

PHYSIOTHERAPY FIRST.

NATURE'S MEDICAMENTS BEFORE DRUG REMEDIES : PARTICULARLY RELATING TO HYDROTHERAPY.*

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All through the records of the history of medicine, from early Assyrian and Egyptian times down as we find to modern uncivilized tribes, we have clear evidence that in the first or early steps in the science of medicine, the practice of the art consisted for the most part in the employment of magical incantations, the laying on of hands, &c., and was apparently somewhat of the nature of modern hypnotism, acting through the mind, as if the chief reliance in the healing of disease was upon the natural living forces within the body. We are here reminded of the old saying that "God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions." Although Æsculapius in his practice, we are told, enjoined first of all a hygienic regimen, attention to the diet, strict temperance and absolute cleanliness by frequent ablutions, and although the temples that were afterwards erected in his honour were built in the healthiest localities, and the patients in them treated upon like hygienic principles, including rest and pleasing impressions, yet, so far as we know, it was Hippocrates who, practising in a similar way, first drew special attention to the inherent natural curative force within the body, applying to it the term *phusis* (*φύσις*) nature, the "*vis medicatrix naturæ*" of later Roman writers, while he also recognized subordinate forces, which he termed *dunamies* (*δυνάμις*), relating more particularly to the various organs of the body. Moreover, in practice this father of medicine allowed these forces to pursue unmolested and uninterrupted their benign course ; and he was in practice it appears remarkably successful. Coming down through the obscurity of the dark ages to two or three centuries ago, we find the discerning Van Helmont advancing the theory of a more specific healing force or power within the body, different from that belonging to inanimate matter—a sentient principle seemingly distinct from the cor-

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