

LITERARY MAGAZINE

ations which he was reputed to be so constantly pulling off had no existence except in the minds of the gossipers who were always prating about his wonderful skill. His operations were very trivial, indeed. In treating nervous or hysterical women he invariably diagnosed every case as "spinal disease" and put a seton in the muscles of the back. He would order the string pulled every day, thus creating a painful sore that would certainly give the woman something to think about beside her introspective troubles. These neurotic cases would of course all recover in time and they would then sing the praises of the doctor and the string who and which saved their lives. I have known this man to go forty and fifty miles to do his operation for "spinal disease."



Doctor Skinem.

Keencutter was forever cutting out cancers, too. I often wondered from what source he drew his malignant clientele. At last I found out all about it. A young man called my attention one day to a little lump on his face. It was a dermoid cyst or wen and was about the size of a marble.

"Dr. K. is going to remove this tumor as soon as I get twenty-five dollars to pay him for the operation," said the young fellow with a gleam of pride in his tones. So many people like to brag about surgical operations which they are to undergo or have undergone.

"What does the doctor call it?" I queried.

"Well," replied the youth, "he says it's not exactly a cancer yet, but that it's likely to turn to one any time. So I thought it would be best to have it taken off."

The day set for this important operation—important because of the twenty-five involved—was about two weeks off, and when it arrived the patient did not find it necessary to be present. He had gotten into a scuffle with some other young fellows and had fallen, striking his face on the tumor side against a chair. The tumor was gone and the great surgeon cheated out of a fat fee! So I learned later that most of this old doctor's cancer cases were really warts, wens, moles and other dermal excrescences which he kept from "turning to cancers" by taking time by the forelock and cutting them out.

I WAS just awakening to the fact that so many people were ready to follow strange gods and take stock in things that were intangible and unreasonable. I was certainly surrounded by an atmosphere of such. There was one woman in the town who enjoyed the reputation of being able to blow the fire out of a burn; while another "who had never seen her father or mother" could cure thrush by blowing into the child's mouth. A great many cases of hemorrhage were referred to an old long-haired gentleman who had never had a failure. Perhaps these things were the embryo from which has grown the great harvest of psychic healing which we note at the present time.

In the town was also another unique quack, known far and near as "the old cancer doctor." Samuel Skinem we will call him, for that name seems to fit him like a glove fits the fingers. He cured cancer, erysipelas, sore eyes and a few other distressing maladies, and he usually got five dollars for a treatment more readily than I could get fifty cents or a dollar with my medicine thrown in.

Skinem was not hampered by ever having had a course in a medical college, but his secret methods and remedies had for the most part come to him as a sort of legacy. He had also for a short time consorted with an Indian from whom he had picked up a few valuable hints with regard to curing disease. Old Skinem's many blunders were usually very charitably overlooked. Anything that he could wheedle people into believing a cancer or in danger of "turning to a cancer" he would eat out with his caustic paste. I remember one old lady who had a slight horny excrescence of the skin near the inner angle of the eye. The cancer paste was applied, but it was a little too strong or was left on too long, for it bored through and destroyed the periosteum of the bone. The bone began to decay—necrosis the doctors call it—and the unfortunate woman suffered day and night until death relieved her a year or so later. I have since known several quacks or irregular doctors who

treated alleged cancer by escharotic pastes and plasters which remove a plug as deeply as they are permitted to burn. The plug that is removed is designated as the "core" and the fibres and strings of tissue hanging to it are its "legs." The class of cancer specialists that I mention endeavor to create the impression that a cancerous growth is very similar to a huge spider or parasite that continues to burrow deeper and deeper until it has eaten into vital organs.

I SAW so much quackery round about me that I was becoming pretty well tinctured with it, although I detested such petty, commonplace practices as I observed. There were great possibilities, I thought, in deceiving people about their health if it were only done artistically, for it is not difficult to fool most of the people part of the time and part of the people most of the time. I resolved on the first opportunity to make a few little tests in applied psychology. Until now I had had no desire to take anybody's money without giving him slight, if not adequate return therefor. My ideals were now, however, getting pretty well dried up. I did not have long to wait for a chance to get some of my ideas on a working basis.

Joe Bowers, a wealthy and rather penurious widower, came in one day and asked me to give him something to cure him from chewing tobacco. Joe was known to me to be paying court to a worthy young woman and it was not surprising that he should want to divorce himself from a filthy habit. Under the circumstances I knew that it would not be difficult to effect a cure, at least during the ante-nuptial period. I now blush in "maidenly" shame as I chronicle that experience.

