

"NARRATIVE  
OF THE  
LIFE, &c., OF SAMUEL THOMSON"\*

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Childhood of Samuel Thomson.

THERE is nothing, perhaps, more unpleasant than to write one's own life; for in doing it we are obliged to pass over again, as it were, many scenes, which we might wish to have forgotten, and relate many particulars, which, though they may seem very important to ourselves, yet would be very uninteresting to the reader. It is not my intention to attempt to write a history of my life, nor would it be in my power to do it if I had such a wish; but as I have been the greater part of my life engaged in one of the most important pursuits, and which is of more consequence to the great human family, than any other that could be undertaken by man; that of alleviating human misery, by curing all cases of disease by the most simple, safe, and certain method of practice, I think the public will be interested to know something of me, and the reason of my having taken upon myself so important a calling, without being regularly educated to the profession, which is thought by the world to be indispensably necessary; but I shall take the liberty to disagree a little with them in this particular; for, although learning may be a great advantage in acquiring a profession, yet that alone will never make a great man, where there is no natural gift.

By giving a short sketch of the early part of my existence, and relating those accidental circumstances that have occurred during my life, and which were principally the cause of my engaging in the healing art, will enable the public to judge more correctly, whether I have taken that course, in fulfilling my duty in this life, which the God of nature hath pointed out for me. In doing this, I shall endeavor to give a plain and simple narrative of facts as they took place, and relate only those particulars of my life, with such of the cases that have come under my care, as will best convey to the reader, the most correct information of my system of practice in curing disease.

I was born February 9, 1769, in the town of Alstead, county of Cheshire, and State of New Hampshire. My father, John Thomson, was born in Northbridge, county of Worcester, and State of Massachusetts; he was twenty-five years old when I was born. My mother's name was Hannah Cobb; she was born in Medway, Mass., and was four years older than my father. I had one sister older than myself, and three brothers and one sister younger, who are all living except my second brother, who died in his fourteenth year. My oldest sister married Samuel Hills, and lives in Surry, New Hampshire, and my two brothers live in Jericho, Vermont. My youngest sister married Waters Mather, and lives in the State of Ohio.

That country was a wilderness when I was born; my father had began there about a year before, at which time there was no house within three miles one way,

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\*This is an autobiography. It was many times reprinted, but no account was kept of their number.—L.

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and about one the other; there were no roads, and they had to go by marked trees. The snow was very deep when they moved there, and my mother had to travel over a mile on snow shoes through the woods to get to their habitation. My parents were poor, having nothing to begin the world with; but had to depend upon their labor for support. My father had bought a piece of wild land on credit, and had to pay for it by his labor in what he could make off the land, which caused us great hardships and deprivations for a long time.

As soon as I began to form any correct ideas of things, my mind was much irritated by the impressions made on it by my parents, who, no doubt with very good intentions, filled my young head with all kinds of hob-goblin and witch-stories, which made a very deep impression on my mind, and which were not entirely eradicated for many years. I mention this as a caution to parents, not to tell their children any thing but the truth; for young children naturally believe whatever their parents tell them, and when they frighten them with such stories, for the purpose of making them behave well, it will most generally have a very bad effect; for when they arrive at years of discretion, and find that all those stories are falsehoods, they will naturally form very unfavorable opinions of their parents, whose duty it is to set them better examples.

### Domestic Medicine in Thomson's Day.

When I was between three and four years old, my father took me out with him to work. The first business I was set to do was to drive the cows to pasture, and watch the geese, with other small chores, which occupation kept me all day in the fields. I was very curious to know the names of all the herbs which I saw growing, and what they were good for; and, to satisfy my curiosity was constantly making inquiries of the persons I happened to be with, for that purpose. All the information I thus obtained, or by my own observation, I carefully laid up in my memory, and never forgot. There was an old lady by the name of Benton lived near us, who used to attend our family when there was any sickness. At that time there was no such thing as a Doctor known among us, there not being any within ten miles. The whole of her practice was with roots and herbs, applied to the patient, or given in hot drinks, to produce sweating; which always answered the purpose. When one thing did not produce the desired effect, she would try something else, till they were relieved. By her attention to the family, and the benefits they received from her skill, we became very much attached to her; and when she used to go out to collect roots and herbs, she would take me with her, and learn me their names, with what they were good for; and I used to be very curious in my inquiries, and in tasting every thing that I found. The information I thus obtained at this early age, was afterwards of great use to me.

