

### HINDOO PHYSICIANS.

BY O. R. BACHELER, M.D., MISSIONARY IN HINDOSTAN.

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**THE** practice of medicine among the Hindoos was formerly, no doubt, principally confined to the Brahmins, or priests; yet at present the profession is composed of several castes, although the Brahmins are by far the most numerous. As a body, they are probably quite as intelligent and well informed as any other class.

A person acquainted with the medical humbugs of civilized countries, would not be surprised that the unambitious Hindoo practitioners should sometimes resort to jugglery when more honest means have failed; yet

I think humbugging is not so common among them as might reasonably be expected. Their system of medicine, so far as it extends, is perhaps as systematic and precise as the systems of the most classic authors. Their means of information are exceedingly limited. By the principles of their religion they are deprived of the opportunities of dissection, the touch of a dead body being considered pollution. Consequently they know nothing of anatomy but what they learn from the living subject. Of course many of their principles are exceedingly erroneous; yet their method of reasoning from what they know clearly indicates that they are close observers of the phenomena of the human system both in health and disease. Their *inateria medica* comprises a vast collection from the vegetable, mineral and animal kingdoms, and their pharmaceutical preparations and combinations are innumerable.

Surgery, of course, is a science almost entirely unknown. In most surgical cases the patient is left entirely to the operations of nature. Suppuration invariably follows the slightest wounds. They know nothing of healing by the first intention. Midwifery is generally practised by females.

Any person, of whatever caste, may become a regular practitioner by making himself acquainted with the prevailing system of medicine. Their medical books amount to several volumes, and the time necessary to become acquainted with their system varies from one to two years, according to the ability of the student.

The proportion of practitioners to the number of inhabitants, is very great. Probably not less than one per cent. are physicians. Indeed almost every village contains one or more. Their emoluments vary with the different classes among whom they practise. A respectable physician, of this city, informs me that in cases of severe illness he gets from 25 cts. to \$1,00, provided he cures; but if he does not cure, he gets nothing, not even for his medicine. In country places, of course, the fee is far less.

Their means of diagnosis in obscure diseases are various, but the two principal are the pulse and urine. All diseases are divided primarily into three classes; viz., rheumatic, bilious and phlegmatic. These several diatheses are indicated by the variation of the pulse, which they suppose to be air pervading the system, and the different appearances of the urine.

The *rheumatic* diathesis is indicated by an irregular, full and slow pulse, resembling in its motion the swimming of an alligator or a fish, or the running of a snake. The urine is colorless, and a drop of oil dropped into it spreads out into irregular lines.

The *bilious* is indicated by a quick, full and bounding pulse, resembling the walking of a crab, the flying of a crow, or the leaping of a frog. The urine is deeply colored, and the drop of oil spreads out into a large, well-defined circle.

The *phlegmatic* is indicated by a full, slow pulse, resembling the walking of a goose, or a peacock, or a dove. The urine is slightly colored, and the drop of oil remains stationary.

These three classes may be combined to an almost infinite extent,

forming a multitude of distinct diseases, divided into various orders, genus, species, &c., which are severally indicated by the combination of the symptoms common to the three primary diatheses. Perfect health is the equilibrium of the rheumatic and bilious diseases.

However erroneous many of their principles must necessarily be, yet they are certainly oftentimes very correct in their diagnosis, and not unfrequently very expert in the cure of disease.

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