of plaid trousers, and a large, rough, double-breasted waistcoat; out of doors, he carried a thick stick with a big top. He eschewed gloves, and looked, upon the whole, something like a dissipated Robinson Crusoe.”

“‘Nothing like dissecting, to give one an appetite,’ said Mr. Bob Sawyer, looking round the table.

“Mr. Pickwick slightly shuddered.

“‘By the bye, Bob,’ said Mr. Allen, ‘have you finished that leg yet?’

“‘Nearly,’ replied Sawyer, helping himself to half a fowl as he spoke. ‘It’s a very muscular one for a child’s.’

“‘Is it?’ enquired Mr. Allen carelessly.

“‘Very,’ said Bob Sawyer, with his mouth full.

“‘I’ve put my name down for an arm at our place,’ said Mr. Allen. ‘We’re clubbing for a subject, and the list is nearly full, only we can’t get hold of any fellow that wants a head. I wish you’d take it.’

“‘No,’ replied Bob Sawyer; ‘can’t afford expensive luxuries.’

“‘Nonsense!’ said Allen.

“‘Can’t, indeed,’ rejoined Bob Sawyer. ‘I wouldn’t mind a brain, but I couldn’t stand a whole head.’ ”

Needless to say, medical students of the present day are no longer like this, although perhaps the difference is not so marked when we look at the Hospitals Cup Final or the recurrent struggles for some hospital mascot.

Overshadowing the life of the average care-free student, however, are the examinations, and in connection with these Dr. Schofield, author of *Behind the Brass Plate*, tells a story of how, when a student, he went to sit his viva voce in the first stage of typhoid fever and with a temperature of 103°. Very curiously one of the questions asked was if he could give the symptoms of enteric fever. “Well,” said the doctor, “I think I have all the symptoms at present. I have a temperature, a slight rash, etc., etc.” “Thank you,” said the examiner hastily, “I think that will be quite satisfactory.” “I was then,” added Dr. Schofield, “hurried out of his presence, having passed with honour.”

Of the many stories told of students it is doubtful if there is one to equal that in which a well-known but somewhat conceited doctor figured. It



happened that he had been appointed to the Royal staff, and in the fullness of his pride he wrote on the blackboard in his class-room, "Professor X has the honour to inform his students that he has this day been appointed honorary physician to Her Majesty Queen Victoria." In the course of the morning he had occasion to leave the room, and on his return found, to his indignation, that some wag had added to the announcement the words, "God Save the Queen."

There are many stories, equally good, told against the medical student. Three of the fraternity were coming out of the hospital when they met a white-bearded Jew of patriarchal appearance who was making his way into the building. With the idea of taking a rise out of the old man, they dropped into Indian file, and as they passed him the first student greeted him with, "Good morning, Father Abraham," followed by the second with, "Good morning, Father Jacob," and the third, "Good morning, Father Joseph." "Pardon me," replied the old man quietly when the trio had finished, "but you have made a mistake. I am neither Abraham, Jacob nor Joseph, but Saul the son of Kish, who went out to seek his father's asses, and lo! I have found them."

A woman waiting in the out-patients' department was growing impatient at the time she was kept waiting. At last she ventured to stop a young white-coated man hurrying through the room. "Excuse me, but are you the doctor?" she asked. "No, madam," was the reply, "I'm only a student passing out as a doctor." A few minutes later another young man came through the room, and putting the same question to him she received a similar reply. After this there was an interval of a few minutes, and then another white-coated individual came along. "Excuse me," said the woman once more, "but are you the doctor or another of these young men who is passing out as a doctor?" "No, mum," came the reply, "I'm only a painter who is passing out for a pint."

Strange characters flit across the hospital stage. Among these, not the least humorous was old Molly, of whom Dr. Schofield writes in *Behind the Brass Plate*. "Molly," he said, "came every Saturday night to the receiving-room with a broken head inflicted by the pewter base of a quart pot in one of the neighbouring public-houses by her affectionate husband. There used to be a guessing competition among the students as to the particular public-house where the injury was inflicted, judging from the shape of the lump on her head. . . . For several Saturdays, however, she was missing, and eventually turned up one afternoon with a sprained thumb. 'Why, Molly,' I said, 'why don't you come on Saturday nights as usual?' 'Lor' bless you, sir,' she said, 'he's dead.' 'Well, anyhow,' I said, 'you've had enough of matrimony.' 'Lor' sir, you're out of it this time. I'm married again, but bless you, he ain't nothing of a husband. He treats me like a friend.' "

Another quaint visitor was one of whom the late Viscount Knutsford used to tell. He came one day to the London hospital, and tendered a cheque for £50 as a donation. Knutsford himself came out to see him, and laughingly said, "I suppose you brought this in to save your soul?" "My soul, oh dear, no," was the reply, "I brought it myself to save postage."

A well-known doctor was hurrying through the out-patients' room at a hospital when he was stopped by a working man, who greeted him with, "Well, master, I'm right glad to see you; you're Professor Brown, I believe?" "I can't stop now," said the medico, trying to hurry on. "But I want to talk to yer," complained the other; "you know a lot, don't you, and have a lot of letters after your name?" "Come, my man," said the angry doctor, "none of your impudence." "But you don't know who I am and that my wife knows your wife. She does your washing." "I can't stop another minute," said the professor. "Well, but you might. You know a lot, but you don't know all." "I don't suppose I do," said the professor, "but I must get on." "Aye, but there's something you don't know which you ought to know." "Well, what's that?" asked the doctor. "Why, I'm wearing your shirt," came the unexpected answer.

It is strange too what sidelights on human character the hospital will bring out. On one occasion the landlord of a public-house was brought to the hospital with concussion of the brain, having fallen down the stairs when he was drunk. Next day his wife came, and wept bitterly when she heard there was little chance of recovery. After that she did not come for a day or two, during which period her husband grew better. When told the good tidings on her return she became very angry. "I call it a great deal too bad of the doctors," she said, "to mislead one like this. First he wasn't to get better, and now he is, and I have bought a clean sheet all ready to lay him out, and I've sold the business, and whatever am I to do now? I think it's shameful of the doctors, showing one no consideration."

It is also doubtful if there is any place in the world where such appalling ignorance is shown as in our hospitals. "Your medicine, Doctor," complained one mother in the out-patients' ward, "gave the child a fit. He couldn't eat the milk and sago pudding that you ordered, so I gave 'im a bit of what we was having." "And what was that?" queried the harassed doctor. "Pork, greens and taters. I couldn't let the poor child starve, could I?"

"Baby is ever so much better, Doctor," said one mother. "Splendid," said the doctor, who was trying a new remedy, and picking up his note-book he prepared to make copious notes. "Yes," went on the mother, "but I was going to ask you to give him a change of medicine, because a lady in our house said it was too strong for him, so she made him some saffron tea and I gave him

that instead, and it did him a power of good.”

An out-patient was in search of the lady almoner of the hospital. “Can you tell me where I can find the lady armourer?” she asked one of the nurses. “Better send her to the electrical belt department,” said a student who had overheard the question.

A frequent contributor to the humour of hospitals is the street arab, who, as a general rule, once he comes within its portals, feels himself to be a person of importance and acts accordingly. Nothing but the best will satisfy him. “Go away,” said one young rascal of eight years of age to a probationer nurse, “you ain’t the trained nurse. Go and fetch me the trained nurse.”

It is surprising the pride which this class of youngster takes in his own case, and the rapidity with which he will pick up medical phraseology. “What’s the matter with you?” asked a nurse of one small patient. “Oh,” was the reply, “I’m a very interesting case. I have necrosis of the tibia, and the doctors are very pleased with me.”

