

they may know some simples that are good, but not half so good as the remedies in use among civilized people. Their chief reliance for a cure seems to be the keeping up of an unearthly howling over the bed of the patient, by way of driving off the evil spirits. It is only the state of semi-savage ignorance of scientific matters in which the prevalent methods of education leave our people that makes them so eager to accept Indian, Persian, Egyptian, or American quackery in preference to scientific treatment.

One of my schoolmates was hard of hearing. In his childhood, the physicians having failed to relieve the deafness which came as one of the sequels of a fever, the family resolved to consult a famous "Egyptian doctor" in Cincinnati, and a relative of mine was the messenger for this purpose. This Egyptian doctor, who was only a shrewd negro, perhaps with accomplices, did not ask for a lock of hair, but wished to have the middle finger of the sufferer dipped into water in a certain way, so that only the middle of the finger should be wetted. The water was then bottled and taken to him. In the present case he complained that others had put their hands into the water, and it was necessary to make a second trial; by the time this was done, the doctor had secured information enough to startle the family, and greatly increase his reputation for the possession of the black art.

I suppose one must attribute to the singular inefficiency of our school systems the strange tendency to superstition in medicine, as well as much narrow prejudice in other matters, so prevalent among the mass of our people. I have known families who regularly employed two physicians in their families,—an allopathic physician for the adults, and a homeopathist for the children,—on the plan, I suppose, of giving to each one pills according to his size. I have known people, otherwise sane, to stand an asthmatic boy

up against a growing tree, bore a hole at his exact height, and insert a lock of his hair, driving in a peg after it, and then cutting the hair from his head. The superstition is that when the boy grows above that lock of hair, his asthma will vanish. Among more ignorant people, the blood of a black hen is sometimes used for erysipelas, and the oil of a black dog is applied for rheumatism, and, to my knowledge, astonishing cures of consumption have been wrought by administering internally the oil from a large black dog. Pills made of spider-webs cure the ague, and so also will caterpillars worn around the neck as beads. The two last are *similia similibus*—the shuddering produced by the remedy cures the shaking of the ague, I suppose. Something of the same notion is found, no doubt, in the application of the flesh of the rattlesnake to cure its own bite. There is, possibly, a real benefit from this, the tissues of the newly-killed snake absorbing some of the poison that would otherwise be distributed through the human system.

One of the rarest quacks I have ever known was a man whose mind was positively feeble in everything but cunning. He was greatly sought after as a doctor for children by people who would not trust him to treat grown folks—the measure of his intellect being just suited to the size of a child. He was always boasting of his success.

"How are you, Doctor W.?" I said, one day.

"I am well, and my patients are doing well, too," he answered, characteristically.

He took an active part in politics and secret societies, for the sake of talking about his patients, until he became a by-word. Once in a political meeting he was appointed on a committee. Instantly he was on his feet.

"Mr. Chairman," he drawled, "I hope you'll excuse me. I must leave the house at once to see a patient."