

THE

# Hindu Message

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

## Medical Supplement

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

VOL. I. No 41.]  
Registered No. M. 1304.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1922

[PRICE: 1 ANNA  
Annual Subscription Rs. 3.]

### NOTES AND COMMENTS.

A YOUNG Brazilian scientist, Octavio Felix Pedros, has invented a device whereby Negroes can be changed into white men without difficulty.

Up to the present colour transformations have been conducted with rats, and they have been successful.

A blood irrigation device is the means. This is a pump whereby the blood is drawn from one arm or leg into a series of rubber coils, where it can be treated by heat or inoculation with serum, and returned to the body through the other arm or leg.

About a month is required to change a black skin into a white one, the change being accomplished by the introduction of white corpuscles and the elimination of black corpuscles in the blood.

In the experiment on rats a change of colour occurred at the end of fifteen days.

E. Stier, from a study of syncopal attacks in children and adolescents, concludes that psychic conditions are very large factors in the occurrence; as he shows, such attacks rarely happen in a manner to cause danger to life as would be the case were they to arise in the midst of a thoroughfare, or when bathing or swimming, etc., in fact, that they occur as a rule amid home surroundings with assistance at hand. Stier regards such attacks as depending upon unusually severe circulatory oscillations due to a transmitted defect in the pressor mechanism so that the contraction of the cerebral vessels is excessive and their subsequent dilatation postponed for longer than the normal.

A Mayer, as a result of analysis of some thousands of cases at the Heidelberg lying-in-hospital does not find that the forceps are specially conducive to fatalities nor that the latter might have been prevented by the adoption of other courses to expedite deli-

very, for the very reasons which induce the resort to forceps are themselves of grave menace to the child.

Chievitz classifies fifty-three infants in various groups, and tabulates the details of the findings after the barley gruel test meal. No instance of congenital achylia was discovered, but there was achylia or hypochylia in about half the cases of essential digestive disease. In the healthy, the values of the free hydrochloric acid averaged Gunzberg 8, Congo 11, and Phenolphthalein 14.

M. Ascoli and A. Fagioli having obtained very good results in treating sluggish endocrines with small doses of X-rays were induced to expose the pituitary of several asthmatics to this process by the invariably unsatisfactory results of other methods of treatment. In four of the five cases selected there have been none, or only very slight attacks since, while in the fifth a severe seizure of daily occurrence has been replaced by a mild one every second or third day. Four exposures were made in each case at intervals of a week, the technique being a crossfire through the brow and temples for a total exposure of twelve minutes with a 2 mm. aluminium filter, 3.5 milliamperes, at a focal distance of 45 cm., with a spark of 18 cm.

Hylkema warns that in Europe rats come in contact with human beings less than in the tropics, and consequently the fight must be against the infected fleas rather than against the rats. Plague in Europe is more a man-flea-man disease, after the first cases. Human cases of plague should be regarded as a warning of the presence of infected fleas. The main thing is to seek out and recognize the cases early; this is at least as important as seeking for infected rats on ships and in harbours as a sign of the importation of the disease. To prevent the spreading of the disease by the fleas requires measures beyond merely deratization.



## How Food May Become Poison.

### EMOTIONS CONTROL DIGESTION.

Hard feelings, like hard-boiled eggs, are bad for the digestion. It is quite true that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, but it is equally true that the way to a man's stomach is through his heart, in the sense that bitter or moody feelings of any sort send in their bill to the body in terms of indigestion. In the sour all things turn sour, says Dr. Hutchinson, whom we quote.

This marvellous man machine of ours is built curiously all of one piece. Mind and muscle, body and spirit, fuel and feelings are closely related as heads and tails of the same coin. They act and react upon each other until it is hard to say which has the more powerful influence.

On the one hand, we know quite well that certain of our feelings, such as tiredness and hunger, are due to chemical changes which have taken place in our blood and in our muscles. On the other hand, strong feelings, such as anger, sudden surprise or the "blues," will set up chemical changes in our blood and our nervous system which will throw our whole body machinery out of gear.

In an earlier day we used to put down all these frictions and interferences and short-circuitings to our telegraph nervous system, and that was complicated enough. But now we know that, in addition to our government-owned system of wires flashing messages all over the body, we have a parcels post and free delivery system of messenger substances called hormones. These, carried everywhere in the blood as it pours through the arteries and veins, convey information and orders to the liver in the centre, for instance, the muscles of the limbs at the outposts, and the control station of the brain at headquarters.

### WHY WE SOMETIMES BREATHE QUICKLY.

This may sound like rather slow delivery, but as the blood will make the entire circuit of the body from the heart and back to the heart again in about forty-five seconds, the messages sent in these hydraulic tubes make vastly better time than the average messenger boy.

At meal time, for instance, some of the most quickly soluble and tasty extracts of our food are picked up by the blood vessels in the mouth, swept down to the heart and shot all over the system. When in the course of a few seconds they reach the cells and the glands and the pancreas and the intestines they tell them what kind of food is coming by presenting them with a sample, so to speak, and stir them up to prepare the proper kind of juice for its digestion.