The humour to be found among the patients in a hospital is indeed strange and wonderful, and appears in a thousand unexpected places. To most of us, for example, the idea of an anæsthetic is something terrifying, and not the thing of joy that it was to one patient, who, after coming round, said to his nurse, “Well, I never had such a cheap drunk in all my life before.” Another patient was so delighted with the effects of the chloroform that, on awaking after the operation, he seized the sponge with which the anæsthetic had been administered and, ramming it into his mouth, resumed inhalation as hard as ever he could.

In the same way the most severe operations and even the loss of a limb are treated by some patients in a manner that is little else than heroic. Here are some good illustrations:

There was a good deal of laughter in the ward at the time when the patients should all have been asleep. Hurrying up to know the reason, the nurse was informed by one young fellow, who appeared to be the ring-leader, “Please, Nurse, they will keep tickling my feet.” The joke lay in the fact that this man had recently undergone amputation of both feet.

At an informal hospital concert, the promoter seeking for “turns” was informed by some patients present that Brown of their ward was a wonderful juggler. While asking Brown if he would oblige, the promoter was horrified to find that he had lost both arms. Apologies, of course, followed, but they were drowned in roars of laughter in which Brown joined, and it was only later that it was found that this was a never-failing joke originated by Brown himself.

A patient had been fitted with a glass eye, of which he was very proud. Admiring himself one day in the mirror, he finally turned to the nurse and said, "Sister, won't it be a bloomin' sell for the fly that gets into this glass hoptic?"

The same spirit of light-heartedness often crops up in patients' letters. "For the future I shall be able to save half of what it has cost me for shoe-leather," was how one man announced that his leg had been amputated. "Going in for a long rest cure," wrote another grimly, after being informed that he was incurable. Imbued with the same spirit of optimism, but less happy in his method of expression, was the man who wrote to his mother as follows: "This comes hoping to find you as it leaves me at present. I have a broken arm, a fractured rib and dysentery. Your affectionate son, Tom."

The hospital visitors provide another never-failing mine of humour. Here the laughter arises usually either from the fatuous remarks of the visitor himself or the humorous rejoinder of the patient.

"Were you shot in the Dardanelles?" said a lady visitor once of a man in a military hospital who was carrying his arm in a sling. "It doesn't look like it, does it, mum?" was the reply.

A Wesleyan minister, accompanied by two friends in black, came into the hospital ward. "Great Scott!" said a patient who was just recovering consciousness, "the undertakers!"

"How were you wounded?" asked a lady once of a soldier in hospital. "By a bullet, mum." "Oh, indeed, and now tell me, did it hurt most going in or coming out?"

Another lady visitor, coming into a ward, asked what had become of a certain patient. "He's gone to the theatre, madam," said another patient, concluding that of course she would understand that he meant the operating theatre. "How jolly," said the lady; "what's he gone to see?" "Inner mysteries," came the reply, "with Dr. Carver as star turn."

Last, though indeed they should be given first place, in the contributors to the brightness and humour of the hospital comes the nursing staff.

The male staff of a certain hospital found it impossible to get a particularly stupid man to gargle. The impossible was, however, achieved by one of the nurses. "How did you manage it?" asked the house surgeon. "Oh," said the nurse, "it was really quite easy. I found the man had been in the Army, so I told him to fill his mouth with the liquid, throw his head back, and then try to make a noise like a sergeant-major."

A nurse under examination was informed that a patient had been brought in

with a fractured skull. What did she propose to do? As she seemed to be puzzled at the question, the examining doctor walked over to the window to give her time to collect herself. After a few moments he returned, and to his amazement found the patient's eyes closed, and hands folded across the breast. "Good gracious, Nurse," he said, "fractured skulls don't all die." "This one has," replied the nurse in a very determined tone.

Nor should it be forgotten that nurses are often women first and nurses afterwards, and that in the exercise of their profession they may sometimes rank their patients, not according to the severity of their complaint or the interesting condition of their case, but according to the degree of their good looks or personal charm. There is a good story told of two nurses comparing their respective cases. "Mine," said Nurse Jones, who took her vocation very seriously, "has got a broken leg and a dash of fever. What's yours?" "Oh," said Nurse Lovelace, with a far-away look, "mine's got heavenly eyes, a dinky moustache and a perfectly lovely mole on his cheek."

There is no place where life can be studied as it can in a hospital. "There," to use the words of a celebrated medical writer, "the doctor begins to learn lives. He need not go, like other young men, for the lesson to the slums, for they come to him, and that thrilling drama, 'How the Poor Live,' is played to him daily by the entire company, hero and heroine, villain and victim, comic relief, scenic effects and a great crowd of supers at the back of the stage, undesired babies, weedy little boys and girls, hooligans, consumptive work-people, unintelligible foreigners, voluble ladies, old folks of diverse temperaments, and many more comfortable but not more interesting people."

So, day by day he goes on with his noble task, and at the end of the year there comes the annual meeting of the hospital, when votes of thanks are passed to outgoing members, to the auditors, to the clergy for collections made in their churches, to those who have sent flowers and those who have sung to the patients. Then, at the last moment, someone remembers something hitherto forgotten, and a supplementary vote of thanks is accorded to the medical staff "who have given gratuitous service during the year to the entire satisfaction of the Committee."

## X

# HUMOUR IN THE OLDEN DAYS

THE history of medicine is largely the history of mankind, and its records reach back to the very earliest days. The oldest medical work known is the *Medical Papyrus*, discovered near El Lahun in Egypt, which is dated about 1600 B.C. (before the time of Moses), while the *Berlin Medical Papyrus*, dated about 1400 B.C., speaks of a King Athosis who lived over six thousand years ago and is said to have written a book on medicine.

Coming down to more recent times, the earliest scientific medical work in Latin is the *De Re Medica* of Celsus, which was written about A.D. 30. Though this is not an original work, being a compilation from a Greek complete medical encyclopædia, the only portion still remaining is in many respects a remarkable work. Especially is this the case in showing the advance already made by surgery in those early days and the boldness of the operations then attempted. Thus the writer describes plastic operations on the face and mouth, the removal of polypus from the nose, the extirpation of goitre and the cutting for stone, and also an operation somewhat akin to the modern one for removing tonsils.

At the time when those Western nations which are now foremost in medical research were steeped in ignorance the practice of medicine in such countries as Greece, Rome, Egypt and Arabia had already made huge strides. In all these countries medicine was looked upon largely as a magic art, and in Greece the early practitioners were actually endowed with a divine ancestry. Disease was looked upon as possession by the powers of evil, and the treatment at first was largely by charms and incantation. This soon gave way to more material remedies, especially in articles of diet, such as milk, dates and oil, together with the use of balms and incense. These in turn were supplemented by drugs, and we find that the ancient Egyptians were acquainted with such remedies as opium, garlic, peppermint, aloes, yeast, castor-oil, fennel, magnesia, lime, soda, turpentine, juniper, squills, pomegranate and gentian. They appear also to have manufactured pills, plasters, powders and ointments, while the doctors of that time also wrote long prescriptions, one of which has been preserved, consisting of no fewer than thirty-five ingredients. More wonderful still, they had hair restorers, insect powders, gold fillings for teeth and soothing syrup for infants. Surgery was

making good progress, and there was a fair knowledge of hygiene and sanitation—a knowledge which the Hebrews acquired and developed, but which the Egyptians apparently lost and have not yet regained.

