

## DR. SIRINGEM, Q.C.K.

As in the political world there are some persons who are always in opposition, and continually sympathetic with the powers that be, so in matters physical there is a considerable minority to whom commonly recognized authorities are equally abhorrent. A man whose nature is Conservative should be cautious how he once transgresses in any of these revolutionary directions; for not only is retreat found to be impossible, but further unorthodox advance seems to become imperative. A gentleman cannot take the Pills of Methuselah, night and morning, with the intention of protracting life, and dying with a white beard forty inches long, for any considerable period, with impunity to what remains within him of common sense. Finding himself alive, and with his beard growing, his respect for the Faculty will diminish, and his desires for Patent Medicines increase and multiply. When his eyes get dull, he will patronize *Wink's Efficacious Pig's Ball* instead of spectacles; when his legs begin to totter, he will support them with *Walker's Powders for strengthening the Bones*, instead of a stick; and he will make his bald head shine with *Noddle's Revigator*, with the idea that, after a week or two, it will save him the cost of a wig.

Similarly, a Teetotaler runs a considerable risk of becoming a Total-abstinence man, and a Total-abstinence man of sinking into a Vegetarian—that is to say, down to the level of the beasts that perish for the use and benefit of the great mass of his fellow-countrymen. It may be also added that, in religious matters, from being a Juniper to becoming a Mormon is not many jumps; and in literary concerns, that one who, upon principle, spells Bill with one l, must soon become a convert to the Phonetic system. Our business just at present, however, is only with the Medically Unorthodox; with those who believe in no curative science that is not advertised on blank walls and in newspapers, and who demand nothing of a practitioner, except the one proviso that he shall not be a recognized M.D.

Unknown to the College of Surgeons and Physicians, though not by any means to Fame, there are numberless heaven-born professors of the Healing Art in every populated portion of this happy country: whose cures, if not always lasting, are very speedy, and if not always cheap, are at least miraculous. Those whose mission is exclusively directed to the poorer classes make no pretensions to Science whatsoever, but rather glory in their state of nature and primeval ignorance. They have "gifts" instead, and "faculties" and "powers," and are generally found to lodge over the shops of very small green-grocers. Perhaps they do this for the sake of the simples—that is, the vegetable simples—thus ready to their hand; but, at all events, they are peculiarly parasitical to that profession; and, on the other hand, the small green-grocer doubtless makes some kind of Profit out of his wise man. They dwell, and even emigrate together, when occasion demands, as the following advertisement, culled out of yesterday's newspaper, from a considerable assortment of such intimations, will testify:

## TO THE AFFLICTED.

Removed with Mr. Mellon, green-grocer, from No. 9 to No. 10 Arbour Court, Finsbury.

## RICHARD HIGGINS,

who still continues to treat the following diseases with success: Rheumatism and Sprains—within seven days; Rose—within two days; Ringworm—within four days. Lupus Exedens, which baffles the Medical Faculty—certain. All Skin Diseases—certain. Rough Skins very soon made smooth.

The punctuality, as well as rapidity, of Mr. Higgins's cures, without doubt surpasses the effects of ordinary treatment, while the somewhat elliptical addition of the word "certain," betokens a confidence which is rarely commanded by mere professionals.

Besides these Blessings to poor neighbourhoods, however, there is another class of benevolent persons who administer relief to suffering brethren of a higher social position. Being actuated by motives considerably above suspicion, they are far from blushing to find the good they accomplish, Fame; indeed—since their expenses are generally confined to the hire of a Front Door with a brass plate upon it—their principal outlay may be said, like that of the Physician so well known to us, whose "sands of life" have been running out any time these fifteen years, to consist "in communicating to others, through the medium of the press, the news of the inestimable advantages they have to confer." In other words, they advertise very largely. These gentlemen by no means disclaim the title of "Doctor," and their titles have not seldom quite a kite-like appearance from a "following" of some twelve or fifteen letters of the alphabet. They are usually corresponding members of the Chirurgical Societies of Teheran and Archangel, and have been sometimes principal physicians at the courts of Donner-Blitzen or Offenbüswigg.

