

THE COMMON COLD

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Prompted by an article in the *New York Times*, June 12, 1926, in the thrilling headlines, *The Common Cold In For a Battle*.

Joint attack of many sciences, to banish the most harmful of diseases, suggested by President of the Chemical Foundation, to bring together physicians, pharmacologists, chemists, bacteriologists and pathologists, in co-ordinated study of the common cold, and formulation of its remedy. Seven thousand hospitals, 400 universities, will participate, becoming Pasteur Institutes to study the cold, using their laboratories to supplement each other.

It is thought the resources of the whole domain of fundamental sciences are needed in the achievement, as they all overlap, and the cure of disease is no longer the work of physicians alone, and the common cold demands the cooperation of all related sciences, besides publicists, employers and parents.

They assert that having conquered smallpox, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, yellow fever, hookworm, diphtheria, typhoid and diabetes, the common cold overshadows them all in economic waste and weakening of the human race. Expectant mothers transmit its influence to the child and barren women find other ways. The major expense of hospitals is incurred in combatting the common cold. Eighty per cent of a physician's practice deals with ailments derived from the common cold. The greater part of the country's \$ 500,000,000 annual drug bills is for cold remedies. Thirty years ago there were 2700 preparations on the druggists' lists, now 45,000 and most of them advocated for colds, indicates that many of them are not remedies at all; nor any of them, in the light of the above plea?

According to figures, the ravages of the common cold are unimaginable, even to the most experienced sufferers. Every man, woman and child loses several days' productiveness each year. It imperils and postpones surgery; 90% of child mortality is due to common cold (if nothing is said about the treatment).

Great industries are impeded and put to enormous expense for medical departments, health workers and safety directors to combat colds and their effects.

Much has been done to ascertain the nature of the disease; bacteriologists have devoted years to laboratory investigation; the medical profession made exhaustive study of respiratory diseases during the war; (very exhaustive, about 50% mortality); the U. S. Public Health Service, local health departments, insurance companies, contributed statistical aspects of the problem, and the cause is still a mystery.

Despite all efforts to determine the cause of the common cold, it remains unknown. At various times, various bacteria have been considered the cause,

but no distinctive organism has been convicted. Others think colds are due to chilling, wet feet, wet clothing, exposures, drafts, etc., but Eskimos are cited as not subject to cough or colds by exposure but have been ill after visiting a ship. They did have the 'flu' in 1918, however, in the entire absence of any ship, or other communication.

"Colds are most common in the temperate zone. Eighty-five per cent. of people have more than one cold a year." Dr. Dochez, doing special research work on this subject says, the cold itself is of slight importance; its harm being in disposing the patient to measles, typhoid, scarlatina, and pneumonia. He says chemistry can help by inventing a local antiseptic; to shorten the life of the bacteria; although as said above, the cold cannot be traced to a germ, though bacteria may be traced to colds? The American Medical Research Society say that they have demonstrated that the cause of colds can operate through two feet of solid masonry, hence bacteria must be secondary, if considered at all. The U.S. Government confirmed that finding.

Why this bewilderment about the common cold, sending a despairing S. O. S. to the limits of materialism, which cannot shed a ray of light on the source or nature of life or health, in whose inhibitions must inhere the primaries of health and disease? And what is meant by a common cold, varying in its manifestation with every season, locality, occupation and individual, especially the latter? Is it not apparent that such a variable disorder can have no invariable cause or remedy? Can they tell us why, in one person, a cold is distinctively right-sided, and in another left-sided, and that proven remedies have a similar pathogenesis; and why no curative remedy can straddle such a distinction? Can they tell why, among these common colds, one patient will have a scalding coryza and bland lachrymation, and hover over the heat with extra wraps, and cringe from cold air, and another will have bland coryza and smarting eyes, and is relieved in cold air, and that it is impossible to comply with both needs with the same remedy?

