

*Love is the healing power
of the successful physician*



Abstract and train of thoughts¹

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¹ Frontispiece illustration by Wendy Videlock.

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Selections from Dr. Joseph Rodes Buchanan's *Therapeutic Sarcognomy. The application of Sarcognomy, the science of the soul, brain and body, to the therapeutic philosophy and treatment of bodily and mental diseases by means of electricity, nervaura, medicine and haemospasia, with a review of authors on animal magnetism and massage and presentation of new instruments for electro-therapeutics.* Boston: J.G. Cupples Co., 1891.

Religious emotions are highly curative, and the “divine healing” of prayer, song, faith, and other religious processes has produced many marvellous cures, for the emotions of the upper brain may be stimulated by mental or spiritual influences as powerfully as by direct action on the impressible brain. It is therefore the duty of the practitioner so far as possible to stimulate the higher powers by spiritual as well as manual means — in other words, to rouse the faith, hope, love, and devotion of his patient. To do this he should not rely upon any form of words, but should carry that faith, hope, love, enthusiasm, and resolution in his own person, from which by contagion it should go to his patients whenever he approaches them, even if he is not in contact.

This is the secret of the success of many physicians neither very learned nor very skilful. Their love is their healing power. Hence it was that Dr. Jennings, of Derby, Conn.,¹ near half a century ago, finding that his medicines did not accomplish much good, ceased to give anything but bread pills, coloured powders and liquids, but retained his patients even after he had told them of the deception.

In addition to this personal potency which the physician should develop in his own moral nature, he may do much by vocal music. Songs of a cheering and inspiring character, adapted to the feelings of the patient, and skilful instrumental music, are very important aids in healing. But I must protest against any music which is merely technical, and not full of emotion, not calculated to rouse our sentiments. A great deal of our common music, including even the most pretentious, is utterly worthless for any good purpose. To listen to it is a waste of time.

These principles are not new. Physicians and friends generally realize the necessity of sustaining hope in a patient, and surrounding him with pleasant influences. What better influence can we have than faith in a Divine Providence, conviction that an immense love broods over and sustains humanity, and that even if our career be shortened on earth it is thereby extended into a more glorious and happy realm. The physician should cherish and diffuse such sentiments.²

Thoracic expansion, singing, dramatic oration, and even conversation bring out the noblest elements of humanity.

The thoracic development which does so much for life, health and energy may be cultivated also by conversation, declamation and singing. By engaging in these daily we increase our stock of normal life and health. They expand as well as vitalize the chest. There is no labour performed so easily and with so little fatigue as that which is accompanied by singing. A citizen of New Orleans named McDonough many years before the war gave to his negroes an opportunity of emancipation by extra work to

¹ [Isaac Jennings, 1788–1874, American physician and writer who pioneered orthopathy.]

² Excerpted from p. 79.

buy their time piecemeal. They would buy one hour a day to begin, and with that advantage buy the remaining hours with increasing rapidity. Animated by such hopes, they astonished spectators by the zeal with which they worked, early and late, singing at their work.

The practice of singing, it is well known, promotes the health and the development of the chest.

The expansion of the chest indicates the expansion or development of the noblest elements of humanity, for the higher organs of the brain are in so close a relation to the chest that its development becomes to them an invigorating co-operation.

Thoracic expansion should therefore be steadily sought by all, and when it is not obtained by active exertion, which is the normal method, it may be sought by the expansion of the chest in forced respiration. We should, five or ten times in the day, inflate the chest to its fullest capacity for several minutes,¹ and in walking we should make it a practice to inflate the chest and firmly hold the breath for a fourth of a minute.²

The inflation of which I speak is by the ascent of the ribs instead of the descent of the diaphragm, and its tendency is to develop the thorax and diminish the prominence of the abdomen, thus giving a desirable form, promoting the growth of the lungs and improving the quality of the voice as well as the aeration of the blood. I regard these systematic exercises in full breathing as of great hygienic value and highly beneficial to the nervous system and the higher sentiments. In expanding the upper portion of the chest and restraining the lower, the abdomen being drawn in as the chest is elevated, we produce an amiable and womanly sentiment. One who wishes to imitate a woman would find this the most natural way to do it.

The very great benefit of high altitudes and mountain ranges from two to four thousand feet high in developing higher health and a more spiritual temperament is produced chiefly through the expansion of the chest required by a rarer atmosphere and the more active exhalation of the lungs.³ This beneficent influence has been amply realized in the elevated portions of Colorado, California and Northern Georgia and the Carolinas.⁴

¹ [Cf. "The loss of vitality should be made good by standing in the sun, with as little clothing on as possible, breathing deeply and slowly, and retaining the breath between each inspiration and exhalation as long as is convenient, i.e., not long enough to cause any struggle or gasping. Five minutes of this should restore the prānic balance." *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (ON MESMERISM AND HYPNOTISM) XIII p. 363; posthumously published.]

