

THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IN CHINA.

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The native practitioner has learned his business by the apprentice system, mainly by his wits. Systematic education does not necessarily enter into his equipment, although the most successful may be possessed of more than the average learning. Others are the more successful for their very ignorance, as ignorance and superstition are their main stock in trade. If the practitioner belongs to the better class he will have an array of Chinese books in his office and an extensive stock of drugs, with many servants about to minister to his every wish or desire.

The richer will travel in a fine carriage, while the less favored will be satisfied with the ever available rickshaw. In the line of medicine, both internal and external, he will attempt anything, and while he may not understand the properties of his remedies, from experience he may have gained a little practical information. Chinese physicians have existed who actually used drugs scientifically, understanding their properties and watching their effects after administration. But the most of the present native physicians have learned empirically that certain drugs are good for certain ailments, and the theory of medicine is the least of their studies. That many Chinese doctors have a reputation is proved by the price charged for their visits, which in some instances in Shanghai is \$30.00 per visit. The foreign practitioner asks \$15.00 per visit (local currency).

Chinese literature contains many works on medicine and materia medica, but the best of these were written years ago and cannot be read at present except by specialists, especially foreigners who have made a special study of these old characters. Old Chinese inscriptions on rocks and statuary and porcelain and the very oldest characters are unintelligible to the present Chinese scholar.

The foreign practitioner, especially the missionary medical man, is only slowly gaining the confidence of the natives, and I would judge that the triumphs of surgery have more to do with the improvement in this matter than practice of medicine.

Chinese officials and the higher classes as a rule call in the native doctor, but often appear at hospitals for surgical treatment.

The surgery of the native doctor may be considered an absent quantity. Abscesses may be opened with their crude knives, and will be treated without any regard for asepsis or antiseptis. Ointments, blisters and poultices seem to be the limit of their treatment.

The Chinese like medicine. Pills are used most in general practice, and probably decoctions and infusions take second place. Pills are supposed to possess all or any virtue possible to be imagined and this confidence in medicine and its prescriber has much to do with the cure in most instances.

Diseases of women rarely come under the attention of the native doctor, and infectious diseases are not at all understood and can therefore be treated with no chance for success. Obstetrical work is all handled by midwives, and it may

be supposed that these also attempt advising women about their special ailments. Chinese women will readily relate all their symptoms to male doctors, but absolutely refuse to undergo examination. However, women doctors can very readily secure an examination, and also do much obstetrical work, especially at the hospitals for women.

Some of these native doctors also attempt dentistry, but the most of this work is done by native dentists with the shops along the streets, who extract teeth by tying a small strong cord about the tooth, or extract it with crude home-made forceps. These men have their little benches at certain places in the native cities or side streets of the foreign concessions, and year after year continue to do business exposed to wind and weather. That they do business is testified to in the affirmative by the great number of dirty, decayed teeth exhibited.

Vaccination according to modern methods must be taken as a great advance with the native medical man. Vaccination from arm to arm is quite general in the more enlightened districts, but the old process of inoculation, consisting of inoculating children through the nostril with powdered scabs is being slowly discarded.

Vaccination from arm to arm has been introduced since the Tai'ping rebellion, which occurred during our rebellion but lasted about twenty years. However, this work hardly comes within the scope of the Chinese doctor. The priests at the temples have monopolized this work largely, while the people themselves in their own households, or some financially minded individuals traveling with a vaccinated child will vaccinate people in wholesale lots at a most trivial price.

During the winter months, beginning about October, the priests have arranged for inoculation by having a supply of powdered scabs on hand at the temples, and at a cost of a few coppers or less will inoculate children, to be taken home and die in many instances. Of course, if the child lives, as is proved to occur frequently by the many pitted faces seen in China, the chances are very good that it will never again have the disease.

The native doctor would rather be called upon by the people for advice than to make visits. The sick may even be dragged to his home for treatment, to save expense. The Chinese are ingenious in arranging stretchers for the transportation of sick and wounded, and especially in the summer time one cannot travel far in the native cities where the missionaries have established hospitals without seeing sick being carried from place to place.

While the missionaries have been abused and maligned by many people ignorant of the facts, or prejudiced against Christianity, yet in China we see the promising results of missionary endeavor. If the missionaries did nothing more than the magnificent work, now well under way, of educating young Chinamen in modern medicine and surgery, overlooking even the work done by the missionary doctors themselves in the cure of disease and alleviation of pain and distress, the results would well repay any effort or cost expended. One is most certainly struck with a consciousness of the power of the missionary effort when he witnesses a young Chinaman, probably under twenty-five years of age, performing amputations, removing tumors and intelligently prescribing the medicines of civilization for the cure of disease. Schools have been established at many cities

in China, and Chinese graduates are being turned out each year after a five or seven-year course in modern medicine and surgery. This instruction requires a good preliminary high school education which is given in the missionary schools and universities.