Strange to say, Greece and Rome, foremost in all the arts and sciences, were in respect of medicine much behind Egypt. In both these countries down to about 100 B.C. serpents played a prominent part in the healing world. In the valley in which the temple of Æsculapius was built, there were to be found quantities of large non-poisonous serpents, which were trained to lick wounds and sores with their tongues—hence the serpent round the staff on the badge of our present-day Royal Army Medical Corps. The fame of these serpents spread widely, and it is recorded that when about 300 B.C. Rome was desolated by the ravages of a plague, she sent to Greece for one of these famous serpents, and on its arrival the plague at once abated.

Steeped though it was in superstition, Rome, even in its earliest days, attained a high degree of sanitation, and as early as the sixth century B.C. the city was provided with subterranean sewers, while in A.D. 450 an edict forbade burials in the city, and gave instructions to municipal officials as regards the cleanliness of the streets and the distribution of water. It is to Rome also that we owe the foundation of hospitals, these coming into being in consequence of her many campaigns in foreign countries.

As is generally known, the earliest surgeons in this country were the barbers, and although control over them was very slight, they were to some extent regulated by their Court of Livery, for we find from their records, for example, that one barber-surgeon who had claimed to cure a patient and had not succeeded was ordered either to pay the client twenty shillings or carry out the promised cure. The barber was evidently mistrustful of his own powers, as the record shows that he paid the twenty shillings.

At this period the barber-surgeon's position was quite an enviable one. In the first place, the custom was for him to be paid in advance, and accordingly there was no trouble as regards bad debts. In the second, there was rarely any such thing as failure, for if the doctor did fail to heal, his ill-success was put down to the fact that evil or demoniacal influences were at work, or that the star under which the unfortunate patient was born was unpropitious. How low was the status of the doctor in England in the Middle Ages is shown by the order of precedence in the army of Henry V in France, which runs as follows: "Soldiers, shoemakers, tailors, barbers, physicians and washerwomen."

Surgeons are seldom mentioned in the record of our ancient armies, and where they did exist they were so few in numbers, compared with the number of troops to which they had to attend, that the situation was more than

ludicrous. In the army raised by Henry V for the invasion of France, for example, there was only one surgeon and twelve assistants. The truth was, that the lower ranks when seriously wounded were discharged with a small gratuity to find their way home as best they could, a practice based on a principle which existed down to comparatively modern times, that it cost more to heal a wounded man than to train and equip a recruit. When we consider how elementary was the knowledge of medicine and surgery at this period, however, it was perhaps the most humane plan to follow. It is hardly conceivable that a profession of such supreme importance as the surgeon's was practised indiscriminately by barbers and farriers down to the beginning of the sixteenth century.

No better example of the almost criminal ignorance of this period can be given than is shown in the composition of the following balm much used for gunshot wounds in the time of Henry VIII: "Two young whelps boiled alive in oil with one pound of earth-worm, two pounds of the oil of lilies, six ounces of terebinth of Venice and one ounce of aqua vitæ."

At this time, and even till a later date, the composition of medicines seemed to have been based either on superstition or on an attempt to crowd into them the most objectionable substances that the compounder could discover. Mayerne, the most eminent physician of his time, physician to James I, Charles I and Charles II, had a famous compound called "Balsam of Bats," which was composed of crushed adders, bats, sucking whelps, earth-worms, hog's grease, the marrow of a stag and the thigh-bone of an ox. He was very fond also of prescribing pulverised human bones, and the principal ingredient of his celebrated gout powder was "the raspings of a human skull unburied."

Another celebrated doctor named William Bulleyn, who died in 1576, prescribed for a child suffering from a nervous malady "a small young mouse roasted." Among other recipes which he gives in his book, *Dialogue between Soarene and Chirurgi*, he says: "Snayles broken from the shelles and sodden in whyte wyne with oyle and sugar are very holsome, because they be hoat and moist for the straightness of the lungs and cold cough."

Although the trade of barber and surgeon was carried on for many years in England by one individual, in France they went even farther, joining together those of doctor and public executioner. It is not recorded, however, in which capacity the operator despatched his clients with most expedition. It appears that in Paris, even down to barely less than a hundred years ago, a considerable number of executioners practised the art of surgery more or less openly. Their daily job of conducting executions gave them the necessary nerve for operations, while their ordinary employment of flaying gave them a certain



amount of experience as regards anatomy. The result was that several built up a sort of surgical practice, and gained a local reputation among the working classes.

Until comparatively recent years the field of medicine was undoubtedly a glorious one for the quack, or indeed for anyone with sufficient impudence to force some absurd idea upon a gullible public. Thus in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1750 there is a sketch of a stomach brush brought out by a Court doctor. It was used by pushing down the gullet and turning round like a sweep's brush. It was seriously recommended that gentlemen should thus sweep out their insides about once a week.

An impudent quack who successfully imposed on the public was Joshua Ward, a Thames Street drysalter, who brought out, and made a fortune by so doing, a much-advertised "Drop and Pill." Obtaining the powerful support of Lord Chief Baron Reynolds and one of the Court officers, he managed to have himself called in to prescribe for the King. Fortunately for him His Majesty recovered from his ailment, although whether this was due to the treatment is extremely doubtful, and Ward was rewarded with a solemn vote of the House of Commons protecting him from any action by the College of Physicians, and, as an additional fee, asked for and obtained the privilege of driving his carriage through St. James's Park.

At this period it is doubtful whether even the leading physicians, if they were honest with themselves, had much opinion of their own abilities. It is recorded of one Dr. Garth, a prominent physician of the time of King George I, that on one occasion he stayed on at the club drinking long after he had said he must be off to see his patients. At length one of the company delicately suggested to him that he ought to have no more wine, but should go away and complete his round. "It's no great matter," replied the doctor, "whether I see them to-night or not, for nine of them have such bad constitutions that all the doctors in the world can't cure them, and the other six have such good constitutions that all the physicians in the world can't kill them."

Whatever the opinions of the doctors regarding their own qualifications may have been at this time, it is certain that the general public did not, in the main, rate their services very highly. It is recorded of the famous Beau Nash that on one occasion he called in a doctor and asked him to prescribe for him. On the day following his examination the doctor called again and asked if his prescription had been followed. "No i'faith, Doctor," replied the beau, "I haven't followed it. 'Pon honour, if I had I should have broken my neck, for I threw it out of my bedroom window."

Methods of self-advertisement were at this time practised that would not be

tolerated for a moment to-day. It is said of Sir Edward Hanes, a prominent doctor and contemporary of Pope, that it was his practice to send his liveried footman running about the streets with directions to put their heads into every coach and enquire if Dr. Hanes was in it, as he was wanted urgently for a very grave and important case. Eccentricities too were often indulged in with the idea of bringing the eccentric one before the public eye. Sir Humphry Davy, Bart., President of the Royal Society from 1820, used to pretend not to have sufficient time even to complete his toilet properly. In actual fact he rarely washed himself, and on the plea of saving time it was his practice to put on clean linen over his dirty, so that he had been known to wear at the same time five shirts and five pairs of stockings. From this fact the inference may be easily drawn that he slept in these garments. When the time came that he divested himself of these layers of clothes, his sudden change from corpulence to meagreness was a source of wonder to his friends.

Down to comparatively recent years it must be admitted that the standard of education among doctors was not at all a high one. Even as late as 1816 the Law required no medical education for anyone practising in country districts beyond an apprenticeship to someone dealing in drugs, with the result that apprentices were often placed under the tuition of a man who had no knowledge to impart to them beyond the rudest elements of a druggist's learning. As an instance of this a story is told of an old-time doctor who was asked if he believed in phrenology. "I never keep it and I never use it," he said, "but I think it highly probable that, given frequently, and in liberal doses, it would be very useful in some cases of irregular gout."