² Says Dr. E. Cutter:

"A late account of the gypsies states that every morning they go out early and inhale full breaths, hold them, pound their chests hard in expiration, and then inhale deeply again, and so on."

³ [More! "The world of the plains is antagonistic to that of the mountains," said a Master of Wisdom. Cf. "Near the Earth's surface there hangs over us — to use a convenient simile — a steamy moral fog, composed of the undispersed exhalations of human vice and passion. This fog penetrates the sensitive to the very soul's core; his psychic self absorbs it as the sponge does water or as fresh milk effluvia. It benumbs his moral sense, spurs his baser instincts into activity, overpowers his good resolutions. As the fumes of a wine-vault make the brain reel, or as the choke-damp stifles one's breath in a mine, so this heavy cloud of immoral influences carries away the sensitive beyond the limits of self-control . . ." *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (A CASE OF OBSESSION) II p. 399]

⁴ Excerpted from pp. 394-95.

As love produces that full inspiration, which is called a sigh, all higher emotions are truly inspiring for pulmonary elevation assists emotional and moral elevation.

The higher emotions are known to be inspiring. Love produces that full inspiration which is called a sigh. "The emotions that swell my bosom" is a common oratorical expression. The depressing feelings lower the chest and mental agony or physical pain produce its compression, forcing out the air in a groan, a cry of pain or a scream. The violent passions are expressed by the diaphragm rather than the ribs. Expressions of disgust, scorn and hate are made with depressed ribs.

The exhausting efforts of the student are accompanied by unexpanded lungs and consequently a great lowering of vital power, which unfits him for efficiency in society. All active pursuits give that expansion and consequently development of character and power, with this difference, that when the pursuits are those of the selfish forces they develop the lungs downward, which gives force and activity but not sustaining power; but when the activity is less selfish, when it brings out the warm, friendly emotions combined with heroic firmness, then there is a harmonious expansion which tends away from fatigue and depression, giving to the brain and upper chest a fountain of power and delight in action — a steady, calm, sustaining energy.

This condition may not be readily forced by pulmonary exercises, but pulmonary elevation does greatly assist emotional elevation, and with a confirmed habit of such expansion it will be much easier to develop the faculties that make health and happiness. Hence I would urge upon all the practice of pulmonary expansion by elevation as a powerful adjunct to moral culture and hygienic culture, to the resistance and conquest of disease. How much it will accomplish I cannot say, but, having entire confidence in the laws of Sarcognomy, I venture to assure my readers that they will be well repaid for such exercises in themselves, and physicians will find it profitable to prescribe them for their patients, especially if they are combined with rousing, spirit-stirring songs, such as the Marseilles Hymn, Star Spangled Banner, John Brown's Body, Nearer My God to Thee, Exile of Erin, and spirited hymns.

Such songs, sung four or five times daily, make a great addition to the moral power, as they bring out the emotions. If we do not sing we may bring in the moral power, though perhaps less effectively, by direct evocation of the emotions. Let us think intently, as we expand the chest, of the Divine power, to which we aspire with devotional feelings, or of the loved and lost, the dear beings whom we behold no longer, who are waiting our arrival in the better world. If we love them deeply, this loving thought will inspire us and make our pulmonary inspirations effective.¹

Spirit-stirring songs are the most efficient means for ethical culture as well as thoracic and cerebral development.

Evidently the basilar organs and the muscular system are not the most essential to vitality, and women, who are inferior to men in muscle, are superior in longevity, because they maintain a more complete and symmetrical activity of the brain.

¹ Excerpted from p. 400.

Our colleges are beginning to recognize the importance of physical culture, but have scarcely attained the true philosophic conceptions. Neither laborious gymnastics nor trivial varieties of calisthenics are what human development requires. Our leading idea should be the culture of the brain, meaning thereby its upper region, which sustains the brain power and energy of the soul; and, secondly, the culture of the thorax, giving predominance to its upper half. From these regions life flows out to the entire body and perfects every organ.

What exercises, then, will be most effective for this purpose? Singing emotional songs is, as I have shown in the *New Education*, the most efficient of all means for ethical culture and thoracic as well as cerebral development, and hence this should occupy the first rank in a system of complete culture. It is the very opposite of the system of culture by mere muscular exertion practised by athletes and gymnasts — a system which does not elevate the character or efficiently promote health and longevity.

Muscular exertion which does not come from the spontaneous overflow of cerebral energy is a tax upon the brain and lowers rather than elevates the constitution. Brain and muscle should act in unison.

As the exercise just mentioned — spirited song — gives the highest activity to the brain and upper thorax, it is manifest that it produces a surplus energy that would delight in physical exertion and therefore should be indulged in action.

Dr Buchanan's prescription for health and well-being.