"Joe," I said, "don't you know that there are only a few remedies for the tobacco habit and that they come pretty high?"

"I know it," replied my close-fisted acquaintance defiantly, "but haven't I got all kinds of money? All you've got to do is to name your price."

"I learned of this remedy from an old German professor and paid him a hundred dollars for the secret," I explained. It's always a winner to lug in an old German doctor under any circumstance. People also like to hear of a fabulous price being paid for some secret remedy, not realizing that the best things known to the medical and scientific world are as free as water.

I then went on to tell the man that I was just out of the remedy and would be obliged to order some of it from Heidelberg. In a few days Joe came in and rather impetuously asked for his medicine. I told him that it had arrived, forgetting for the moment that only a week had elapsed since it had been ordered from a foreign shore. But no questions were asked and the placebo that I gave him effected a cure. A placebo, by the way, is medicine that is sure not to kill you even if it doesn't do any good.

WHEN I quit pouring out good advice to sick people and began to act as if I knew a great deal more than I ever hope really to know they seemed to have more confidence in me, and when Dr. Keeley died I acquired a large practice. But now that things were coming my way, they did not appeal to me as they once did. The apple just beyond our grasp always looks the best.

I now located in a larger town—a city in fact. The name of it is irrelevant to the story. An attractive office was fitted up with what little money



One old woman had a curative breath.

I had. It was now that I made my grand slide into quackery. My methods were not always reprehensible, but they were always bizarre and calculated to attract attention. My conscience was not dead, but only in a state of somnolency. Realizing that people like to patronize a doctor who is head-over-heels in business, I arranged for all my patients to appear in my waiting room at the same hour. The crowd in waiting would be sure to discuss my big practice and go out and advertise me as being a fine doctor. In order to keep them from thinking that their all coming at one time was a put-up job I would whisper to each patient:

"Be back at 1:30 tomorrow, but say nothing to others in the waiting room. I want to have as few patients as possible tomorrow; you are one of the favored few."

When fifteen or twenty patients, some of them decoys, would stampede me in one hour, it created the impression that I was seeing more than a hundred patrons every day. I complained a great deal to my callers about being overworked and that seemed to be a drawing card.

Business was fairly remunerative, but I soon became tired of one line of procedure. Double-dealing or crookedness of any kind soon palls on one whose conscience has not been killed outright. I was always looking for something new and different. Snapshot methods of making diagnoses was a fad that I took up and on which I made a little, short-lived reputation. It requires very little skill and experience for a doctor to wind off a lot of symptoms to which people will lend ready acquiescence. They will take delight in going out and saying to others that "the doctor can tell better how they feel than they can tell it themselves."



Hartley played the role of a Quaker.

AFTER the quackery habit gets deeply rooted into your system it is hard to shake off, and still you are dissatisfied with yourself. I think I was no exception to that rule. All the irregular practitioners whom I ever knew were always changing their tactics. In this connection I wish to speak of George Hartley, a classmate, who turned quack several years ago. He and I were about the only members of our class who had ever brought any stigma upon our alma mater. That matter, however, depends a good deal upon your point of view. One classmate was known to be operating a pasteur institute in a western city where alleged hydrophobia is treated; one was connected with an incorporated company that was exploiting a serum for the cure of consumption; a half dozen more of the old boys were now operating for appendicitis every day. Hartley and I made no pretense of being on the square or of doing things in the name of science. This is something to ponder over.

On this occasion my friend presented a unique appearance. He was rigged out in a broad-brimmed hat and broadcloth coat of ministerial cut and wore long hair. Hartley is a fine looking man anyway and in this garb he was the very picture of benevolence. I do not know which he looked the more like, William Penn or William Jennings Bryan. I could not repress a smile when I gazed on him, for when I saw him last, a year previously, he was playing an entirely different role. At that time he was direct from the Monastery of the Adepts of India and was diagnosing by stellar and planetary guidance.

"I am the old Quaker doctor now," he explained, "and it's great. Ever since I found out that I am a lineal descendant of old Bill Penn I've been living on Easy street."

Hartley was very resourceful in being able to think up new schemes, but he always became disgusted with them in a little while. He had run the gamut of little things from naming a disease from a lock of individual's hair to selling ladies' remedies to put in their husband's coffee to secretly cure them of the booze habit. Hartley told me that he was pining for a change, for he was growing very tired of wearing his hair long and trying to talk the "thee and thou" vernacular. So we mutually agreed to go on the road and sell

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