Of another bygone practitioner of the same school it is said that his simple method was to tie a piece of string round the waist of the patient. He then asked the patient to locate the pain, and if it was above the string he gave him an emetic and if below a purgative. If the patient was unfortunate enough for the pain and string to coincide, the doctor, in order to be on the safe side, gave him both.

A humorous feature of this period was that in order to take the patient's pulse correctly the old-time doctor used to make his rounds in cold weather with his hands in a large fur muff.

An extraordinary feature of the medical profession is the conservative attitude it has always adopted towards inventions or discoveries. Time has proved over and over again how difficult it is to overcome fixed medical prejudices. When Lord Lister first introduced his antiseptic treatment, he was looked on by his brother physicians as a kind of crank, if not a lunatic. Harvey was ridiculed when he announced his discovery of the circulation of the blood,

while, on its introduction, the stethoscope was almost laughed into obscurity. Writing on this subject Charles Lever says: "You know the obstinacy with which the medical people reject every discovery in the art and only sanction its employment when the world has decreed in its favour."

Some of the objections brought from time to time against medical and scientific discoveries by members of the profession that should welcome them have been ludicrous in the extreme. When vaccination was first introduced, Dr. Rowley, a well-known doctor of the time, published a pamphlet in which he showed to his own satisfaction that its effect would be to make all those treated develop faces like cows. In a pamphlet on the same subject, another doctor clinched the evidence for the prosecution by telling of a lady who complained that, since her daughter had been vaccinated, she coughed like a cow and had grown hairy all over her body. In a second case that came under his notice, he reports that the patient, after vaccination, bellowed like a bull.

When the use of anæsthetics at childbirth was first suggested, one doctor opposed it strongly, saying: "I feel strongly against its use, merely to avert the ordinary amount of pain which the Almighty has seen fit, and most wisely no doubt, to allot to natural labour."

Strange methods have been adopted to force on the profession and the public the benefits of some new discovery. For example, when inoculation for smallpox was first brought in, the Princess of Wales begged the King, in 1722, to pardon some Newgate criminals under sentence of death on condition that they should be inoculated, with the result that successful experiments were made on six condemned criminals. Similarly, to do the great Dr. Jenner a favour, the Duke of York ordered every man of the 85th Regiment of Foot to be vaccinated.

A story is told concerning the inhabitants of one village who had showed the greatest hostility to vaccination, but, after a time and without any warning, began presenting themselves in crowds for the vaccinator's needle. Jenner was at first delighted to think that they had at last come to a right view, but his joy was somewhat damped when he found later that the authorities had stopped all outdoor relief until the people were vaccinated, as the expense of coffins was so great.

The elevation of the profession from the low position it held in the Middle Ages to that which it holds to-day has been a slow business, and it is only within about the last fifty or sixty years that the country practitioner has thrown off the last traces of the retail trade. Dr. Bell, in his *Reminiscences of an Old Physician*, tells how, before proceeding to Glasgow as a medical student, he was serving as an apprentice in 1860 with a medical man of the old

school. "My duties," he writes, "consisted in keeping the dispensary clean, washing bottles, dusting the various bottles containing tinctures, liniments and other extraneous fluids which, though not of medicinal value, yet were of commercial importance, such as scents, train and lamp oil, salad oil and other commodities which in those days it was customary for the doctor in a small town to supply at a profit to the public. Then there were the ointment jars to be kept tidy, and other jars which looked like these, but contained such things as tapioca, arrowroot and other articles of a like nature. We also sold cigars of a kind, seven for a shilling, Havanas so-called at three for a shilling and also Manilla cheroots at five for a shilling."

## XI ADVERTISING

BACKWARD as they may have been in olden days in matters of medicine and surgery, the quacks, and even some so-called physicians, were thoroughly up-to-date in realising the advantages of advertisement. In the earlier stages these aids to business were issued in the form of broadsheets, and were usually marked by a flamboyant description of the medico's powers.

In the following example the advertiser, who calls himself "An Oxford Doctor," and heads his bill with a Greek quotation, combines the art of healing with that of schoolmaster. According to his broadsheet, his "Oxon pills against the Scurvy, Dropsie and Colt Evil exceed all other medicines and are Sixpence a box." The sheet continues as follows: "He draws teeth or stumps with ease and safety. He lets blood neatly and Issues Setons he curiously makes for two pence each and welcome! . . . He also teaches writing arithmetics Latin Greek, and Hebrew at reasonable rates, at two pence each by the week."

The broadsheet continues with an appeal to the reader to "Repair to the Oxford Doctor at the Fleet Prison near Fleet bridge, London. Lately a Fellow of Arx-cercer College, Oxon."

Another of the same breed, who had just returned to his former place of abode, signifies the fact as follows:

"After my travels the Lord hath been pleased to bring me safe to this former place of my habitation. He hath also been good unto me to answer me that in that I have sought after, and as He hath given to me many large talents, I desire, with the assistance of Him, to put them forth to the best use for the good of the world, that when my Lord cometh to inquire of me what use I have made, He may find them doubled, and then He will say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'

"If any be diseased let them repair to me and I shall be free in my advice or direction to all, for the Lord hath called and I must hear. When the poor cry shall I stop my ears? No, God forbid, the poor of the World are Rich in God.

"I will not be like the physicians of the times. Look into the fifth chapter of Jeremiah, verse 28, that agrees with them. If any of the world be troubled or offended at my good will to all, let me satisfie them with the wise saying of Solomon, Proverbs three chapter 32 verse, 'For the froward is abomination to

the Lord, but his secret is with the righteous.’

“As the Lord hath given me a Healing Hand I am willing to employ it with thankfulness. Farewell. Soli Deo Gloria.”

A third heralds his abilities to the world through the medium of verse:

“To all that please to come he will and can  
Cure most diseases incident to Man,  
The Leprosie, the Cholick and the Spleen  
And most diseases common to be seen,  
Although not cured by Quack Doctors proud,  
And yet their names doth ring and range aloud,  
With riches and with Cures which others do  
Which they could not perform, and this is true,  
This Doctor, he performeth with out doubt  
The Ileak Passion, Scurvy and the Gout,  
Even to those the Hospitals turn out.”

Chief among this loud-voiced fraternity was John Case, who came to London as a boy of fifteen in 1675, and after trying various methods of making a living with little success, blossomed out as “a student of Physick and Astrology.” His bill which is headed, “Good news to the sick,” continues as follows:

“Over against Ludgate Church within Black Fryers Gateway, at Lillies Head, liveth your old friend Dr. Case, who faithfully cures the Grand P—— with all its symptoms, very cheap, Private and without the least Hindrance of Business.

“Note. He hath been a Physician 33 years and gives advice in any Distemper per gratis.

“ ‘All ye that are of Venus Race,  
Apply yourself to Dr. Case,  
Who with a box or two of Pills,  
Will soon remove your painful ills.’

“He will sell no more of his Friendly Pills to Nature to those that make money of it again. He keeps them for the use of the poor. Laus Deo.”

Nor were the leading papers at a later period above opening their columns to these gentlemen, as witness the following from the *Morning Chronicle* of 1776: Mr. Patence, who apparently combined the threefold callings of a

doctor, dentist and dancing master, “announces his discovery of a marvellous cure—all which he calls his Universal Medicine or Supreme Pills invented by Patence, Dentist and Physician to several of the Royal Family.