### Discovery of Lobella.

Sometime in the summer, after I was four years old, being out in the fields in search of the cows, I discovered a plant which had a singular branch and pods, that I had never before seen, and I had the curiosity to pick some of the pods and chew them; the taste and operation produced was so remarkable, that I never forgot it. I afterwards used to induce other boys to chew it, merely by way of sport, to see them vomit. I tried this herb in this way for nearly twenty years, without knowing any thing of its medical virtues. This plant is what I have called the Emetic Herb, and is the most important article I make use of in my practice. It is very common in most parts of this country, and may be prepared and used



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in almost any manner. It is a certain counter poison, having never been known to fail to counteract the effects of the most deadly poison, even when taken in large quantities for self-destruction. There is no danger to be apprehended from its use, as it is perfectly harmless in its operation, even when a large quantity is taken; it operates as an emetic, cleanses the stomach from all improper aliment, promotes an internal heat, which is immediately felt at the extremities, and produces perspiration.

### The Lobelia Patent, "My Right to the Discovery."

The exclusive right of using this plant for medical purposes is secured to me by patent, and my right to the discovery has never been disputed; though the Doctors have done every thing they could to destroy the credit of it, by false statements, representing it to be a deadly poison, and at the same time they knew to the contrary, for they have made use of it themselves for several years, and have tried to defraud me of the discovery. I feel perfectly convinced from near forty years' experience of its medical properties, that the discovery is of incalculable importance, and if properly understood by the people will be more useful in curing the diseases incident to this climate, than the drugs and medicines sold by all the apothecaries in the country.

### Experimentation with Lobelia on Child Friends.

The winter I was eight years old, I was very sick with the canker-rash; but was attended by the widow Benton, who cured me by making use of such medicine as our country afforded, and I was in a short time able to be about. After I had got well, my mind was more attentive to the use of roots and herbs as medicine, than ever. I had at that time a very good knowledge of the principal roots and herbs to be found in that part of the country, with their names and medical uses; and the neighbors were in the habit of getting me to go with them to show them such roots and herbs as the doctors ordered to be made use of in sickness, for syrups, &c. and by way of sport they used to call me doctor. While in the field at work I used often to find the herb, which I tasted when four years old, and gave it to those who worked with me, to see them spit and often vomit; but I never observed any bad effect produced by it, which simple experiments eventually led me to observe the value of it in disease.

### Hope of Becoming a Physician and Subsequent Disappointment.

Sometime during the year that I was sixteen years old, I heard my parents say, that as my mind was so much taken up with roots and herbs, they thought it best to send me to live with a Doctor Fuller, of Westmoreland, who was called a root doctor. This pleased me very much, and in some measure raised my ambition; but I was soon after disappointed in my hopes, for they said I had not learning enough, and they did not know how to spare me from my work, which depressed my spirits, and was very discouraging to me. I now gave up all hopes of going to any other business, and tried to reconcile myself to spend my days in working on a farm, which made me very unhappy. I had little learning, and was awkward and ignorant of the world, as my father had never given me any chance to go into company, to learn how to behave, which caused me great uneasiness.



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A Wound and its Results Illustrating the Terrible Methods of Medical Practice, Domestic, Empirical, and Regular at that Date. "My father in dressing my wound had drawn a string through between the heel-cord and the bone, and another between that and the skin; so that two-thirds of the way round my ankle was hollow."