Although it has been (maliciously and libellously) stated that they lead a large portion of the British Public by the nose, this is not the literal fact. It is the Ear, in preference to any other organ, by which they prefer to take it. That is found to be the most conveniently held—if the longer, the better—and to afford altogether the most advantageous subject for the Irregular Practitioner. There are few persons, in any populous and commercial town, who are not afflicted, at one time or another, with "singing in the ears." For that complaint, you are therefore adjured, while there is yet time, to consult, at his professional residence (dimly suggesting a private one in Grosvenor Square), the celebrated aurist, Dr. Siringem, Q.C.K., and C.H.R.L.T.N. Again, if you are so unfortunate as not to have singing in your ears, what charms has music left for you? If music has no charms, the poet has informed us in what a savage condition must our feelings be. A beneficent advertisement, headed, with a delicate indirectness, *Concerts*, will in this case also suggest your immediate application to Dr. Siringem. No trumpet, it says, will assist you, or find a response in the drum of your ear, without his aid. The whisper of Love, the prattle of affectionate Childhood, the fine bass tones of Friendship, now all as nothing, by reason of your unresponsive tympanum, will be restored to you by his means alone. "Doctor S. may, without vanity—and humbly acknowledging that he is (metaphorically speaking) but an instrument—appropriate to himself the faculty of restoring life, since he thus restores with certainty all that makes life endurable. No. 99 Gongoose Street, Blackfriars. Hours of attendance, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m."

My Uncle Sanders, who is always giving his adhesion to Grand Novel Discoveries in Science, and who, I most devoutly trust, will be able to confine his aberrations to maltreatment of his own system, and not suffer it to affect his present testamentary intentions with regard to others, was for a period which, but for me, might have been unlimited, an esteemed patient of Dr. Siringem's. The learned professor's mode of treatment was so original as to deserve, if upon that ground only, public acknowledgment; and as I see he is still courting the attention of the World at large, I will assist him, by giving a fuller account of the benefits which he proposes to confer upon it, than a mere advertisement can offer. My uncle had been taking the Manna of Mephithosheth—a sovereign remedy for deafness—perseveringly for several years, without getting perceptibly less hard of hearing; but he was very far from confessing to that failure. He even affirmed that he felt "a softening" at times—which must have been, if anywhere, in his brain—and "a sort of a feeling as if he was going to hear;" so that I was rather astonished when calling upon him on a certain day to find that he had left off the Manna, and confessed himself the better for so doing.

"I am sincerely glad to hear it," said I; "and I do hope you will no longer permit your too trusting nature to be imposed upon by pretenders to science." He was my uncle, and my only one, so I could not say "fooled by quacks."

"What the deuce do you mean, sir?" replied he angrily. "Of course, I shan't. I'm the last man in the world to be taken in by anything of the sort."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed I, suddenly perceiving a very extraordinary change in the appearance of my relative, "what have you been doing with your ears and the back of the neck?"

"Nothing," said he, but rather tremulously. "They're only a little red—are they?"

"Red!" cried I. "Redder than beet-root, redder than boiled lobster. Why, they have been absolutely skinned."

"Ah, it's only the liniment," said he with affected composure. "Dr. Siringem informed me that the effect of the first external application was not unlikely to be peculiar. It shows that I'm just the subject for it, and a very little more of it will do for me."

"My dear uncle," said I, gravely. "I haven't a doubt of it. May I ask where Dr. Siringem lives?"

"His professional residence," replied the patient, pompously, and quoting from the advertisement, "is 99 Gongoose Street."

"I don't find it *here*," observed I carelessly, and turning over the leaves of a Medical Directory.

"No," cried Uncle Sanders pettishly. "and I'm very glad of it. I have had water enough injected into my ears already, sir, by your professional gentry: water enough to give a fellow hydrocephalus. This is a man of original genius, sir; you should see him yourself, and hear *his* talk of the Faculty."

