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## Original Communications.

### THE CURATIVE TREATMENT OF EPILEPSY BY SURGICAL MEANS.\*

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"If I wished to show a student the difficulties of getting at truth from medical experience, I would give him the history of epilepsy to read." (1)—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The Father of Philosophical Medicine might also have directed the student to confine his studies to the treatment of the disease and to set aside his summer holidays for the task. And as the long days "waxed and waned" he would at least be impressed by the arduous nature of the undertaking even if he did not arrive at any conclusions worthy of being regarded as *truth*.

Probably the most bewildering observation—and even the most superficial reader would make it—is that success, as the story reads, has attended remedies, both medical and surgical, that bear no relation to what

was then known or what has since been learned of the etiology of epilepsy. "There is hardly anything," as the Autocrat elsewhere reminds the student, "which has not been supposed to cure it." It might, perhaps, be pleaded in extenuation of this unsatisfactory condition of its therapeutics that the causation of epilepsy is probably as various as the proposed treatment is diversified. If one remembers the definition given by the greatest living authority upon the subject, viz: that epileptic convulsions may arise from a "discharge" of any of the gray matter of the encephalon which subserves sensori-motor processes, (2) it is cogent to recollect that practically every part of the organism is directly connected with some encephalic sensori-motor center! The clinical proofs of the truth of Gowers's definition are many and interesting. First of all we know that gross central lesions affecting motor areas may produce epileptic convulsions, giving rise to that form of the disease known as "Jacksonian" epilepsy. To these we add those definite peripheral irritations which have long been known to issue in localized cerebral "storms." Their name is legion and their *locus* every "nerve ending" of the body. They stretch all the way from

\* Revised by the author from the original article in the July No. of the *Western Med. Reporter*.

1. "Currents and Counter-currents in Medicine," p. 25.

2. "Epilepsy and other Chronic Convulsive Diseases."—W. R. Gowers, p. 171.