Can they tell us why a cold so virulent as to reduce the patient in a few hours to a blear-eyed besotted look and feeling, dull, apathetic, even delirious state, too sick to sit up, too sore to lie down, head aching and aching all over, pillow feels like a rock and the bed like a plank, throat dark red, sick and tending to rapid dissolution; and the indicated remedy will restore order in this patient as rapidly as he went down, and yet bring no response in a mild cold, moderate coryza, painless hoarseness or complete aphonia, racking cough day and night, patient worse in cold, damp weather and lying down?

And can they tell us why these varied but common colds, treated by a common remedy, are followed by the deplorable sequences and chronic disorders, economic waste and increasing menace so frankly admitted and earnestly protested, and so naturally charged to the ailment instead of its suppression?

Can they tell us how such a patient comes in saying, "I have had a cough ever since I had a cold seven years ago, constant and violent all winter, quiet all summer, and has resisted every known treatment, medical or mechanical, scientific or domestic. I dread to ride in a street car, lest a coughing spell cause me to leave a steaming puddle on the car seat, or walk far in the street, lest I leave a trail like a sprinkler on the sidewalk," and that vanished with the second dose of Natrum mur. 200, though she had eaten salt every day of its seven-year duration?

But give 'em another try. A twelve-year-old girl brought to me in Minneapolis had coughed all night for eight years, and the family was in despair because there was no rest for any of them, and were told there never would be because of irreparable structural change. There was a nasal deformity contracting the right side of the nose and face and affecting speech. Whether its incidence was cold or whooping cough at the age of four I cannot now recall, but for eight years she had sat up in bed every night to modify the cough, symptomatic of several remedies, but the peculiar one was a bluish transparency of the skin of the face and forehead. The first dose of Hyos. 1000 ended the eight-year cough; a second relaxed the spastic nose, and restored normal speech.

A year or two later she was treated for an extreme case of measles, emphasizing the previous tendency to extreme disorder and hinting of the liberation of some infantile suppression.

In passing it may be added for the assurance of anyone who feels doubtful of anything but freshly medicated remedies that the Hyosecyamus was an heirloom from some associate's discard, yellow with age.

But this is not a clinical recital, but an inquiry into cause and remediation of common colds. It intimates, however, that cause does not determine cure, however desirable it may sometimes be to know. Friend Palmer used sometimes to say of my citations that he had done the same things with a half glass of water, stirred long and hard. All right; if water is enough, the use of arbitrary chemical power to override disease action convicts one of an assault on the vital force, increasing disorder and courting death, as set forth in the S. O. S. above. It might be more instructive and less destructive to use water every time we are in doubt of the indicated remedy, or unable to get the indications and see how much nature would lower the death rate and raise our courage.

The statistician for an insurance company, who was invited to our local meeting, presented a table of averages indisputably correct, but, as he explained, in no way intended to solve medical problems. His tables show accurately that men *do* die, not *how* they die, whether by act of God, self or the doctor; and because finite comes of the infinite, no material science will penetrate the *mystery of life*, and only the superficial aspects of physiology or psychology, whose disturbed equilibrium is soon followed by tissue changes; yet in honest endeavour and diligent search, will materialistic men

swallow chunks of sophistry, but gag or choke on a little pearl of wisdom; and pearls are of humble birth.

With the shifting and passing of sophistries, fads and fallacies, dignified as medical discoveries, there sparkles that pearl of Josh Billings: "It is a whole lot better for a man to be ignorant than to know a lot of things that ain't so." Or Lincoln's: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." The horse is true to nature, but suggest to man that he chill his stomach will three glasses of cold water on retiring, and scald it out with three glasses of hot water in the morning, and he's at it, with Bridget's "Dadé, Ma'am, I'll take anything that'll cure me, if it kills me." Often I remind patients that a calf two months old knows more than a man old enough to vote. The calf may safely be turned loose to nibble for his needs, and avoid incompatibilities. The average man at twenty-one is ignorant of his needs and indifferent to his mistakes. That this is by Divine law does not alter the fact. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth* becomes more than a religious precept, if pondered in the shadow of human sufferings that science cannot fathom nor remedy.