I not only professed submission to the superior intelligence of this wonder, but I accepted my uncle's recommendation, and repaired to Dr. Siringem's at once, for his invaluable advice. Not that I was at all deaf, but because I wanted to hear something new—and with the intention of repeating it afterwards.

The door of 99 Gongoose Street was ornamented with a gigantic brass plate, with the name of this Apostle of Hearing conspicuously set forth upon it, and underneath the words—"The Institution for the Ear." I was introduced into a small apartment wherein were two male and three female patients awaiting their turn for an interview with the great man. All five had kerchiefs bound under their chin; for my own part, I had but a poor half-penny worth of cotton-wool in my ears, and that not inserted so tightly but that I could hear what was said with considerable ease. My companions were communicative enough, and let me know in some three minutes—at the full strength of their lungs—that they were, like myself, novices in Gongoose Street, and had been attracted thither solely by the advertisements. Presently, the young man, half-footman, half-medical assistant, who had admitted us, and who—so lachrymose and sympathetic was his appearance—might have been Mr. Job Trotter himself, put his head into the room, and beckoned me into his master's sanctum. Why I, the last comer, was selected, I do not pretend to say; perhaps, Mr. Trotter was by nature suspicious, or perhaps the circumstances of his profession may have been such as to call forth particular caution; but he certainly did eye me with distrust as he introduced me to the presence of Dr. Siringem.

This Benefactor of the Human Family was a florid gentleman, with such huge whiskers and so magnificent a forehead, that your attention was instantaneously swallowed up by those two objects, and diverted from his countenance, which was also much obscured by large blue spectacles.

"What are your particular symptoms, sir?" inquired this gentleman, in an ordinary conversational tone.

I shook my head, and pointed to my ears, with a dumb eloquence that I flatter myself must have been rather touching.

He threw into his forehead an air of tender pity, and elevating his voice, repeated the question.

Again I smiled in a melancholy and maudlin manner, to express my consciousness of his benevolent efforts, and to let him know at the same time that they were fruitless.

The forehead retained its tenderness, but I am much mistaken if the voice did not utter something like "Never met with such a fool," before it ejaculated, in a tone that must have reached two streets off, his original inquiry.

A conversation, which, upon his part, threatened to burst a blood-vessel at every word, was in this manner carried on between us, during which Dr. Siringem perfectly convinced me that he knew no more about the causes of deafness than an earwig.

"You undertake, then, to cure me," said I, referring to his advertisement, "in seven minutes?"

"In seven minutes and three-quarters," responded he, with modesty, "since yours is a very difficult case."

"Very good," replied I. "We will say eight, and I shall be quite contented. Please to begin."

This determination to be operated upon at once seemed a good deal to stagger the learned doctor.

"It will not be good for you to go out into the air, sir, afterwards."

"Not good for the hair!" said I, with surprise and innocence.

"The air, you idiot!"—this complimentary epithet was addressed to me in a lower tone of voice—"the atmosphere, the

wind," screamed the unfortunate physician, "would be the death of you, sir."

"Eight minutes," said I, quietly soliloquising, and taking out my watch—"it's now just twelve o'clock."

This action seemed to give the man of science—now almost at his wit's end—a new idea. He produced from his fob a repeater of gigantic size, and standing behind me, applied it to my right ear.

"Do you hear it striking twelve?" roared he.

"No," said I; "I don't;" and indeed the repeater was quite silent.

"See here," cried he, producing a phial full of the whitish liquid which had skinned my uncle's ears, "I only just touch the orifice with this fluid," and I felt my ear tingle as he said so. "Now, do you hear my repeater striking twelve?"

If I had not done so, I must have been past curing even by Dr. Siringem, for the strokes thundered upon my tympanum like the beats of the Great Tom of Oxford.

"Yes, I hear it," said I, as if in some doubt still, although I was indeed almost deaf in reality by the uproar.

"And you didn't hear it before, sir, did you?" asked he triumphantly.

"No," said I, with the utmost truth: "I certainly did not."

"The liniment did it," cried he—it was all the liniment.