“I shall offer no apology for my medicine,” he continues, “which is well-known to give ease and satisfaction in palsies, gout, rheumatism, piles, fistula, cancers of any sort, King’s Evil, hereditary infections, jaundice, green sickness, St. Anthony’s Fire, convulsions, consumptions, scorbutic diseases, pains in the head, brain, temple, arteries, face, nose, mouth and limbs, for which there is nothing upon the earth surer, softer or better.

“The Universal Medicine also restores lost hearing and sight, renews the vital and animal vitalities, gives complexion to the face, liveliness to the whole structure, and many times has given unexpected relief on *the verge of eternity*. . . .

“It requires no confinement, eat and drink what you please, and if it does not answer the end proposed I will return the Money. The real worth of a box is *Ten Guineas*, but for the benefit of all it is sold for three shillings; with personal advice ten and sixpence.”

The following similar advertisement is from the *Morning Post* of 1782:

“Mr. Katterfelto has in his travels had the honour to exhibit with great applause before the Empress of Russia, the Kings of Prussia, Sweden, Denmark and Poland, and since his arrival in London has been honoured with some of the Royal Family, many Foreign Ministers and Noblemen and a great many ladies of the first rank.

“WONDERS! WONDERS! WONDERS! WONDERS! Are now to be seen by the help of the Sun and his new invented Solar Microscope and such wonderful and astonishing sights of the Creation was never seen before in this or any other kingdom and may never be seen again. The admittance to see these wonderful works of Providence is only, Front seats 3/-, Second seats 2/-, Back seats 1/- only, from 8 o’clock in the morning till 6 in the afternoon at 22 Piccadilly, this day and every day this week. . . .

“The insects on the hedges will be seen larger than ever, and those insects which caused the late influenza will be seen as large as birds, and in a drop of water, the size of a pin’s head, there will be seen about 50,000 insects, the same in beer, milk, vinegar, flour, blood, cheese, etc., and there will be seen many surprising insects in different vegetables and above two hundred other dead objects.

“N.B. After his evening lecture he will discover all the various arts on dice,

cards, billiards, and E.O. tables.

“Mr. Katterfelto likewise makes and sells ‘Dr. Bato’s medicines at 3/- a bottle, which has cured many thousand persons of the late influenza.’ ”

These old-time doctors and quacks did not err on the side of modesty in their advertisements, and indeed on most occasions they laid claim to powers which, had they really possessed them, would have placed them in the front rank of the medical profession even to-day. This is how one, Dr. Rose, booms his “Balsamiel Elixir,” which he modestly claims to be the “most Noble Medicine that Art can produce.”

“It cures the English Frenchified beyond all other medicines upon the face of the earth. It removes all pains in three or four doses and makes any man tho’ rotten as a pear to be sound as a sucking lamb. Whoever tries it, on my word, shall have just reason to thank me as well as pay me. And as I have set no value on anything here mentioned you may be better satisfied if you please to come or send to me at my Lodgings at Mr. Hampton’s, a Joyner, in Hewitt’s Court near St. Martin’s Church in the Strand.”

On somewhat similar lines is the bill issued by Dr. Thomas Kirleus in 1691, and here we get some idea as to prices, which, in view of the apparent high standing of the doctor, cannot be considered heavy.

“In plow yard the 3rd door in Gray’s Inn lane lives Dr. Thomas Kirleus, a Collegiate Physician and Sworn Physician in Ordinary to King Charles II until his death, who with Drink and Pill (hindering no business) undertakes to cure any Ulcers, Sores, Swellings of the Nose, Face, or other parts, etc., expecting nothing until the cure be finished. He has cured many hundreds in this City, many of them after fluxing, which carries the evil from the Lower Part to the Head and so destroys many. The Drink is 3/s the Quart, the Pill 1/s a box with Directions, a better Purger than which was never given. With another Drink at 1/6d a Quart. He cures all Fevers and hot Distempers without Bleeding except in few Bodies. He gives his opinion to all that writes or comes for nothing.”

Both of these, however, are put to shame by a certain Madame Gordan of Goodman’s Fields, who, in a bill dated 1695, thus advertises her medicines. The bill is headed “By His Majesty’s authority,” but what this may mean it is not possible to say. It is clear, however, that Madame Gordan fully understood the value of advertisement when it is presented in a novel form, and accordingly she announces that she has “two Monsters on view, which by medicine prescribed by her to Robert Cobb, a labourer, who lives in White Horse Alley in Barbican who had been Labouring under an unknown Distemper for several years, and after being given over by many Physicians



was, by her medicines and God's assistance, delivered of one monster the 9th October 1695 *like a lion* and of one other the 5th June 1696 *like a fox* both of which he vomited up at his mouth and are now to be seen. Vivat Rex." The order of the curative agencies "her medicines and God's assistance" denotes this lady's humility.

An early specimen of the beauty doctor was the Widow Drew, who described herself as "the daughter of a Doctor of Physick and who for twenty years and upwards visited her father's patients, prepared physick for them, and administered to all." She further announces that, since her father's decease, in order to improve her skill, she has lived with Doctor Rose, the Man-Midwife. ". . . Her pills certainly cure the green sickness and change the pale greenish Tallow-coloured nasty and Death-like look of the patient into a fair, florid, and healthy complexion. Many hundreds of young Virgins have had the benefit of these pills, which may be had at the sign of the Blue Ball at the Upper end of Gun Yard in Houndsditch near Aldgate. . . . At the same house likewise are sold all kinds of children's coats by wholesale or retail."

An amusing and certainly a cheaper quack was Ben Willmore, who lived in Ram Alley, near Fetter Lane. In a bill, issued in 1680, he comes out as a poet, prefacing his appeal with the following lines:

"Are you Sick, Lame, Blind, Deaf, Dumb, come away,  
To this skilful Doctor and do not stay,  
Try Willmore, a cure you will thereby  
For Honest dealing is his policy.  
And when you have done pray prove so kind,  
Respond your candid censure as you find."

After this outburst the bill goes on to announce that the Doctor is ready to "Cup you after the German manner, Purge you after the English manner, or Sweat you after the Turkish manner. You may be neatly blooded, your teeth or stumps dexterously drawn, have Issues curiously made, and Setons put in your neck, safely, for sixpence a piece and welcome."

Grotesque as these old-time advertisements are, it would appear that the age of credulity is by no means gone. In his interesting book, *Perfumed Tigers*, Maurice Dekobra gives the following examples of charlatan advertisement extracted from recent issues of leading Indian papers:

FOR PRINCES AND THE RICH MEN ONLY  
THE ROYAL YAKUTI

Patented in 1907 after J. C.

“Yakuti, or reviving nectar, is prepared from natural plant products, carefully chosen. It has the wonderful power of increasing your strength. . . . In short it makes a man a Man. This inestimable remedy is used by our rajahs, Maharajahs, nawabs and other aristocrats, also in Europe, America, Asia, and in Africa.

“Sixteen and eightpence for forty pills.”

Then there is the “Talisman,” which is turned out in three grades, the extra-powerful (12 rupees), the powerful (5 rupees), and the ordinary (2 rupees 8 annas). Before condemning it, however, the reader should note what its creator has to say about it:

### WHY DO YOU WORRY?

Here is the remedy.

“This is a mysterious and active power which comes to the assistance of anyone who wishes to gain his end.

“The world-wide success achieved for several years by my psycho-electric talisman is due to the fact that it is unique of its kind and has revolutionized the psychic world. The Talisman is not an article made in quantities. It is based upon the unique and marvellous theory of

### INDIVIDUALISM.

“Each talisman is made especially for the person or the object in view. At the first contact a spark emanates from the talisman, and the body experiences a peculiar sensation which is practical proof of the efficacy of the talisman. It lasts for a lifetime.”