The thing that controls the rate and depth of our breathing is the well-known carbon dioxide, or so-called carbonic acid, one of the most abundant waste substances in our blood.

Just as soon as this waste poison rises above a certain percentage in the blood, as it passes through our lungs, it becomes irritating to the breathing centre in the lower part of the brain, and this promptly gives orders to the muscles of the chest to breathe quicker and deeper.

As soon as this quicker breathing has got rid of enough carbon dioxide to bring it down to its natural level in the blood, then the centre of the brain is no longer stirred up by the impure blood passing through it, and allows breathing to drop to the natural rate.

So delicate is the adjustment of this breathing centre that an increase of a very few parts per

thousand of carbon dioxide in the blood will start it to blowing off steam in this safety valve fashion by quick breathing.

Now consider what takes place when we are suddenly startled by the sight of an accident or the bang of a loud explosion. We are so astonished that we forget to breathe, and we stand staring open-eyed and open-mouthed.

### PICTURE OF INDIGESTION CAUSED BY RESENTMENT.

This starts the carbon dioxide piling up in our blood, and in a very few seconds it gets strong enough to stir up the breathing centre. We catch our breath with a gasp and start breathing rapidly and deeply to ventilate our blood once more. "It fairly takes our breath away" as we say.

If the thing which has startled us happens to be somebody or some object which we dislike, then another message is sent to the breathing centre in the brain to keep on breathing deep and hard so as to be ready for any clash or "scrap" which may result from the incident.

So that every time a flash of resentment or dislike passes through us, it upsets our body balance and our body chemistry in a most unwholesome way.

One of the most marked effects of chronic and often repeated hard feelings is upon the digestion and assimilation or burning up of our food. Many of us have heard, or perhaps, know by personal experience how the coming of bad news or the sight of something unpleasant during a meal, or a hot argument right after supper will upset digestion, and may even cause vomiting and colic.

We have known for a long time that this would happen, but were in the dark how and why it occurred.

The coming of the X-ray, however, gave us a means of deeper vision. By the ingenious method of mixing with the food of cat, dog or human being some harmless heavy powder, opaque enough to cast a shadow, we can watch and photograph with X-ray the process of digestion and the passage of the food through the stomach and intestines.

As the powders used, such as bismuth or talc are practically tasteless and colourless, a cat will eat them readily mixed with its food. And when the cat has become accustomed to her comfortable cradle and to the flicker of the X-ray, she will doze quietly and let her dinner digest while her "inside" photograph is being taken. Thus the study of the course of digestion is begun.

Now, if the door is suddenly opened and a strange dog is brought into the room—still more so if it be allowed to approach close to the cat's cage and bark at her through the wires—the whole procession is broken up at once.

The churning and vibrating movements of the stomach and intestines by which the food is mixed with the digestive juices on through the alimentary canal stop abruptly, or may even be reversed so as to drive the partly digested food back up into the stomach again or even up into the mouth. The proper absorption of the food is prevented and even putrefactive changes start in it, so that the wholesome food is literally turned into poison.

This sort of thing on a somewhat modified scale is what takes place in our own stomachs and digestive tracts whenever we get angry or moody or jealous while our food is in process of digestion. The more chronic and frequent our hard feelings are, the more continually our nerves and muscles are rasped and poisoned by these irritating products of our food.

In fact our blood may become so full of them



that the liver no longer can purify it properly, and we become bilious and sour.

From a health point of view it is not safe to even indulge in feelings "in the back of our minds," and to brood and worry over them, because this keeps the poisons slowly simmering in our blood and makes them increasingly more poisonous.

*Popular Science Siftings.*

## Lumbago.

The Medical correspondent of the "Times" writes:—

It has been a general experience this autumn that lumbago has been more than usually prevalent.

Occasionally it seems to have occurred in a form so acute as to exercise a prolonged crippling effect; in most cases, however, the attacks have been of a transitory nature.

What is specially interesting is that they have largely coincided, in point of time, with the passage of an epidemic period of influenza, one of those periods during which, as was pointed out some weeks ago in this column, the disease appears "in mufti".

Influenza in mufti seems to exercise a weakening effect on joints and muscles. Consequently—and here is the point of interest—sprains and sprains are more liable to occur during such visitations than at ordinary times.

### SPRAINS OF THE BACK.

Now it is a fact that many of the attacks which are described as lumbago would be more correctly described as sprains of the back. Those who doubt this should very gently but firmly press on the bony prominences of the spine, beginning high up and working down. Frequently a painful spot—painful, that is, to pressure—will thus be discovered.

This spot represents, in some instances at least, the area of sprain. Curiously enough the pain experienced by the patient is not located in this area, but considerably below it. For the effect of the sprain is to cause an over-excitability of the nerves proceeding from the injured area. Feeling occurs along these nerves.

It has for long been claimed that the proper treatment of such conditions is to attempt, by manipulations or otherwise to remedy matters at the bony "seat of injury". In some instances, undoubtedly, the timely help of a competent medical man may effect what seems to be almost miraculous relief, and in all cases such help should be sought without delay.