But to continue with the common cold. We were once given a statistical resumé of the epidemic of 1918 by our city health officer, in which was emphasized the simultaneous, volcanic-like eruption of the malady in all climes, all conditions of life, among people isolated and segregated, which prompted me to ask the speaker if he could not see in that something more occult, more spontaneous, than physical communication? To which he replied with undebatable vehemence, "No sir? You've got to have the hen or the egg;" that witless vaudeville joke proving itself sophistry, for either the hen or the egg had to be a primary spontaneous product; and the radio and the wireless were already demonstrating the apparently supernatural presence and power of intangibles.

How naturally people use the term *epidemic*, of fire, crime, religion, and other outbreaks, without concerning themselves with the scientific axiom: *All things are governed by law*, and nothing by chance. It has long been a comment among observing physicians that ailments come in crops that rotate and vary like unto field crops, and are likewise scanty or excessive, normal or perverse. A confrère once observed that his obstetrical cases seemed strangely and persistently hoodooed, so that he declined them for over a year, then resumed them without further trouble. He was led to relate this by another experience. One fine October day I saw him passing my office, wearing green goggles; later I called on him. He said he had been unable to read for weeks by painfully congested eyes, which resisted every indicated remedy. He had consulted two oculists, and the only light they could offer was a flashlight, which he could not stand. Having the necessary data, I was prepared to give him a needed demonstration and told him that, regardless of medics or mechanics, he would continue in limbo until about April 15, then come out of it as does the sun through rifted clouds of a

passing storm. Winter passed, April came, and the doctor passed, *sans* goggles, and I waited. I met him in May. "Let's see, didn't you tell me my eyes would clear up about April 15?" "Yes." "Funny thing, that's just what happened." Any scofflaws present may note he was told before, not after, the event.

Last fall floods prevailed alarmingly the world over; millions in crops were destroyed, with other property and lives. By January the same influence had passed from a watery sign into a fiery one, and an equally significant record is being made in fires; not the incidental, occasional, incipient fires, although these are multiplied, but the wiping out of great industrial plants and trading centres like Brewster, Bangor, Malden, Providence, and the one to come in Portland. In the zodiacal influence on man, the same sign rules the hips, and the majority of patients are referring to hip pains and sciatica. Incidentally, scientists are timing earthquakes, as the weather man qualifies the weather, seeing significance in sun-spots, but giving no consideration to the obvious interaction of the rest of the solar system. It seems a timid reasoning that can see in shadows on the sun an appalling force that can rend the earth and spill its internal fires out of mountain tops, yet sneer at the suggestion that it can disturb the health of man, the most vital, receptive and sensitive organism on this same convulsed earth.

And yet it is even better known that the sun is the giver of physical life and that all life on the earth would vanish if its light and heat were shut off as we switch our local light and heat. Worse than that, the earth itself would probably crumble and scatter into space. The moon's influence, less vital but well defined, has long been observed in the tides, the crops, in childbirth, its twenty-eight-day cycle timing the menstrual nixus, its periodicity in epilepsy, lunacy and hallucinations, and even in the proving of remedies, *to wit*, Calc. c., Graph., Phyt., Sil. and others. Equally obvious influences are checked up to other members of our solar system, in scientific observation, not so open to the lay mind or to the child of nature, yet noticeable even to them. They notice, too, that they come into the world without volition and similarly pass out of it, and rightly reason that it is an ambiguous law that determines both ends and relinquishes its vital function *interim*.

Man daily demonstrates and recognizes that he bristles with electricity, likewise apprehends electrical storms, and that cyclones, though lacking thunder and lightning, are even more electrical, in ripping off metal roofs, lifting 150-ton locomotives and setting them crosswise on the tracks, curling the rails into ringlets, and leaving untouched fragile and insulated things, are freaks no wind performs, however violent and destructive it may be. Note again the perception of a child of nature, seated on a bench outside his shack; within the shack Maria at work; off against the blackened sky a building somersaulting, gyrating across the plain; and the unmoved farmer

chirps in to his wife, "Looks like we might have a twister, Maria, thar goes Jenk's barn."

