

# SEND FOR THE DOCTOR; YOU'D BETTER BE SURE THAN SORRY

Better Stand the Expense Than Take the Risk—A Summary of Dr. George W. Gay's Popular Address Before the Harvard Medical School and the Public—Trifling Things That May Be Most Prolific in Serious Disease—How Anti-Toxin Has Reduced the Death Rate in Diphtheria.

(By John Ritchie, Jr., in Boston Transcript.)

Under the title "Under What Circumstances Should You Send for the Doctor," George W. Gay, M. D., has recently delivered a lecture which is full of advice from the professional point of view. The lecture is one that was presented the present season in the Harvard Medical School. In reply to the question, Dr. Gay divides mankind into two varieties, first, the smaller group that sends for the physician when anything is the matter and second, the much larger class that waits for him when it wants him. In the long run the former class will be the safer, have less trouble and much less cause for regret. Too often it is that a account of mildness of symptoms, many persons assume the responsibility of making the diagnosis, directing the treatment or trusting to nature, for the first few days of the illness, the very time in which intelligent, skilful aid may do the most good. In many acute affections the first few days are of supreme importance and in not a few instances the results depend upon the course of treatment during that period.

"If our watch is out of order," said Dr. Gay, "we do not wait for it to right itself, nor do we ask our neighbor what to do. We take it to one who devotes his entire attention to sick watches and leave it in his hands with the expectation that the best thing possible will be done. This human machine of ours is infinitely more complicated than any of man's devices can possibly be, and it seems worthy of at least equal consideration, but unfortunately it does not always receive it."

Dr. Gay passed next to the consideration of the part which drugs play in therapeutics. In modern treatments of disease medicine is frequently of secondary importance. Regimen and regime are the important elements. The time has passed when prescriptions must be given in every ailment. "I dressed his wounds and God healed them," is more and more true in modern therapeutics. Yet although the physicians give medicine less frequently there is doubtless more medicine consumed than ever before. Domestic and friendly dosing was never so popular as it is today and the amount of neighborly, kindly, but ignorant and irresponsible medical advice that is so freely circulated and the actual harm that it does is not realized by any save the physicians.

The majority of people do not realize that what seem to them to be similar symptoms may really mean entirely different conditions, and hence call for very different management. The ensuing delay frequently means needless suffering and at times real danger to the patient, for in certain affections hours count for or against him and the first day offers more chance for efficient relief than any subsequent period. It is true that na-

danger to other members of the household. Previous to 1895 diphtheria was one of our most fatal diseases. In some of the epidemics nearly half the patients were lost. During the past ten years the mortality has been reduced to less than ten per cent. That this figure is so high even in this is due to the fact of neglect during the early stages of the disease, the City Hospital figures showing that excluding those who were clearly hopeless on entering the hospital the mortality has been only about six per cent. Practically no one need die of this disease, if so situated as to receive prompt and efficient attention. This is shown by the fact that during the past ten years 240 cases of diphtheria have occurred among the doctors and attendants at the City Hospital. Every one received antitoxin treatment within the first 24 hours and every one recovered.

"For many years," continued Dr. Gay, "I have told the students of this (Harvard) medical school that they are not to practice medicine until they are able and willing to use antitoxin freely and fearlessly in the treatment of diphtheria."

"I make no apology," he asserted, "for declaring here and now that the physician who withholds this agent from diphtheric patients is either too prejudiced or too ignorant to be a safe counsellor in these cases, and is therefore unworthy of public confidence."

Pain, wherever located is one of nature's most common signs of disease. It may be the initial symptom of any one of a host of affections, most of which are serious. Fits or convulsions in children always mean something, sometimes a condition that in adults is represented by a chill. Either one may be passed by the time the physician arrives, but it is important for him to attend to determine if possible the cause of the disturbance and to take measures to avoid further attacks. Chills indicate at all events a profound disturbance of the nervous system. Pneumonia and pleurisy and other diseases begin with a chill. Always treat a chill with respect and consideration. With reference to the common cold, Dr. Gay has no contention with those who prefer domestic to scientific treatment. He does insist, however, that it is important to know that the trouble is not incipient pneumonia, pleurisy, or bronchitis.

A person in the vicinity of fifty years of age may notice an unusual shortness of breath on going up stairs, walking against the wind or running for a car. He thinks he is feeling his age. The sooner he consults a physician who will put him on a careful regimen and simple treatment the sooner he will be relieved of his uncomfortable symptoms and the longer will his failing heart continue to do his work satisfactorily.

A cough may mean much or little. If persistent, find out the cause. A slight cough in the morning may be an early symptom of consumption. This is no longer an incurable disease, but it is impossible to insist too strongly upon the importance of the earliest recognition of its presence. A prick of the finger or a scratch are common accidents and are usually simple affairs. Occasionally these wounds become infected by some of the virulent bacteria and result in blood poisoning. The time to call the surgeon is when these slight wounds begin to throb with pain and be uncomfortable. Any localized infection such as a pimple, boil or felon, which interferes with sleep demands surgical inspection to avert future disaster. Tumors, swellings and unusual growths of whatever description should receive intelligent attention so soon as they are discovered. First for the mental effect, for such things worry and depress the individual, and second for physical considerations. Cancer in its earliest stages probably may be permanently cured. Too often it passes this

time before being brought to the notice of the surgeon. At all events the earlier these affections are submitted to the expert the better are the chances for relief. The advice often given, "to wait and see if it grows," is not wise, since the period may pass during which permanent cure is possible. Never temporize with a tumor until you have ascertained its probable character from an authority. Never delude yourself with the idea that tumors will disappear spontaneously or that they can be rubbed away. Go at once to a reliable surgeon. If it is benign and will do no harm, well and good. If the contrary, no time has been lost and no unnecessary anxiety endured.

