

# THE Hindu Message

A Weekly Review of Indian and World-Problems  
from the Hindu Standpoint.

## Medical Supplement

‘चिकित्सिताल्पघतमं न किञ्चिदपि शुश्रुमः’ । ‘विभेत्यल्पश्रुताद्वेदो मामयं प्रहरिष्यति’

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### NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Sometime ago the Actor's Association of England drew the attention of the Ministry of Health to the complaints received of injuries to eyesight, due to the powerful lights used for the production of films in cinematograph studios. The complaints were referred to a departmental committee which, in an interim report, traces the trouble to the use of open arc lights without diffusing screens. They find no evidence has been adduced of permanent damage to sight. The evidence tendered seems to indicate that unscreened arcs, besides being unnecessary, give less satisfactory results. The Incorporated Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers have given an undertaking to the Ministry of Health that its members will not permit the use of open arc lights without filters in their studios. The Committee, while accepting this undertaking, point out that the industry is in a state of development, and that research is needed as to the best type of lamp required.

Brigadier-General Surtees, M. P. has introduced a bill in the House of Commons proposing that every chemist when selling poisons must state on the label of the bottle the antidote to the poison, so that in the case of any mistake a swift remedy may be applied. The penalty for failure to comply is put at £ 5. One criticism raised is that the vendor should be allowed to state the antidote in writing instead of print on the labels; another is that such precautionary statement may prevent people from calling in a doctor in case of accidental poisoning.

Onions, according to the *Popular Science Siftings*, contain some of the most valuable and tonic mineral salts in the vegetable kingdom. They are perhaps best known as a cure for insomnia. They also oppose the condition known as rheumatism. Except in cases of idiosyncrasy, onions are easily digested, nourish, stimulate the appetite, soothe nerves and act as a mild diuretic. They contain sulphur and other elements which act as intestinal antiseptics. People have always been inclined to eat onions with a view to breaking up a cold. Cooked onions are both sedative and laxative, and perhaps nothing in the voluminous pharmacopoeia will relieve acute bronchitis (breathlessness) as the old-fashioned onion poultice.

It has often been contended in these pages that the pretensions so often and so pompously put forward on behalf of the Western medical faculty as being the only scientific system are so much balderdash; that they so often follow fashion after fashion as long as it pays them to do so. A distinguished Western medical man once spoke contemptuously of their hard-psychology; and their lack of scientific training. This is amply brought forward by two extracts which our young contemporary, the *Akademi*, gives in a recent number, from two followers of the allopathic system on the properties of flies. One of them, Rao Sahab U. Rama Rao, has not the least doubt that flies are disease carriers, live and breath in all kinds of filth, infect food and drink by germladen feet; and that all flies should therefore be kept out of dwellings. As against this view, a Fellow of the Royal Chemical Society has no doubt that statements like the first are 'untrue' and 'opposed to known facts.' Dr. Henry W. Drew—such is his name—uses quite as strong language as Dr. U. Rama Rao; and says that "if a little common sense and fact is allowed to take the place of clap-trap and prejudice, it may be found that the fly is friend and not foe, even although he sometimes disturbs the postprandial naps." Here indeed is a case of doctors differing: one is obsessed with the germ theory of disease, of which enough has been said in the first volume of the *Message*; the other takes in this instance a saner view of flies as nature's sanitarians, which in fact they are. The natural conclusion is that it is all a question, not of science, but of empiricism and majority of votes.

And yet, in the West, the triumphant trade union of medical men is trying to shut out or clap into jail those whom they are pleased to call quacks should these latter miscarry. At an inquest the other day held on three inmates of Porrfok Lunatic Asylum, Worcestershire, who died of poisoning, the doctor made the dramatic admission that he had given belladonna instead of car-cara to the patients. The Medical Superintendent of the Asylum said of this doctor that he was "a most experienced, skilful and reliable doctor and even now I have no cause to withdraw that opinion." The Jury returned a verdict of death from misadventure. We wonder how great a hue and cry will have been raised if the negligent medical man was an unauthorised practitioner.



The *Antiseptic* in its last issue takes what appears to us to be a sane and statesmanlike view of the question of supporting the indigenous systems of medicine. It is not possible to expect from that quarter a more than grudging recognition of the scientific superiority of the Ayurvedic and Unani systems of medicine. But what is perhaps quite as good, the Editor recognises "the most solemn fact" that truth is one and universal and ought to be counted, wherever found. For the ordinary citizen, we trust, apart from abstruse questions, it is sufficient to note that only a tenth of the population are dependent on or benefitted by the allopathic system of hospitals and dispensaries which the dominant medical trade union have succeeded in charging to the funds of the people. It is pleasant to see the *Antiseptic* declaring itself in favour of resorting to the indigenous systems of medicine and employing Ayurvedic and Unani physicians to discharge these functions, at least on the grounds of the very considerable saving and retrenchment that can thereby be effected. And we hope and trust the Government will take note of the warning of our contemporary that bias towards any particular system is not to be tolerated by a State whatever may be the inclinations or disinclinations of gentlemen who follow the allopathic system.

