

or confidential nature, whether this secret was safe in his breast or could be wrung from him upon the witness stand in a Court of Justice. Ordinarily, as the physician knows, the occasions when such secrets are imparted are not of a kind to afford either the time or the conditions necessary for a deliberate weighing of consequences. Laws of evidence—all human affairs, in fact—appear trivial to one enduring physical suffering, and an earthly court, however High or Supreme it may call itself, is too insignificant to be perceptible to eyes fixed on eternity.

But the solid and substantial ground upon which the medical profession should demand this change in the law is that, save to expose crime, the public have no right to compel, in any Court of Justice, a physician to violate confidences reposed in him—whether intentionally or involuntarily—in the course of professional duty.

PHYSIOTHERAPY FIRST—NATURE'S MEDICAMENTS BEFORE DRUG REMEDIES; WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO HYDROTHERAPY.*

BY EDWARD PLAYTER, M.D., OTTAWA.

All through the records of the history of medicine—in the times of the Chaldeans or Assyrians, of the ancient Egyptians, of Aesculpius and Hippocrates, and down in modern uncivilized tribes, we have clear evidence that in the first or early steps in the science of medicine, the practice consisted for the most part in the employment of magical incantations, the laying on of hands, etc., acting through the mind, as if the chief reliance in the healing of disease was upon the natural living forces within the body.

It was Hippocrates, it appears, who first drew special attention to the inherent natural curative force within the body, and to give it a name, *phusis* (*φύσις*), nature; afterwards Latinized as the *vis medicatrix natura*; while he afterwards recognized subordinate forces, which he termed *dunamies* (*δυνάμεις*) relating more particularly to the various organs of the body, *vires medicatrices naturæ*. Now a Metchnikoff rises up and displays before our wondering eyes, as it were, the *vis medicatrix natura* actually personified in the field of the microscope, certain living blood cells in actual combat with disease germs, while other investigators teach us that there is generated in the body itself, in the blood serum, a germicide more powerful than corrosive sublimate.

It was not intended to make a tirade against drug remedies. Some of them were of much value. Prof. Erb, however, said of "Chemical or internal remedies": "Here we enter upon a very obscure field, which needs thorough cultivation; we know almost nothing of it; the little which therapeutic experience has taught us is neither securely established nor in any way scientifically or intelligibly formed." The practice of the text-book makers and schools giving such remedies first place usually instead of last, in the *materia medica*, was to be deprecated.

Some of the dangers which may arise from drug remedies were referred to: to the recent report in the *British Medical Journal* on the "Inquiry regarding the importance of ill effects following the use of antipyrin, antifebrin and phenacetin," by the Thera-

* Abstract of a lengthy paper read before the Rideau and Bathurst Medical Association.