The latter portion of Dr. Gay's lecture concerned itself with eruptive ailments, noting the origin and disastrous results of carelessness at the beginning of some of our recent epidemics. In 1885 a Pullman car conductor with the smallpox entered the hospital at Montreal. Through lack of precautions the disease was spread and more than 3,000 persons died and there was enormous financial loss. In our own city in 1872-3 more than 1,000 deaths were reported from the same disease. Ignorance, prejudice and politics played an important part in permitting the spread of the disease. When the board of health was created it had the epidemic almost instantly under control. Epidemics of this disease are always preventable and the community that suffers from them has only itself to blame.

The agency of the mosquito in scattering disease germs formed the concluding paragraph, in which there was sketched the story of the discovery of the malarial mosquito and its relative whose product is yellow fever. The history of the latter, was given together with the death of Dr. Azevedo, a martyr to the cause and the heroic experiments of Dr. Carroll and the two private soldiers from Ohio who exposed themselves to the dangers of the disease in the interests of science. The battle was won through the discovery of these plucky men. It was proved that yellow fever is transmitted by a certain species of mosquito and the means which are possible for its destruction and for guarding against its attacks have placed yellow fever fairly under control. It is no longer the scourge of a few years ago, numbering its victims by the thousands.

## STRANDED HARRY KNOWLTON TO BE SOLD AT AUCTION

Providence, R. I., March 9.—The wreck of the schooner Harry Knowlton, stranded on the rocks at Quonochontaug Beach, will be sold at auction next Saturday by order of the United States court. The sale is a part of libel proceedings which the Joy line have begun against the owners of the Knowlton, which collided with and sank the Joy liner Larchmont.

## Three-year-old Boy Drowned.

Boston, March, 9.—Breaking through the thin ice where he was playing with other small boys on the Neponset river, this afternoon, three year old Frank P. Ryan was drowned. His companions were all too young to make any attempt to save him.

## "PUSHER" ROUTE ACROSS NEW BRUNSWICK CHOSEN

Ottawa, March 10.—Although it may not be officially announced for a few days, the government has approved of the route of the transcontinental in New Brunswick. It has been decided to adopt one of the two centre routes.

Three routes were surveyed, one is the St. John valley route and the other two through the centre of the province from Chipman to Grand Falls.

One of the centre routes is called the standard route because of its having the standard grade. It is twenty-nine miles shorter than the valley route. The other centre route is called the "Pusher" route because it will require a pusher for some seventeen miles. It is forty-six miles shorter than the valley route, and will cost a good deal less for construction than the standard route.

The route therefore which has been adopted is the "Pusher" route. The pusher will be required for west bound traffic.

## P. E. ISLAND MINISTER HAD TOUGH TIME REACHING NEW CHARGE

Newport News, Va., March 9.—Rev. W. R. Motley arrived here today to assume the pastorate of the Thirteenth Street Christian church. He left Georgetown, P. E. Island, two weeks ago, but encountered severe ice flows on the trip from the island to the mainland, thirty miles away, and was for seven days marooned on the ice. He was one of a party of six who traveled sixteen miles over the ice drawing sleds with baggage on them.

## Killed Father With Baseball Bat.

Solon, Ohio, March 10.—Richard Kennedy, Jr., twenty years old, struck his father today with a baseball bat, killing him instantly. His father and mother were quarreling and the son came to his mother's rescue. The boy surrendered to the police.

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Black Rock.....	Ralph Connor.....	One Hoss Shay and Other Poems.....	Oliver Wendell Holmes.....
Browning, Mrs., Poems.....	Ralph Connor.....	Paradise Lost.....	John Milton.....
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Browning, Robert, Poems.....	Ralph Connor.....	Prince of the House of David.....	Rev. Prof. J. H. Ingraham.....
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Creditation of Philip Strong.....	Sheldon.....	Professor at the Breakfast-Table.....	Oliver Wendell Holmes.....
Drummond's Addresses.....	Longfellow.....	Rab and His Friends.....	Brown.....
Emerson's Essays.....	Longfellow.....	Representative Men.....	Emerson.....
Ethics of the Dust.....	John Ruskin.....	Robert Hardy's Seven Days.....	Sheldon.....
Evangeline.....	Henry W. Longfellow.....	Romola.....	George Eliot.....
Golden Legend, The.....	Longfellow.....	Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.....	John Ruskin.....
Grandfather's Chair.....	Hawthorne.....	Sesame and Lilies.....	John Ruskin.....
Hawthorne.....	Longfellow.....	Simple Life.....	Charles Wagner.....
House of the Seven Gables.....	Nathaniel Hawthorne.....	Stepping Heavenward.....	Prentiss.....
Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow.....	Jerome K. Jerome.....	Tales of a Wayside Inn.....	Longfellow.....
Imitation of Christ.....	Thos. A. Kempis.....	Tanglewood Tales.....	Hawthorne.....
In His Steps.....	Charles M. Sheldon.....	Tennyson's Poems.....	Jerome.....
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