### ✓The Active Principle in Medicinal Drugs—IX.

By Eliyurkar G. SUBRAHMANYA SARMA.

	Compounds.	Source.	Formula.
Opium.	Morphine	Opium	$C_{17}H_{19}NO_3 + H_2O$
	Narcotine	"	$C_{22}H_{23}NO_7$
Black Pepper	Piperine	Pepper	$C_{17}H_{19}NO_3$
	Piperidine	"	$C_5H_{11}N$
	Piperic acid	"	$C_{12}H_{10}O_4$
Nux Vomica	Strychnine	Nux.	$C_{21}H_{22}N_2O_2$
	Brucine	"	$C_{23}H_{26}N_2O_6 + 4H_2O$

So far we have been enumerating only certain of the alkaloids found in the vegetable drugs: we shall now consider some of the Carbohydrates and see how they help our theories. Under the Carbohydrates three groups of substances are usually discussed viz:—(1) The Glucose (2) The cane sugar group (3) The Cellulose group. These three groups almost resemble each other in their compositions with but certain variations in their proportions of the elementary substances.

The Glucose group which consists of Dextrose, Glucose, grape sugar, Levulose or fruit sugar and Galactose contains the same proportions of the three elements Carbon, Hydrogen and Oxygen. For example we see that Dextrose is formed in the ratio of 6: 12: 6:: Carbon: Hydrogen: Oxygen; or in its chemical term it will be represented as  $C_6H_{12}O_6$ . Similar is the case of Levulose which is also  $C_6H_{12}O_6$ . So also.

Glucose which is  $C_6H_{12}O_6$   
Grape Sugar "  $C_6H_{12}O_6$   
Galactose "  $C_6H_{12}O_6$

Again the cane-sugar group also presents the same similarity in compositions. For we see Cane-sugar is represented as  $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$ .

Similarly sugar of milk or lactose  $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11} + H_2O$ .

So also Maltose which is represented as  $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$ .

The third or the Cellulose group represents the very same similarity in compositions of the various substances which form members of this group. The primary one is cellulose which is represented as  $C_6H_{10}O_5$

Similarly Starch "  $C_6H_{10}O_5$   
The Third of this group Dextrin is also  $C_6H_{10}O_5$

Thus we see that all the carbohydrates group, represent an uniform proportion of the substances in composition, so much so the very group is being represented by formula of the members of any one of the particular group. There is one great peculiarity which is to be particularly noted in respect of the various groups of the Carbohydrates. In the Glucose group the proportion of water or the Oxide of Hydrogen is in equal proportion to the other substance carbon. While in the other two groups, there is only one difference; namely that the carbon is in excess by only one part to the quantity of water or Hydrogen and Oxygen which are in exact proportion to form water.

Similar instances of carbohydrates and hydrocarbons series can be enumerated to show the fixed proportions, in the compositions of all vegetable drugs, of the primary elements Carbon, Hydrogen and Oxygen which are constant. For want of space we are precluded from doing justice to the subject here. Any compound of a vegetable plant, whether an acid, or an alkaloid or even a gas, however they may be represented in their nomenclatures, are found to contain, in fixed but definite proportions, the primary elements Carbon and Hydrogen along with its ally—Oxygen. Or we may express the same in a different way. All vegetable drugs in the creation contain certain of the primary elements Carbon, Hydrogen and Oxygen. They exist in fixed but definite proportions in composition. These compositions are given only certain names, in order that they may be distinguished from each other, according to the proportion in which they exist in the compound. The nomenclatures are, therefore, but conventional ones given by us to serve our own purposes and facilitate the progress of our work in the line while, the composition is natural and constant and which will admit of no modification or alteration in its composition.

Even in synthetical preparations of certain compounds we conform ourselves to that very same proportion of the elements in the composition, as that which exists in its natural formation. Neither do we give them any different names or forms. These conventional names do not affect therefore in any way the compound or its properties whether they be of natural or synthetical, though in certain instances the latter is found to be far inferior to that of the former or the natural compounds. The synthetical compounds, it must be remembered, are only imitations of natural compounds. It is the latter that forms the basis of our work in the manufacture of synthetical compound.

