

## HEALTH AND NATURAL LAW

On reading the appreciation by Dr. Rolf on the new edition of Dr. Henry Lindlahr's **Philosophy of Natural Therapeutics** for which I am responsible, I have little to add. I would, however, like to make a few additional observations. The thing which I feel to be most important about this and other works of Lindlahr and which decided me to bring out a new edition of them, is that he has claimed, I believe with justice, to have laid the foundation of a true Science of Medicine or Therapeutics. The scientific approach to the world in which we live is, as I understand it, based on the belief that it is a world which is governed and proceeds according to law. If this is so, health and disease are not, as seems now to be generally thought, matters of chance, but are the result of the operation of natural laws. By discovering those laws, studying them and learning to work with them, and only by so doing, can we prevent disease from arising or, if it has arisen, bring it to an end.

If a Science of Medicine is to be built up the first thing we have to realize is that man is "naturally" healthy. This is to say that where there is life there is the potentiality of good, healthy life. Moreover, the "vis medicatrix naturae" is at work all the time and is always trying to do the best it can. It is not really possible for doctors (and much less for drugs) to "cure" diseases; cure can only come about as the result of the operation of the natural healing forces of the sick person working in that person. All that he or anyone else can do is to help or liberate those forces, or to remove obstacles to their operation. When we come to consider the basic laws or principles upon which health depends we must first get ourselves into the habit of looking at everything from the point of view of physiology and not from the point of view of pathology, for disease or diseases are not things which exist in their own right but are rather perversions of normal physiology. It is now generally recognized that there is reciprocal action and reaction going on all the time between the physical body of man on the one hand and his mind and emotions on the other, but in thinking about therapeutics we must be primarily concerned with the physical body and must make a beginning with that. Whatever else the human entity may be or may contain it is or has a physical body which is a physico-chemical organization which, as such, is subject to physical and chemical laws. It is for this reason that all through history physicians and others who have sought to do something for sick people have used methods which have acted either upon the physical or upon the chemical condition of the body. As far as physical conditions are concerned it has become abundantly clear that we can lay it down as a law or principle that the health of people is conditioned to a very great extent by the structural, mechanical, and postural state of their bodies. There are a number of ways in which this law operates but the chief of them is that structural, mechanical and postural faults and imperfections tend to interfere with the proper functioning of the nervous and circulatory systems. But if there is one principle that health depends on a good structural and mechanical condition of the body, there is another which can also be laid down: namely, that health depends on a sound chemical state of

the body. These two principles do, of course, have a reciprocal action on one another. This is because a body which is functioning well in a mechanical way will tend to have a better chemistry than one which is not, and, conversely, if the chemistry of the body is good it will tend to lead to a better structural and mechanical state. However, it is important if we are to promote health or prevent or overcome disease, to have both these principles in mind. The chemical condition of the body is a thing which must depend basically on what is put into the body in the way of food, drink and air, but it also depends almost as much on the efficient working of the processes of assimilation and of the four great emunctories of the body, the skin, the kidneys, the bowels and the lungs.

In addition to enunciating and developing these basic ideas, Lindlahr draws attention to a number of universal laws which have an important bearing on the behaviour of the body in health and disease and which can be used as the basis of measures for the promotion or restoration of health. Among these are the Law of Resonance, the Law of Periodicity, the Law of Action and Reaction, the Law of Inertia, the Law of Attraction and Repulsion, the Law of Crisis, etc. For instance, the Law of Resonance (called by Hahnemann the Law of Similars) is the basis of the action of homoeopathic remedies. It is also highly probable that it provides an explanation of certain forms of infection and epidemics. The Law of Action and Reaction (which is allied to the Law of Resonance) is the basis of effective hydrotherapy. The working of a Law of Periodicity is to be seen in the behaviour of the body in the course of an acute disease and also in its behaviour under treatment of chronic conditions by natural methods. The Laws of Crisis and of Inertia are exhibited in the acute reactions by which the body seeks to rid itself of pathological encumbrances and in the chronic conditions in which the body is unable, on account of suppression or lack of vitality, to react satisfactorily to the unhealthy condition in which it is. In dietetics and biochemistry we have to consider the operations of chemical laws of affinity, and negative and positive polarities are exhibited in the human body in various ways and can be used in certain therapeutic procedures.

It cannot, of course, be maintained that Lindlahr has said the last word about everything. There is no doubt that new methods of treatment which are good and useful have been discovered since his time and that more will be discovered. Moreover it may well be that more of the principles and laws by which health and disease are governed will be discovered. It can, however, be maintained that Lindlahr has laid a foundation in a way in which few or any others have done. He has also given us a yardstick or criterion by which we can judge or evaluate the goodness or badness of forms of treatment and habits of living which may exist or be proposed. For, as he points out, a great deal of our troubles which do not come from our own bad habits come from treatments which are suppressive and in the long run harmful because they are not based on sound physiological principles and a knowledge of the laws governing the creation, maintenance and restoration of health.