If, after this, the unbelieving Westerner still doubts, let him read the following testimonials:

“When your talisman touched me, I felt a violent sensation. I was thought to be consumptive, but since using your talisman I have had no more pain. Send me another.”

“Thanks to your talisman I have passed my exam. at the University. Send me an extra-powerful one so that I can obtain a

good post in the Government.”

“Your talisman No. 1 has a magical effect. I had worn it for barely three months when I married an accomplished woman, a woman that I never expected to meet.”

## XII

### “THE MIXTURE, TO BE TAKEN WITH CARE”

IN the course of their duty doctors have been called upon to do many strange things, but few have had greater demands made upon them than the doctor in the following story. “What your mother-in-law wants now,” said the doctor, “is a warm climate.” “What about the Riviera?” suggested her harassed son-in-law. “Not warm enough,” replied the doctor. “Well, what do you think of Egypt?” queried the son-in-law again. “Not warm enough,” replied the physician decisively once more. For a moment his questioner looked at him and then walked out of the room. In a minute or so he was back, and handing the doctor a heavy hammer remarked, “You hit her, Doctor. I can’t.”

How small a thing can destroy what is apparently a careful diagnosis is shown in the story of the surgeon who discovered what he thought to be a bony cancer in his patient’s knee, and accordingly ordered an immediate operation. This discovery was made from an X-ray photograph sent to the surgeon by a local doctor. A second surgeon called in disagreed with his colleague’s opinion, and had the leg X-rayed once more from three different angles, with the result that the second attempt showed no growth whatever. Both plates were then taken to a chemist. “Don’t you know what it is?” said the chemist, pointing to the ragged tumour. “The first photo has been taken on a dirty plate, and that tumour is a dried drop of water that has fallen on it.”

There are no special hymns laid down in any church hymnal for use after a successful operation, but on one occasion a well-known hymn came in very appropriately. At the time of King Edward’s recovery from what had threatened to be a fatal attack of appendicitis, thanksgiving services were held all over the country. At one of these the service was to close with the singing of a well-known hymn, which happened to be included among those added to the book after its first publication. “Let us close our service,” the minister announced, “by singing the hymn ‘Peace, perfect peace’—in the appendix.”

Faith in a doctor is a great thing, but in the following case there is perhaps

more of hope than of faith. "Could you give me six bottles of medicine for my wife?" a man asked his doctor. "Six bottles," said the puzzled medico, "and for your wife. What's the matter with her?" "I don't know that there's anything much the matter with her," replied the man, "but my neighbour Brown told me that after one bottle of your medicine his wife was a different woman, and I thought I'd better get six bottles to make quite sure."

An old lady who was very ill, and not always conscious of what was going on around her, had expressed a wish to see the minister. Before his arrival, however, the doctor called and made a thorough examination of the old lady's heart, lungs, etc. Scarcely had he departed when an insistent call from the patient brought her daughter hurrying into the room. "Mary," said the indignant old lady, "you're not to let that minister in the house again. He's a long way too familiar."

The making of Irish bulls is not usually a characteristic of the medical world, but the following example of a really wild Irish specimen would be difficult to match. Speaking of the high death-rate in the neighbourhood, an Irish doctor said that he could not account for it, "but a large number of people had died during that year who had never died before."

The entry of woman into the medical profession has made the doctors of the old school open their eyes with amazement, and the general upheaval that it has caused, and the peculiar situations that have arisen in consequence, have by no means been restricted to the ranks of the faculty. A tramp, proceeding one day on his lawful occasions, saw on the gate of a house a brass plate bearing the name "Dr. H. Wilson," and he decided to try his luck at the house. His knock at the door was answered by an attractive young lady, to whom he addressed his petition that she would ask the doctor if he had an old pair of pants he could give away. His exit was hurried when, with a sweet smile, the young lady answered, "*I am the doctor.*"

It is a truism that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and in no art does this apply so much as in that of medicine. The late Archdeacon Denison used to tell a story of how when he was a young man his mother gave him a present of a medicine chest. At that time he had an old gardener, William Finlay, and one day Finlay came to him complaining that he felt "bad all over," and would

master give him some rhubarb out of his chest. Accompanying the chest was a book of instructions which gave a table of doses, but this table was constructed on a hypothetical principle. "If to an adult a dram, so much to other ages." The hypothetical part unfortunately escaped the Archdeacon, and, working it out on the basis that sixty grains equalled one dram, he gave the gardener this, together with thirty grains of magnesia. The next morning Finlay appeared looking more like a ghost than anything else, and to judge from his own narrative his sufferings during the night had been intense. Thinking something must be wrong, the Archdeacon had the old man put beside the fire, and posted off to consult a neighbouring doctor. Arrived at the house, he put his query as to what was the correct dose of rhubarb, and was told that eighteen grains was enough. "Good Heavens," he said, "why, yesterday I gave a man sixty and thirty of magnesia." The doctor opened his eyes. "Is he very old?" he said. "Yes, over seventy." "Then perhaps he won't die. Go home as fast as you can and pour in porter and port wine." It is satisfactory to record that the gardener survived for many years his one and only dealings with the Archdeacon's medicine chest.

The addresses published by the quacks, who, in the middle of the last century, made a good living out of the gullible rural public, were weird and wonderful. The following is an excellent burlesque on these productions:

"Having studied Galen and Hypocrate, Albumazar and Paracelsus, I am now become the Esculapius of the age, and having been educated at twelve universities and travelled through fifty-two kingdoms and been counsellor to the counsellors of several monarchs, by the earnest prayers and entreaties of several lords, earls, dukes and honourable personages I have been at last prevailed upon to oblige the world with this notice, that all persons young or old, blind or lame, deaf or dumb, curable or incurable may know where to repair for cure in all cephalalgies paralytic paroxysms, palpitations of the pericardium, empegemas, syncopes and nasieties, arising either from a plethory or a cachochymy, vertiginous vapours, hydrocephalous dysenteries, odontalgic or podogical inflammations and the entire legion of lethiferous distempers. This is Nature's palladium, health's magazine, it works seven manner of ways as Nature requires, for it seems to be confined to any particular mode of operation so that it affecteth the case either hypnotically, hydrotically, cathartically poppesmatically, pneumatically or synedochically, it mundifies the hypogastrium, extinguishes all supernatural fermentations and ebullitions and, in fine, annihilates all nosotrophical morbific ideas of the whole corporeal compages. A drachm of it is worth a bushel of March dust, for

if a man chance to have his brain beat out or his head dropped off, two drops—I say two drops, gentlemen—seasonably applied will recall the fleeting spirit, re-enthroned the deposed archeus, correct the discontinuity of the parts, and in six months restore the lifeless trunk to all its pristine functions, vital, natural and animal, so that this, believe me, gentlemen, is the only sovereign remedy in the world. Venienti occurrite morbo—Down with your dust. Principiis obsta—No cure no money. Quaerendo pecunia primum—Be not sick too late.”

At this period it was the practice of the more affluent of these quacks to travel round the country in a two-horse carriage with negro servants in startling liveries. One even went so far as a four-horse carriage with negroes in green liveries with red collars.

A belief in exotic remedies for certain ailments and disorders was at one time very prevalent in England and Scotland, and indeed in some cases it still lingers among some of the older rural population. At one time a popular cure for toothache was to pick the aching tooth with the nail of an old coffin, or, in some seaside villages, to drink water taken from the top of three successive waves. These remedies were supposed to effect an immediate cure.