At the present time I should judge that not fewer than thirty-five Chinese doctors graduate each year, and this number will rapidly increase with the extension and popularizing of the school work. These men assist the missionary physicians, take contracts with the Chinese Government in the Army or Navy, or take charge of the Provincial Hospitals which are being established by the Province Governors, which has been rendered practicable by the supplying of these Chinese physicians. Others establish dispensaries where the people can receive treatment for disease and injuries or where they can purchase good medicines of established and recognized virtue with intelligent directions.

During the outbreaks of cholera, the native men have recommended chewing copper cash pieces (coin worth about 1-20 cent gold) and I have been told the poor dying devils can be seen chewing copper until death overtakes them with broken teeth and bleeding mouth.

The popular idea that Chinese eat rats; which is false, is probably based on the fact that they use the internal organs of the rat in treatment. Various organs are supposed to possess special virtues in the cure of disease of the corresponding organs in man.

Needling is largely practiced. Inserting a long needle into the abdomen or side without any regard for asepsis whatever and with no knowledge of what organs are being pierced can be only expected to result in the death of the unfortunate upon whom the ignorance is practiced.

Plasters are used for all sorts of abrasions and skin eruptions. Whatever the property of their plaster they do possess the one virtue of sticking. As to the remedies employed I am not informed, but a black plaster is the "first thought" in Chinese first aid. If the trouble heals under the plaster, well and good. Most frequently the discharge which cannot escape sets up an extensive suppuration which is combated by more plasters and the removal of the old ones which are attached to the walls with the belief that the sore is in that way attached to the building. Or, plaster over plaster will often be applied by the most energetic until a great knob sets out from the limb. Perhaps finally the ulceration extends so widely that it becomes impossible to cover it with a plaster when, a means of escape for pus being allowed, the wound may finally heal with great scars and deformity.

Decoctions are made from vegetable drugs and taken, while the dregs are placed at the cross roads or before the house with the idea that the passer-by will unconsciously carry away the disease for which the medicine was given.

At the temples the priests also treat disease and their operations are to be recommended over the methods of the regular practitioner for the reason that a man has some chance of recovering with the priests. Prescriptions are placed in hollow rods and the rods are presented after a manner of divination. These prescriptions call for various herbs which are supplied by the priests or must be

purchased—no doubt, arrangements having been made for the universal “come-shaw.”

Drug shops are plentiful in China. A peculiar fact is that Chinese drugs are never sold in conjunction with foreign patent medicine or chemicals. The shops supplying strictly Chinese medicines stock the most peculiar and disgusting drugs. The imagination need not be stretched to comprehend the meaning of the above statement.

Stores are not so numerous selling foreign patent medicine put up in wrappers printed in Chinese. I have visited stores quite as well stocked with patent medicines and ready-put-up chemicals, etc., as are many small stores in the States. The Japanese and Americans are the leaders in the patent medicine business in China.

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PARADOXES, SCIENTIFIC AND OTHERWISE.

France uses Celsius' thermometers, and Celsius was a Swede. The United States uses Fahrenheit's, a German. Germany uses Reaumur's, a Frenchman. Taine was a Frenchman, and the author of the leading work on English literature. Motley was an American, and author of a leading standard history of the Netherlands. Prescott, the American, is the authority on the conquest of Mexico. The Count of Paris was the first author of a good history of the Civil War. Von Holst, a German, is authority on the history of the American Constitution. Carl Schurz, a German, is the authority on the history of Henry Clay. Charles Rice, a German, was the leader of the U. S. P. revision for years in his time. And I might go on indefinitely; but, last, and not least, I quote your Otto Raubenheimer as authority on what hapened at the Brussels Conference of Pharmacy. The Carmania reached the Voltuno first and saved only one. All the later arrivals saved more, knocking another old saw into a cocked hat,—“First come, first served.” Truly paradox and crossgrainedness are trumps. The word “quarter-sawed oak” is used every day. I have to find the carpenter yet who even knows what that means, let alone explaining it to the uninitiated.

Not speaking about religion, but just an every-day observation, you meet people who acclaim that they believe nothing except what they see. I just see the setting sun in the bright windows east from me. I see the sun, but the setting sun is not there. Looks as if the formula might stand modification.—*W. B. Bodemann, in The Practical Druggist.*