It will be interesting here to remark that the natural compounds appropriate to themselves certain peculiar properties from the soil and present different appearances according to the source from which they may be obtained, though the two may be seen to contain the same composition. This is very important as it plays much in the administration of the drug, as a medicine. For example "Cellulose" already referred to herein which forms the ground-work of all vegetable tissues, presents different appearances and different properties according to the source from which it is obtained. But these differences are due to, says Remsen, "substances with which the Cellulose is mixed and when they are removed the Cellulose left behind is the same thing, no matter what its source may have been." Thus the removal of all other matters that are mixed up together with the substance, though it renders it free from them in its composition deprives it of its specific properties that may have been acquired by it in its natural growth. Similarly a



synthetical Cellulose may be free from other substances but will be devoid of the properties of the natural Cellulose, as the soil, the climate etc., has got very much to do in the shaping of its properties. These will be wanting in a synthetical preparation though we may keep up the formula of the substance. It is on this basis that it was declared that a laboratory preparation of a substance is far inferior to a natural one of the same kind. "Chemistry" in spite of its vast advancement, says a student of Western medicine of fame, "can till now at least, little explain, why natural salicylates are more effective than the synthetical salicylates, why Beechwood creosote is more valuable in therapeutics, than the coal-tar derivative of the same name, why the true mineral waters are more reliable than their exact imitations made by the Chemist". Yet the composition in all these cases is the same whether natural or synthetical. That these synthetical preparations may be of much value for industrial purposes has already been mentioned in these pages. But so far as medicine is concerned they are of very little value and quite useless.

In medicine, it is well known, that every Ayurvedic Physician uses various kinds of barks, plants, roots, seeds, leaves etc., which all contain Cellulose in abundance. "The coarse wood of trees as well as the tender shoots of the most delicate plants, says Remsen, all contain cellulose as an essential constituent. It forms the membrane of the cells." If this is so the use of these parts of a vegetable drug minus the Cellulose will give but little benefit when used as a medicine.

### Mental Treatment.

The "Times" of the 4th October writes referring to the article published elsewhere in this paper:—

We publish to-day a letter on insanity and its treatment by Sir Robert Armstrong Jones. The eminence of the writer and his long connexion with the study of the mentally sick entitle his views to careful consideration. He defends our "mental hospitals"—otherwise known as asylums—against the charges which have lately been preferred against them and maintains that the great majority of them "are in the van of progress and knowledge and are better places for recovery than many private homes." Further he believes that such insufficiency and inadequacy as exist may safely be left to the discriminating encouragement of the Lunacy Commissioners, "who have proved themselves to be the real friends of the mentally afflicted." These views, however, are not advanced in order to defeat the aims of those who believe that certification should be less frequently carried out than is at present the case. On the contrary, Sir Robert Armstrong-Jones states that in his opinion we do require legal sanction to treat early mental cases, apart from the certificate. He postulates, however, that their guardianship must be duly established. In this last contention issue with him will be joined by other workers in the same field. At least Sir Robert Armstrong-Jones will be invited to define precisely what he means by the due establishment of guardianship. Is his idea, for example, that a portion of each asylum should be set aside for the care of the un-certified? Or does he suggest that separate institutions with separate staffs should be inaugurated? The matter is of great importance, because the case for mental hospitals, as opposed to asylums, rests on the view that the ideas popularly associated with the latter institutions are apt to hinder rather than assist cure. It is a debatable question how far these ideas are justified, and we imagine from the general tone of our correspondent's letter that he believes too much weight has been given to them.

We cannot, however, shut our eyes to the fact that most men regard admission to an asylum as among life's greatest calamities.

K. A. S.

### INSANITY AND PATHOLOGY.

Mr. R. A. Jones M. D. writes in the "Times":—

The frequent references made recently in "The Times" to the subject of insanity and its treatment reflect the deeply felt sympathy evinced towards the most unfortunate victims of this mysterious, inscrutable, and obscure disease, in regard to which it can be truthfully stated that no two authorities agree as to its exact delimitation; for whilst some believe that no one is quite sane, and consider that the only difference between persons who are insane in the full legal sense and the rest of us is the fact that owing to their conduct it has been thought desirable in their own and the public interest that they should be detained apart, there are others who regard sanity and insanity as extreme conditions, absolutely differentiated and with no intermediate shades or stages.