In the year 1788, when I was in my nineteenth year, my father purchased a piece of land on Onion river, in the state of Vermont, and on the 12th day of October, he started from Alstead, and took me with him, to go to work on the land and clear up some of it to build a house on, as it was all covered with wood. In about four days after our arrival, we were enabled to clear a small spot and to build us a camp to live in; we had to do our own cooking and washing; our fare was poor, and we had to work very hard; but we got along tolerably well till the 2d of December, when I had the misfortune to cut my ankle very badly, which accident prevented me from doing any labor for a long time, and almost deprived me of life. The wound was a very bad one, as it split the joint and laid the bone entirely bare, so as to lose the juices of my ankle joint to such a degree as to reduce my strength very much. My father sent for a Doctor Cole, of Jericho, who ordered sweet apple-tree bark to be boiled, and the wound to be washed with it, which caused great pain, and made it much worse, so that in eight days my strength was almost exhausted; the flesh on my leg and thigh was mostly gone, and my life was despaired of; the doctor said he could do no more for me; my father was greatly alarmed about me, and said that if Dr. Kitteridge, of Walpole, could be sent for, he thought he might help me; but I told him it would be in vain to send for him, for I could not live so long as it would take to go after him, without some immediate assistance. He said he did not know what to do; I told him that there was one thing I had thought of which I wished to have tried, if it could be obtained, that I thought would help me. He anxiously inquired what it was, and I told him if he could find some comfrey root, I would try a plaster made of that and turpentine. He immediately went to an old place that was settled before the war, and had the good luck to find some; a plaster was prepared by my directions and applied to my ankle, the side opposite to the wound, and had the desired effect; the juices stopped running in about six hours, and I was very much relieved; though the pain continued to be very severe and the inflammation was great; the juices settled between the skin and bone, and caused a suppuration, which broke in about three weeks; during which time I did not have three nights sleep, nor did I eat any thing. This accidental remedy was found through necessity, and was the first time the mother of invention held forth her hand to me. The success which attended this experiment, and the natural turn of my mind to those things, I think was a principal cause of my continuing to practice the healing art to this time.

Our stock of provisions being now exhausted, and my wound somewhat better, my father was very anxious to return to Alstead. He asked me if I thought I could bear the journey, if he should place me on a bed laid in a sled. I answered that I was willing to try. He immediately went to work and fixed a sled, and put me in it on a straw bed; and on the first day of January, 1789, we began our journey. There was very little snow, and the road rough, which caused the sled to jolt very much, and my sufferings were great. It was very doubtful with my father, and likewise with me, whether I should live to perform the journey; but we proceeded on, however, without any thing important happening, except wearing out the runners of our sled, and having to make new ones, and accomplished twenty



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miles the first day. At a place where we stopped all night, there was a woman whose situation appeared to me so much worse than my own, that I felt much encouraged. She had been sick with a fever, and the doctor had given so much poisonous medicine, to break the fever, as he called it, she was left in a most miserable situation. Her side and shoulder were in a putrid state, and in full as bad a condition as my ankle. My father in dressing my wound had drawn a string through between the heel-cord and bone, and another between that and the skin; so that two-thirds of the way round my ankle was hollow.

### Discouraged to Desperation. Dr. Kitteridge Becomes a Good Samaritan.

When we got on to the high land there was considerable snow, and we got along much more comfortably. I had to be carried in on the bed and laid by the fire, every night during the journey. The people generally, where we stopped, treated me with kindness, and showed much pity for me in my distressed situation; but they all thought that I should not live to get through the journey. The doctors had advised to have my leg cut off, as the only means of saving my life, and all those who saw me during our journey, expressed the same opinion; and I think it would have been done had I given my consent; but I positively refused to agree to it, so the plan was given up. I preferred to take my chance with my leg on, to having it taken off; which resolution I have never repented of, to this day.

On arriving in Walpole, my father proceeded immediately to the house of the famous Dr. Kitteridge, to have him dress my wound, and get his opinion of my situation; he not being at home, and it being nearly dark, we concluded to put up for the night, and I was carried in on my bed and laid by the fire. The doctor soon came home, and on entering the room where I was, cried out in a very rough manner, Who have you here? His wife answered, a sick man. The devil, replied he, I want no sick man here. I was much terrified by his coarse manner of speaking, and thought if he was so rough in his conversation, what will he be when he comes to dress my wound; but I was happily disappointed, for he took off the dressing with great care, and handled me very tenderly. On seeing the strings that were in the wound, he exclaimed, What the devil are these halters here for? My father told him they were put in to keep the sore open. He said he thought the sore open enough now, for it is all rotten. Being anxious to know his opinion of me, my father asked him what he thought of my situation. What do I think? said he, why I think he will die; and then looking very pleasantly at me, said, though I think young man, you will get well first. In the morning he dressed my ankle again, and gave me some salve to use in future; and my father asked him for his bill, which was, I think, for our keeping and his attending me, about fifty cents. A great contrast between this and what is charged at the present time by our regular physicians; for they will hardly look at a person without making them pay two or three dollars. I have been more particular in describing this interview with Dr. Kitteridge, on account of his extraordinary skill in surgery, and the great name he acquired, and justly deserved, among the people throughout the country. His system of practice was peculiarly his own, and all the medicines he used were prepared by himself, from the roots and herbs of our own country. He was a very eccentric character, and uncouth in his manners; but he possessed a good heart, and a benevolent disposition. He was governed in his practice by that great plan which is dictated by nature; and the uncommon success he met with is evidence enough to satisfy any reasonable mind, of the



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superiority of it over what is the practice of those who become doctors by reading only, with their poisons and their instruments of torture.