The ingenuous air of pardonable pride which played upon Dr. Siringem's forehead as he stated this enormous falsehood was worthy of any man's admiration.

"You must take it home and apply it yourself," said he, with extreme earnestness and strength of lungs; "the effect of the first external ap—"

Here I nodded with peculiar intelligence, and interrupted him with the anxious inquiry—

"You are sure it will not hurt me? I can't bear any kind of pain."

"It can't hurt, sir," insisted he with vehemence; "it's morally impossible that it can hurt an infant. I'll stake my professional reputation upon its never having given any patient one moment's inconvenience."

"And in what am I indebted to you for your advice?" inquired I, as I took possession of this invaluable specific.

"In nothing," said he; "there is nothing to pay at all."

"Nothing!" echoed I in a tone of very genuine astonishment.

"Nothing," unless you like to leave a five-pound note or so for the Institution."

"No, thank you," said I courteously but firmly; "no, I don't think that I'll do that just now."

The forehead was still bland, but the whiskers rather bristled up, I thought, as he replied:

"The lotion is twenty-nine and six; and the apparatus for use, without which its application would be dangerous, is three pound ten and sixpence."

"That will just make five pounds in all," said I, fumbling in my pocket. "I have not got so much about me, I find, but it shall be paid for with pleasure upon delivery. I am staying," said I, as I stood upon the very last step of the front door while Dr. Siringem was bidding me farewell, "with Mr. Sanders, of Wenzel Chambers, Temple, whom I think you know."

My revered relative was very slow to credit this depreciatory account of his idol; but the repeater that did not strike, and the liniment which could not hurt an infant, (about which he felt especially indignant) were such complete evidences of fraud, that he determined to present Dr. Siringem with a piece of his mind concerning them, forthwith. No sooner, however, did he ring the bell of the Institution, upon the ensuing morning, than out came Mr. Job Trotter, more sympathetic-looking than ever, with the news that his master was ill in bed. My uncle, who is of a pertinacious disposition, renewed his visit upon the following day, when Dr. Siringem was reported to be worse. He visited this House of Science the third time, and received information from a char-woman that the chambers were given up, and that the learned doctor had sailed—for the benefit of his health—to the Madeiras.

Nevertheless, at this present date, and in apartments at no very considerable distance from Gongoose Street, may be still consulted, for Deafness and Singing in the Ears, one Dr. Tympanum, who, although without whiskers, without blue spectacles, and without a particularly high forehead, can be identified by this writer, upon oath, with Dr. Siringem; my uncle Sanders, whose credulity is firmer than the faith of many persons, having been enticed by a fresh advertisement to put himself under a second Benefactor to his Species, and having discovered in that individual an old friend with a new face.

A young man wrote to a Boston paper asking whether it would be advisable for him to marry a "young and tender angel, who had never done her own washing and dressmaking." In reply, the editor advised him to do so by all means, and mentioned a similar case in his own experience, where the bride had never done her own washing; but after marriage she became so fond of the washtub as not only to work for her own family, but for several families among her own acquaintances.

A New York paper says: "There is a story going around about a New Orleans printer who declined to go out and drink when asked, but placed the money he would have spent had he gone out with the boys in a savings bank, and how in five years it had amounted to untold millions. But then he didn't have a wife. We tried that once for a year, quitting smoking, and placing the money that would have been used in a bureau-drawer. One day we wanted to go out with the boys, and went for the money, and it was gone; and in its place was some new dress patterns, and bonnets and things. She looked calm enough, but we began to smoke again."

The theatre at Pompeii is now ready, and is to be opened immediately after the longest *relâche* which has ever been accorded to any playhouse in the world. The *impresario*, Signor Lannia, has posted on each side of the entrance a petition begging the public to accord him "the same patronage as that awarded to his predecessor, Dominus Marius Quintus Monitus, who suddenly quitted his post 1,800 years ago, driven out by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, in which it is feared he must have perished as he never returned to the theatre." The opening piece is to be "La Figlia del Reggimento." Ought it not to have been "L'Ultimo Giorno di Pompeii," with a sensation scene which might include the audience?