However plausible it may be to regard insanity as a matter of conduct, and this in the end to be a question of degree as well as of kind, there is nothing to differentiate the external conduct of an insane person from that of a desperate ruffian or a passionately vain person—we have no comprehensible definition of insanity. It is impossible to state, for instance, where eccentricity or singularity, wickedness or badness, end and insanity begins, and to describe eccentricity as a sign of insanity would clearly be a dangerous doctrine, for it would identify insanity with qualities by which eminent men and women of genius are distinguished from the mass of mankind, and to describe mere wickedness as insanity would be to exonerate the criminal and to condone delinquency. On the other hand, to define insanity would only lead to metaphysical subtleties, and would be useless for practical purposes; whilst to refuse a definition would lay oneself open to the taunt of a want of accurate thinking and to acknowledge that insanity had no distinguishing characteristics.

The rational method of estimating insanity is to examine and to consider in each case the extent of departure from health of the various organs of the body, and to note by observation and experience, judgment and comparison, what organs had failed to perform their appropriate functions, and thus to identify the exact etiological or contributing factor. But even the discovery of coarse lesions, of micro-organisms, of toxins or anti-toxins, a deficiency or an excess of glandular secretion, would only be one-half of the explanation, because the mind, regarded by some as a separate entity—"ens in re sub-sistens"—is capable of influencing matter. We know that the bodily gestures, the expressions of the face, articulate speech, and impressions upon the eye and ear convey from ourselves to others the operations of the mind, and we rightly infer that the same kind of arguments which have validity for us will have a similar significance for others—depending upon possible differences due to education and training, environment and inheritance. These factors, again, may give rise to innumerable peculiarities, yet there is a fundamental resemblance and it is this fundamental resemblance which demonstrates the substantial identity of all human beings. Its bases are the primary instincts of man—viz., that of self-preservation, implying hunger, thirst, warmth and cleanliness; that of reproduction of the species, the parental instinct; that of curiosity, acquisitiveness; gregariousness, with many others, which when well poised and balanced, yield the normal man, but when roused into activity or become dissociated and are in opposition or conflict



with the normal trend, then develop into the abnormal states described as insanity.

It is the aim of the psychiatrist to reveal the unbalanced instincts which may be the root-principle of abnormal conduct, to bring these up to the rational stream of thought, to demonstrate their presence to the reason, to kindle their associated emotions, and so to strengthen the will that it may control their overaction or secure their dispersal; whilst, on the other hand, no effort is spared to effect such changes in the body and in the material basis of the mind as may alter function, promote recovery and restore health. This is the work of our asylums, which of late have been bitterly attacked and vilified by ignorant, impudent, and inexperienced persons.

It was with the object of overcoming the inherent difficulties of mental treatment and of illuminating the pathology of insanity that Sir William Collins—himself an eminent medical man and a distinguished sanitarian—after much thought and investigation persuaded the Second London County Council, of which he was a member, to create in 1893 the new post of pathologist to the London Asylums at Claybury, since removed with doubtful wisdom to the Maudsley Hospital. Much progress has been made in neuro-pathology since this appointment. Schaudinn and Hofmann in 1905 discovered the spirochaete ("Treponema pallidum") and demonstrated it to be the actual cause of syphilis, but which Ehrlich has since enabled us successfully to combat—if only we consent to act. Bordet and Gengou, followed by Wassermann, have discovered reliable methods to identify its reactions; whilst Norguchi in 1912 actually proved its presence and demonstrated its activity in the cerebral cortex, thus establishing indisputably and beyond controversy the causal relationship between syphilis and general paralysis. Later, both in this country and America, it has been suggested that sclerosis of the seminiferous tubes may constitute an etiological factor in another form of mental disease, through the existence of a toxin affecting the endocrine activity of the anterior, pituitary, the pineal, and the adrenal glands—which are known to control the reproductive organs.

I maintain that the great majority of our mental hospitals are a credit to our humanity and to our civilisation, and are in the van of progress and knowledge, and far better places for recovery than many private homes. If some institutions are behind the times, their insufficiency and inadequacy, may safely be left to the discriminating encouragement of the Lunacy Commissioners (Board of Control), a body of the highest experience in the specialty, and who have proved themselves to be the real friends of the mentally afflicted.

I further maintain that we do require legal sanction to treat early mental cases apart from the certificate, but their guardianship must be duly established. To abuse and to vilify our mental hospitals is an injustice and a slur upon some of the most devoted public servants who live in these institutions among their patients. The teaching now undertaken at the Bethlem Royal Hospital and the Maudsley Hospital to those younger medical men engaged in the practice of psychiatry shows that our public authorities and the medical profession are determined to improve the lot of the insane and to encourage their recovery in the asylums. In conclusion, and in view of future progress, I hope to see a pathologist in every large asylum, to encourage teaching and to foster research.

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