### Empirical Study of Field and Forest Plants.

My mind was bent on learning the medical properties of such vegetables as I met with, and was constantly in the habit of tasting every thing of the kind I saw; and having a retentive memory, I have always recollected the taste and use of all that were ever shown me by others, and likewise of all that I discovered myself. This practice of tasting of herbs and roots has been of great advantage to me, as I have always been able to ascertain what is useful for any particular disease, by that means. I was often told that I should poison myself by tasting every thing I saw; but I thought I ought to have as much knowledge as a beast, for they possess an instinct to discover what is good for food, and what is necessary for medicine. I had but very little knowledge of disease at this time; but had a great inclination to learn whatever I had an opportunity; and my own experience, which is the best school, had often called my attention to the subject.

### First Overdose of Lobelia and Its Results.

The herb which I had discovered when four years old, I had often met with; but it had never occurred to me that it was of any value as medicine, until about this time, when mowing in the field with a number of men, one day, I cut a sprig of it, and gave it to the man next to me, who ate it; when he had got to the end of the piece, which was about six rods, he said that he believed what I had given him would kill him, for he never felt so in his life. I looked at him and saw that he was in a most profuse perspiration, being as wet all over as he could be; he trembled very much, and there was no more color in him than a corpse. I told him to go to the spring and drink some water; he attempted to go, and got as far as the wall, but was unable to get over it, and laid down on the ground and vomited several times. He said he thought he threw off his stomach two quarts. I then helped him into the house, and in about two hours he ate a very hearty dinner, and in the afternoon was able to do a good half day's labor. He afterwards told me that he never had anything do him so much good in his life; his appetite was remarkably good, and he felt better than he had for a long time. This circumstance gave me the first idea of the medical virtues of this valuable plant, which I have since found by forty years' experience, in which time I have made use of it in every disease I have met with, to great advantage, that it is a discovery of the greatest importance.

### First Use of "Steaming" by Thomson.

When my second daughter was about two years old she was taken sick, and had what is called the canker-rash. Dr. Bliss, who lived on my farm, was sent for, and he said she had that disorder as bad as any one he ever saw. He tried his utmost skill to prevent putrefaction, which he feared would take place; but after using every exertion in his power, without doing her any good, he said he could do no more, she must die. She was senseless, and the canker was to be seen in her mouth, nose, and ears, and one of her eyes was covered with it and closed; the other began to swell and turn purple also. I asked the doctor if he could not keep the canker out of this eye; but he said it would be of no use, for she could not live. I told him that if he could do no more, I would try what I



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could do myself. I found that if the canker could not be stopped immediately, she would be blind with both eyes. She was so distressed for breath that she would spring straight up on end in struggling to breathe. I sat myself in a chair, and held her in my lap, and put a blanket round us both; then my wife held a hot spider or shovel between my feet, and I poured on vinegar to raise a steam, and kept it as hot as I found she could bear, changing them as soon as they became cold; and by following this plan for about twenty minutes, she became comfortable and breathed easy. I kept a cloth wet with cold water on her eyes, changing it often, as it grew warm. I followed this plan, steaming her every two hours, for about a week, when she began to gain. Her eyes came open, and the one that was the worst, was completely covered with canker, and was as white as paper. I used a wash of rosemary to take off the canker; and when the scale came off, the sight came out with it; and it entirely perished. The other eye was saved, to the astonishment of all who saw her, particularly the doctor, who used frequently to call to see how she did. He said she was saved entirely by the plan I had pursued, and the great care and attention paid to her. She entirely recovered from the disease, with the exception of the loss of one eye, and has enjoyed good health to this time. This was the first of my finding out the plan of steaming and using cold water. After this I found by experience that by putting a hot stone into a thing of hot water, leaving it partly out of the water, and then pouring vinegar on the stone, was an improvement. Care should be taken not to raise the heat too fast; and I used to put a cloth wet with cold water on the stomach, at the same time giving hot medicine to raise the heat inside; and when they had been steamed in this manner so long as I thought they could bear it, then rub them all over with a cloth wet with spirit, vinegar, or cold water, change their clothes and bed clothes, and then let them go to bed.