I would therefore prescribe for a school of thorough culture an exercise of ten or fifteen minutes, three times a day, consisting of spirited songs associated with spirited action. The arms should be thrown aloft in graceful gestures in various directions, but chiefly the arms and palms being held aloft and thrown up with energy; then there should be movement of the lower limbs, marking time with the feet and shifting their positions; then marching with varying rapidity, keeping up the song; finally a systematic dance, song being still maintained, ending with a dance to instrumental music. This would produce the most perfect and harmonious development of the entire constitution. The superiority of the results of harmonious and ethical culture over that of the merely muscular is illustrated in the advantage the ethical nature gives to women in making them superior fencers and dancers, though inferior to men in physical development. Mr. Checkley says that at the ballet school the girls were superior to the boys. Women who are trained to work instead of effeminacy are as efficient as men in labour and often superior in endurance. The King of Dahomey¹ has shown that they may be made good soldiers.

Arm gestures are prescribed in callisthenic training, and are made prominent in training cadets at West Point. They are all beneficial, but the gesture without the voice is comparatively a feeble, spiritless affair. All other gestures are unimportant, compared with the upward. This expands the chest, throwing the vital energies upward, and is therefore of a rousing, hygienic nature.

¹ [Ruler of an African Kingdom in the southern part of present-day Benin, which lasted from 1600 until 1900 when the French Third Republic abolished the political authority of the Kingdom.]

In using the arms we should have a light weight in the hands, of two to four pounds, for brisk movements; and should also have heavy weights, of from six to ten pounds, for the exercise of the shoulders.

Fencing, boxing, rowing, leaping, running, swinging, and a great variety of exercises with ropes, ladders, bars, weights, leaping poles, roller skates, *etc.*, all have their value; but that value is greatly increased when associated with vocal exercises or with music.

Walking with a proper attitude is a very important part of our self-culture. We are continually gaining when we walk with the abdomen held in, the chest prominent, the head erect, and the back also erect, in a line nearly straight.¹

Singing ranks high among hygienic and ethical exercises, but dramatic oration trumps all exercises for overall invigoration and shows its happy effects in leading actors.

The intellectual strain requires to be balanced by social enjoyment and sleep; the physical strain by the higher region of the brain — the strong, delightful emotions and energies which sustain us in toil and give us prompt recuperation when it is over. These higher faculties give to the whole constitution an elastic energy and inspiration which constitute personal superiority and physiological perfection, the superiority of the men who lead in every department. I do not mean that the leaders of society are always the best men, for leadership is often a matter of wealth or accident or animal force; but that their superiority depends on that portion of the upper brain which corresponds with the shoulders and arms and upper portion of the chest.

If, therefore, any system of exercises can be arranged which shall develop the brain, the shoulders and upper portion of the chest, such a system should be faithfully cultivated.

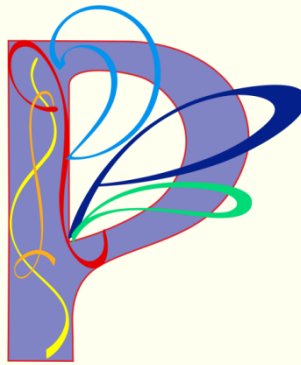
Pre-eminent among these exercises is vocal culture. Even the use of the lungs in blowing musical instruments has proved very beneficial to health and pulmonary development, and the exercise of newsboys in crying their papers cultivates their manhood most efficiently. Singing ranks highest as a hygienic and ethical exercise, but declamation takes the lead of all set exercises for general invigoration and shows its happy effects in leading actors. Lecturing may be made a very superior exercise if rightly conducted, but if made a mere exercise of intellect and animal force it becomes fatiguing, like business affairs, as it uses the anterior and the basilar regions of the brain. But true oratory, which uses the whole brain, and especially its superior regions, to charm, to elevate and to win, is the noblest exercise possible, developing everything admirable in the orator, perfecting his manly power, health and happiness, and leaving an ennobling influence upon his hearers. There is, however, an inferior style of oratory, based upon loquacity, animal force and animal magnetism, which is not ennobling either to speaker or hearer, as it does not use the higher powers. It may invigorate or stimulate the animal force of the speaker, but it does little good to the hearer.

¹ Excerpted from *pp.* 406-7.

To attain the best results of oratory there must not be any intellectual toil, or an extreme intellectual profundity and discussion of abstract themes, which would give it the character of lecturing. The theme should be as familiar as possible, or else the language fully committed to memory, and the subjects of a strongly emotional character — themes that call forth deep feeling and a profound sense of duty. When the orator rises to heroism, as in the appeals of Patrick Henry¹ or the discourse of a religious apostle willing to lose his life to save his fellow men, we have the noblest influence to which human nature can be subjected.

A lecturer who understands these principles and applies them will continually improve himself by lecturing, while another may exhaust himself, impair his health, and find it necessary to suspend his duties.

The same principles apply to the regulation of our conversation. It may be so conducted as to exhaust or to refresh our vital forces.²



“The ennobling power of thoracic expansion,” in our Living the Life Series.

¹ [Patrick Henry, 1736–1799, American attorney, planter, and orator best known for his declaration to the Second Virginia Convention of 1775: “Give me liberty, or give me death!”]

² Excerpted from *pp.* 411-12.