That twist is not a freak but a mode of law. Note the weather charts tracing the weather across the country, its arrows pointing in every direction, but always gyrating in spirals so that storms, though appearing by cloud effect to be moving steadily forward, are gyrating, waltzing, parting and uniting, causing comment that two storms are meeting, and then split, one going down river, the other whirling out to sea, muddling and belying expert prediction. The same law of gyration attends the aspiration of heat, of smoke; even within us, peristalsis, and more wonderful still, the tremulations of the vital force. Then as it is seen that man himself is vibrant with all that makes weather and violence and fire and flood, and being so charged, a unit in his environment, responding with barometric integrity to the varying electrical tension of the atmosphere, we have a clue to forces that elude the laboratory, yet "penetrate two feet of solid masonry."

This is made more significant if repeatedly demonstrated that community disease is forecast in date and duration as mathematically as earthquake and weather; and individual diathesis and longevity determined years ahead, or even from birth; and whether death will be lingering or sudden, by disease or accident, scientific or malicious murder, lamentable or everybody pleased.

Astronomers have accurately located unknown planets by their influences long before the means arrived to visualize them, and true to reckoning they were there awaiting recognition. Likewise the *genius epidemicus* has long been discerned, a changeable cuss like his cousin the weather, with family traits familiar to those knowing his progenitors; and of his influence Boger writes: Study carefully the symptom complex of the first few cases in epidemic form, and the rest will be easy and the remedy group small."

Noticing also *Sinilia* in a given remedy to varied ailments at such times, I sought its confirmation from a studious observer in a wider range of practice. "Yes," said he, "many have noticed it, and I am now treating several colds, a diphtheria, a typhoid, several rheumatics, sciatics and pleurodynia with *Rhus tox.*; and to this obvious relation Hahnemann applied his term *genius epidemicus*."

In the winter of about 1888, I treated a man in Minneapolis with apparent rheumatic aching and lameness in general, and more acutely in the bowels, *weakening watery stools, colic before stool—symptoms peculiar to Rhus tox.*, which promptly cured. I called it rheumatic diarrhoea. Other cases appeared and within a month an obvious epidemic; no precedent, no remedy, but a general alarm that a bug had got loose which must be cornered at once. Minneapolis pumps its city water from the Mississippi River, the intake extending about one-third into the river. Analysis of the water found the bug (?). The press flared with censure of the water management for jeopardizing 300,000 people by its stupidity. Thirty-five thousand dollars

was immediately busy in extending the intake to the middle of the river beyond the germ area, and the malady was named winter cholera; it recurred in fading form two or three winters, as occult influence waned. My doubt of the accepted solution naturally excited the retort, "Why, dam it, man; they found the bug!" But very soon the papers were obliged to report that from East to West, in country or city, with river or without, watered by well, spring, lake or brewery, they were having "winter cholera". The stream of abuse was plugged and fear changed to badinage and comfort was found in "everybody's having it". My smile, being fast, kept good all winter.

And so we are not surprised to read in a later edition of the *Times* regarding the findings of the French savant, Dr. Nordman, in his studies of x-ray, solar ray and stellar rays, that he opines that cancer and many other physical ailments are due to the influence of the stars. Hippocrates, father of medicine, so believed, and a long line of the illustrious from Pythagoras down to Richelieu, Dryden, Bulwer, Byron and Emerson, so observed. Eminent divines, in righteous indignation, studies it to destroy it and were converted, saying with Kepler, "A most unfailling experience of sublunary natures, by the conjunction and aspects of the planets, has instructed and compelled my unwilling belief." Shakespeare teems with it in varied expression, but in one dramatic flare bares the hellish scene he would convey: "When the planets in evil mixture to disorder wander, what plagues, what portents, what mutiny, what raging of the sea, what shaking of the earth, and commotion of the winds!" Likewise the Bible confirms it from Genesis to Jerusalem, in correspondences.

Some bright summer night gaze long and reverently into the ethereal vault, and seeing there but a fragment of our solar system, imagine its extent and ponder its purpose: that exhibit of Divine love and wisdom, that mechanism of the Divine order and world control; Heaven's star-emblazoned alphabet, that he who will may read.

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