In the West of England it was a popular belief that if a live snail was sewn up in a bag and worn round the neck it was a certain antidote for ague. In Gloucestershire a roasted mouse was considered very good for whooping cough, while in some parts of Yorkshire sheep’s dung was commonly applied as a poultice for erysipelas. Consecrated grave mould is considered nearly all over the world to have peculiar medicinal properties, and in the Shetlands anyone who has “a stitch in his side” is recommended to apply to the afflicted part some mould brought from a grave and heated, care being taken that the mould is returned to the grave before the setting of the sun. In the Orkneys a cat is often washed in the water that has previously served for an invalid’s ablutions, the belief being that the ailment would thus be transferred to the animal. In many parts of Scotland a grated skull is said to cure fits, while in Caithness to drink from a suicide’s skull is said to be a sovereign remedy for epilepsy.

At one time there existed in England an idea that the touch of the King would cure certain ailments, especially that one known as the “King’s Evil,” and in many of our parish registers there are entries of money paid to people to allow them to proceed to London to be touched by the King. This practice existed down to the reign of William III, but that monarch was no believer in the idea, and refused to perform it, saying, “Give the poor creatures some

money and send them away.” On one occasion, when he was prevailed upon to lay his hands on a sufferer, he said, “God give you better health and more sense.”

As showing how late the idea of magical curing existed in some of the more remote parts of the kingdom, Sir H. G. Reid, in *'Tween Gloamin' and Mirk*, tells how, as a child, he was treated in Scotland for falling sickness. One night he was secretly carried away to a lonely hut on the open moor. Inside the hut there was an open peat fire on the hearth, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof, and over this fire an old woman sat crouching. No word of greeting was uttered as the party entered the hut, and they took their seats round the fire in silence. After a time the old woman took a tongs, and with it drew from the fire seven large smooth stones which she placed in a rough circle round her. Mystic words were then said and the cure was finished.

Not so many years ago it was the practice for the bereaved family to supply to all mourners at the funeral hatbands and shoulder scarves. The doctor who had attended the case usually received an invitation, and it was the common practice among doctors to return these articles to the draper who supplied them and receive from him a certain amount in return. The usual allowance made by the draper was fifteen shillings for the two articles.

From a study of the current Medical Directory it would seem that the profession is to-day a most curious one. It apparently possesses one DOCTOR but no PATIENTS, although six PAINS are to be found in it. It has also two SLAUGHTERS, and to provide for these massacres thirteen GRAVES but only one COFFIN.

Among things that might have been better expressed is the following extract from a local newspaper. In mentioning the death of a local resident, the paragraph concluded, “She died without medical assistance.”

“I hear you’ve been in hospital!” said one man, meeting a friend whom he had not seen for a long time. “Yes, the doctors have taken my appendix.” “Gracious, these doctors will take anything. It’s a pity you didn’t have it in your wife’s name!”



“What’s the new doctor like?” asked one of two friends when they met in the street the other day. “Not bad as a doctor,” replied the other, “but they tell me that already he’s got quite a reputation as a lady-killer.” “A bit different from his partner, old Dr. Jones,” commented No. 1. “He doesn’t make the slightest distinction between the sexes.”

A ship’s doctor was examining one of the sick-bay attendants before passing him for higher rating. “What would you do,” he asked, “if the captain fainted?” “Bring him to,” said the man briefly. “Then what would you do?” continued the doctor. “Bring him two more,” replied the man with an evident knowledge of the captain’s little failing.

“Two years ago, my friends,” said the quack to a listening crowd of country-people, “I was a physical wreck, terrible to behold, and now I’m going to tell you what wrought this wonderful change!” “Wot change?” asked an old lady in the crowd.

“I can’t find that there’s anything at all the matter with you,” said the doctor after a long and careful examination. “You appear to me to be in the best of health. Your pulse is as steady as clockwork.” “But, Doctor,” expostulated the patient, “you’ve got your fingers on my wristwatch!”

A doctor received a note from an ignorant villager asking him to send some “fizzic.” The next time they met the doctor, laughingly chipping the man, said, “F-i-z-z-i-c doesn’t spell physic, you know.” “Then what does it spell?” asked the letter-writer.

“Well, John,” said a doctor, meeting a patient of his, an agricultural labourer, in the street, “how are you getting on now?” “Well, sir,” replied John, “I be certainly better than I were, but to tell ’e the truth, I bain’t as well as I were afore I was as bad as I be now.”

The following doctor’s prescription for good manners is worthy of being recorded and of being followed:

Of Unselfishness, three drachms.

Of the Tincture of Cheerfulness, one ounce.  
Of the Essence of Heart's Ease, three drachms.  
Of the Extract of the Rose of Sharon, four ounces.  
Of the Oil of Charity, three drachms and no scruples.  
Of the Infusion of Common Sense and Tact, one ounce.  
Of the Spirit of Love, two ounces.

This mixture to be taken whenever there is a symptom of selfishness, exclusiveness, meanness or I-am-better-than-you-ness.

“Doctor,” said an inquisitive person, “why do you always ask your patients what they have for meals? Is it to enable you to fix their diet?” “No,” came the curt reply, “their bill.”

Calling on a Jewish patient in a poor quarter of London, the doctor found a huge fire blazing in the sick-room and the window tightly closed. “This won't do,” he said to the patient's wife, “open the windows and let in some fresh air.” “What,” said the wife in astonishment, “open the windows? Do you think Ikey buys coal to warm the street?”

In most ships that do not carry a doctor medicine chests are provided with numbered bottles, and before the contents of any of these are given by the captain, who usually figures as the doctor, reference is made to a printed index of symptoms. Thus, for example, in a case of sea-sickness the index would give the information that one tablespoonful of No. 8 should be given. A certain captain finding that the bottle of No. 7, which he should have given, was empty, got over the difficulty by giving equal parts of No. 3 and No. 4. Strange to say, the patient recovered.

An Irishman once brought his wife to see a doctor, but after a lengthy examination the medico could find nothing wrong with the lady. “Why did you bring her to me?” he finally asked the husband, “she doesn't need a doctor.” “Shure, and I know she doesn't,” came the reply, “but if she died she would have blamed me.”

“Please, Doctor,” said a little girl, coming into the surgery, “I've been sent for some pills.” “Antibilious?” queried the doctor. “No,” replied the little one, “Uncle is.”

“Well, Doctor,” said an Irishman, enquiring after an acquaintance, “and how’s poor Pat Maloney this morning?” “I’m sorry to say he’s not so well to-day,” replied the medico, “he had rather a bad night.” “Ah, poor soul, and what’s the matter with him, Doctor dear?” “Well,” said the medico, “I’m afraid he’s got phlebitis.” “Flea bites, is it! Well, I don’t wonder he had a bad night, but shure he should soon get over them.”

A very miserly individual had taken his wife to the doctor. “Well,” said the doctor after an exhaustive examination, “all that your wife wants in my opinion is a change of climate.” “That’s splendid,” said the husband gleefully; “according to the wireless we’re having different weather to-morrow.”

An old sea captain, who carried no doctor on board, was always suspicious that every sailor who reported sick was “swinging the lead.” To stop any such practice he had a particularly vile cough mixture made up, and always administered this as first-aid. If at the end of two hours the man refused another dose, then he was fit for duty, but if he was prepared for a second, then the captain came to the conclusion that he was really ill and took the case in hand.

The replies from the late Viscount Knutsford to some of the contributors to his hospital fund are well worthy of being preserved. A gentleman once sent in a contribution accompanied only by a sheet of paper on which he had written his name and the words, “With compliments from above.” In return he received the following characteristic message: “DEAR SIR. You send me an invaluable gift with the words, ‘With compliments from above.’ I send the receipt with gratitude from below. Yours very truly, KNUTSFORD.”