### CRIPPLED BY NEGLECT.

For lumbago, so called, is a far more serious affliction than is generally supposed. Home treatment of it is to be deprecated in the strongest terms.

Indeed, the examination of the back cannot be conducted too soon after the onset of symptoms and cannot be carried out by too painstaking or able a physician. There are cripples being wheeled about at this day who owe their misfortunes to neglect of this wise precaution.

Where early recourse to skilled advice is neglected, there commonly occurs a mild inflammation of the muscles supplied by the nerves radiating from the seat of strain. Acute pain spreads, as a rule, down one or other of the legs. The patient is now in the grip of a localized trouble which may hold him for many weeks.

He is unlikely to connect this with any strain. He is still less likely to connect it with a suppressed epidemic wave. Consequently all his energies, and

perhaps also those of his advisers, will be directed to the muscular pain.

This after a time subsides as a rule, but very often when proper care has not been exercised in the first instance a "weakness" is left. Each subsequent illness then at once "goes to the back."

### INFLUENZA "WAVES".

Lumbago, in fact, is a most complicated and instructive complaint. Its recurrences frequently coincide with influenza "waves," whether actual or suppressed; but other factors are capable of inducing them—notably indiscretions in the use of wines.

In one sense, at any rate, this is no more than the feeling of his wound by an old soldier. (The wound is the sprain of the back which was never properly handled). Naturally, weather conditions play an important part in the production of the symptoms—barometric pressure exercising an effect on nervous irritability of a more or less pronounced kind.

It is important that sufferers from this condition should bear these facts in mind and, if possible, note the occasions of their "recurrences" and the circumstances in which they recur. For only thus can we hope to acquire the intimate knowledge of what are called "trivial" diseases and forge the chain of knowledge from the beginnings to the ends of human infirmity.

### AN ELUSIVE ENEMY.

It is custom among many victims of lumbago to diet themselves. By this means, as they believe, attacks are warded off. Why exactly this should be so is not at all clear, and it is no answer to suggest that "acidity" is here the cause of the trouble. For "acidity" is a term which has never yet been properly defined.

Possibly there may lurk in the background of many of the cases our elusive enemy "rheumatism," that "unknown disease" of the hydra heads. Certain it is that rheumatic people strain themselves and sprain themselves more readily than their fit neighbours. They are also, or at least there is some evidence that way, more subject to inflammations of all kinds than the normal individual.

But where one is predisposed to influenza or rheumatism, by old port or a mere wetting, a sprain is a sprain—a definite material piece of damage. Its repair or readjustment at the earliest possible moment is the only sane and sufficient line of treatment.

## Alstonia.

*Vernacular names:*—Saptaparna (Sans.), Chhatim (Beng.), Chhatian (Hind.), Satvin (Mar.), Ezhilaipalai (Tam.), Edakula-pala (Tel.).

*Characters:*—The Sanskrit names, namely, Saptaparna (seven leaved), Vishala-trak or Vrihattvak (having large or thick bark) are very significant and indicate the general characters of Alstonia scholaris. The bark is about  $\frac{1}{4}$ th to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (three to twelve millimetres) thick, easily breaking with a short fracture, fissured, somewhat spongy in texture, sometimes with black spots and almost odourless. Taste bitter.

The bark of Alstonia constricta is usually in curved pieces or in quills, about sixty millimetres wide and twelve millimetres thick, having slight aromatic odour and of very bitter taste.

*Medicinal use:*—Alstonia bark, leaf, flower and latex have been in medicinal use in India, having been mentioned in early Sanskrit writings of Charaka and Susruta. The antiseptic properties of the drug were known in the days of Charaka who recommended it for the treatment of skin diseases. Experience as to its other actions and uses gradually accumulated and



there was so much evidence in favour of the efficacy of the bark as an antidyenteric and as an antiperiodic that it was officially recognised by its inclusion in the Indian and the Colonial Addendum to the B. P. 1898 the antiperiodic action having been regarded to be as good as that of the best sulphate of quinine, but without the disagreeable secondary effects which are usually associated with the use of the latter. The B. P. 1898 was revised in 1914 and as a great effort was made to attain simplicity in the latest edition by the omission therefrom of all unnecessary drugs and apparently others of doubtful utility, the retention therein of Alstonia is an unimpeachable testimony to its usefulness for the purposes referred to, so far as present knowledge goes. If so, it is regrettable that Alstonia should have been meagrely known in Western medical practice wherein fashions and fancies in respect of particular drugs, preparations and even empiricism appear to be generally more in the run than an intelligent use of the recognised medicines of the British Pharmacopoeia. It is admitted that Alstonia is not only antiperiodic but also tonic, combining, as it were, the virtues of quinine and nux-vomica and as such it should be largely in vogue in a scientific system of medicine. The fact, however, is that there is hardly a commercial demand for Alstonia in spite of the frightful annual ravages of malaria throughout India and of the high price of quinine. It therefore appears to be incumbent upon the medical profession of India first to rid themselves from their slavish adherence to tradition if a charge of slave mentality may be laid against them and secondly to bring into popular use a drug which is readily available on the spot and which occupies an honourable position in the latest edition of the B. P.

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