“How is the patient this morning?” said the doctor, making his morning call. “I’m sorry to say he’s unconscious,” said the daughter, who had answered the door. “Indeed,” said the doctor, “I’m very much surprised to hear that. When did he become unconscious?” “Very soon after you left, Doctor,” was the reply. “After I had let you out I went back to his room and he said, ‘Isn’t that old fool gone yet?’ and that was the last sensible word that he uttered.”

“Good morning, Mr. Brown,” said the jovial ship’s doctor, meeting a

passenger on deck after a stormy night. “I hope your breakfast went down well this morning.” “On the contrary,” said Brown, looking sadly at the wild sea waves.

“Doctor,” said a humourist to a well-known eye specialist, “I saw a cataract recently which was certainly the biggest I had ever seen, and I’m pretty certain you couldn’t have removed it.” “Where was that?” said the doctor, whose professional pride was hurt at the suggestion. “Niagara,” came the crushing answer.

In the early days of anæsthetics the induction of anæsthesia with ether or chloroform for an examination or operation was a rough-and-ready proceeding. In *The Story of a Surgeon*, Sir John Bland Sutton tells how in 1884 he was called in consultation on a footman, a big fellow six feet four inches in height. In order to make a satisfactory examination it was necessary to anæsthetise him. Ether was selected and administered by another doctor, and when he received the signal that the patient was “under,” Sir John began his examination, but in an instant the man sat up, sprang from the bed, and began to knock the doctors about like skittles. In the end a stalwart blacksmith was brought in to the assistance of the medicos.

The following is from the *Public Advertiser* of 1776. “Wanted for a family who have bad health, a sober steady person in the capacity of doctor, surgeon and apothecary. He must occasionally act in the capacity of butler, and dress hair and wigs. He will be required to read prayers occasionally and to preach a sermon every Sunday. The reason for this advertisement is that the family cannot any longer afford the expense of the physical tribe, and wish to be at a certain expense for their bodies and souls. A good salary will be given.”

A village doctor having quarrelled with the vicar of the parish, the latter recommended all his parishioners when they were ill not to try the doctor’s physic, but to take a certain much-advertised patent medicine. To counteract this the doctor informed the vicar that if he continued this practice he would obtain a gross of Spurgeon’s sermons and distribute them throughout the parish, advising everyone to read these wonderful sermons instead of listening to the vicar’s wishy-washy ones. Peace was then declared.

“ ’Ow’s yer ole man, Mrs. Higgs?”

“Poorly, me dear, very poorly; carn’t ’ardly get abaht. Doctor says he’s full of luric acid.”

A good story is told by “Quex” of a New York surgeon who was performing an operation on a patient when a fire broke out in a warehouse opposite, the blaze illuminating the whole operating theatre. Having finished, the surgeon turned to the nurse and said, “Say, Nurse, I notice the patient is coming to. I guess you had better draw the blinds. I don’t want him to think the operation hasn’t been a success.”

A lady, whose nagging habits were well-known, went to a doctor and asked if he could do anything for her husband, who appeared to suffer from violent outbreaks of temper. “I think we can easily cure that,” replied the doctor. “I have here an excellent water, specially prepared for this kind of complaint. Next time your husband becomes violent take half a cupful of water in *your* mouth and keep it there for a few minutes; the warmer the water grows in your mouth the more will your husband’s temper fade away. Repeat till he is normal.” The water was ordinary well water.

“Good morning, Mrs. Williams,” said the doctor, “how’s your young hopeful this morning? Did the pills I sent him do him any good?” “Oh yes, Doctor,” replied the grateful mother, “they were quite a Godsend, and did him a lot of good. He’s been sitting up in bed all day playing with them.”

There was once a man whose objection to paying doctors’ bills was so great that he purchased a book on medicine, and by its aid he treated himself successfully and economically for many years. He eventually died of a misprint.

Sir James Crichton-Browne, in his *Victorian Jottings*, tells a good story of the days when he acted as Medical Director of the West Riding Asylum. A patient at the asylum had died, and it was necessary that an inquest should be held. At this inquest Sir James attended and gave evidence. The verdict as delivered by the foreman of the jury was as follows: “We find the deceased died from natural causes, but the jury wish to add that as this is the first

occasion on which they have met the new Medical Director, they hope as how he will stand the jury some beer.”

An Irish doctor had a patient who was very ill, and accordingly he prescribed the application of ice. Thinking over the matter once more before leaving the room, he came to the conclusion that perhaps the remedy was too drastic, and accordingly turning to the nurse he said, “Perhaps you had better take the chill off the ice before you apply it.”

Medical lecturer addressing a class of students: “Take some cotton-wool fresh from the back of the sheep.”

“Do you suffer from giddiness?” asked a doctor of a middle-aged vinegary-looking woman patient. “No, I don’t,” came the snappy reply, “I’m a respectable married woman.”

The Scotsman’s face fell more and more as he perused the document that he had just drawn from its envelope. For the moment he looked as if on the verge of collapse. “What’s the matter?” said his wife, fearing some terrible news. “It’s the doctor’s bill,” came the sepulchral reply, “and it’s awesome. Ah weel, I maun just be content to dee the next time.”

To illustrate the difficulties against which the medical profession has to contend, Sir James Crichton-Browne tells a story of how he once obtained the services of an Irish assistant who was blessed with a misplaced sense of humour. Finding that the more uneducated patients liked to be told that they had some complaint with a long and high-sounding name, he invented some diseases for them. One to his delight was told that he’d got “Catastrophe on the Bellerophon,” and another that he was suffering from “Evacuation of the Equatorial Provinces,” while a mother was told that her child had got “Diana of the Crossways.” Needless to say, this gentleman soon departed, only to be followed by a Scotsman, who ruined half of Dr. Crichton-Browne’s practice by telling all the patients, “There’s just naething the matter wi’ ye.”

A unique example of how a reputation for skill can be acquired by accident

occurred in the case of a herbalist who gave a lady a packet of charcoal as a cure for depression of spirits. This, it might be stated, was his one and only remedy for all disorders. Unknown to either the patient or the herbalist, the lady was suffering from dyspepsia, the primary cause of the depression, and the taking of the charcoal effected a cure. Her recovery was looked upon as a miracle, and the herbalist gained a great reputation.

The doctor had decided that it would be much better for old Mary if she were removed to a hospital, but her husband objected. A few days later her condition was plainly so much worse that the husband felt he could hold out no longer, and accordingly approaching the doctor on his next visit he said, "Arrah, Doctor, will ye take her to the hospital?" "I'm afraid I cannot undertake it now," said the medico. "When I suggested it to you some days ago she was fit to be moved, but now you must move her on your own responsibility." "Ah, Doctor dear," said the old man, "where would I be getting that? Shure your Honour knows it's only the wee horse and cart I've got."

"I suppose your father practises a good deal?" said Miss Inquisitive to the doctor's small boy. "No," replied the youngster, "he doesn't practise now, he knows how."

"I don't know whether to specialise in teeth or eyes," said the young doctor. "Take teeth, my boy," said the old physician; "every man starts with thirty-two teeth, but he's only two eyes."

"I've cured Brown," said the doctor triumphantly. "He was as bad a case of neurasthenia as I've ever handled. When I took him in hand he was harassing himself to death about his debts, and now he has quite ceased to worry." "I know he has," said his listener sorrowfully, "I'm his tailor."

THE END

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Book cover is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Humour Among the Doctors* by John Aye]