### **Beginning of Thomson's Theory, "Food the Fuel that Continues the Fire or Life of Man. Maintain the Internal Heat and Restore Perspiration."**

I had not the most distant idea at this time of ever engaging in the practice of medicine, more than to assist my own family; and little did I think what those severe trials and sufferings I experienced in the cases that have been mentioned, and which I was driven to by necessity, were to bring about. It seemed as a judgment upon me, that either myself or family, or some one living with me, were sick most of the time the doctor lived on my farm, which was about seven years. Since I have had more experience, and become better acquainted with the subject, I am satisfied in my own mind of the cause. When ever any of the family took a cold, the doctor was sent for, who would always either bleed or give physic. Taking away the blood reduces the heat, and gives power to the cold they had taken, which increases the disorder, and the coldness of the stomach causes canker; the physic drives all the determining powers from the surface inwardly, and scatters the canker through the stomach and bowels, which holds the cold inside, and drives the heat on the outside. The consequence is, that perspiration ceases, because internal heat is the sole cause of this important evacuation; and a settled fever takes place, which will continue as long as the cold keeps the upper hand. My experience has taught me that by giving hot medicine, the internal heat was increased, and by applying the steam externally, the natural perspiration was restored; and by giving medicine to clear the stomach and bowels from canker, till the cold is driven out and the heat returns, which is the turn of the fever, they



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will recover the digestive powers, so that food will keep the heat where it naturally belongs, which is the fuel that continues the fire or life of man.

### **Necessity now Compelled a Course of Medication in His Own Home.**

At the birth of our third son, my wife was again given over by the midwife. Soon after the child was born, she was taken with ague fits and cramp in the stomach; she was in great pain, and we were much alarmed at her situation. I proposed giving her some medicines, but the midwife was much opposed to it; she said she wished to have a doctor, and the sooner the better. I immediately sent for one, and tried to persuade her to give something which I thought would relieve my wife until the doctor could come; but she objected to it, saying that her case was a very difficult one, and would not allow to be trifled with; she said she was sensible of the dangerous situation my wife was in, for not one out of twenty lived through it, and probably she would not be alive in twenty-four hours from that time. We were thus kept in suspense until the man returned and the doctor could not be found, and there was no other within six miles. I then came to the determination of hearing to no one's advice any longer, but to pursue my own plan. I told my wife, that as the midwife said she could not live more than twenty-four hours, her life could not be cut short more than that time, therefore there would be no hazard in trying what I could do to relieve her. I gave her some warm medicine to raise the inward heat, and then applied the steam, which was very much opposed by the midwife; but I persisted in it according to the best of my judgment, and relieved her in about one hour, after she had laid in that situation above four hours, without anything being done. The midwife expressed a great deal of astonishment at the success I had met with, and said that I had saved her life, for she was certain that without the means I had used, she could not have lived. She continued to do well, and soon recovered. This makes the fifth time I had applied to the mother of invention for assistance, and in all of them was completely successful.

### **Beginning of Neighborhood Calls in Home Treatment.**

These things began to be taken some notice of about this time, and caused much conversation in the neighborhood. My assistance was called for by some of the neighbors, and I attended several cases with good success. I had previous to this time, paid some attention to the farrier business, and had been useful in that line. This, however, gave occasion for the ignorant and credulous to ridicule me and laugh at those whom I attended; but these things had little weight with me, for I had no other object in view but to be serviceable to my fellow creatures, and I was too firmly fixed in my determination to pursue that course, which I considered was pointed out as my duty, by the experience and many hard trials I had suffered, to be deterred by the foolish remarks of the envious or malicious part of society.

### **Successfully Treated His Own Family for Measles.**

Sometime in the month of November, 1802, my children had the measles, and some of them had them very bad. The want of knowing how to treat them gave me a great deal of trouble, much more than it would at the present time, for experience has taught me that they are very easy to manage. One of the children took the disease and gave it to the rest, and I think we had four down with them at the same time. My third son had the disorder very bad; they would not come out, but turned in, and he became stupid. The canker was much in the throat and mouth,



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and the rosemary would have no effect. Putrid symptoms made their appearance, and I was under the necessity of inventing something for that, and for the canker. I used the steam of vinegar to guard against putrefaction, and gold thread, or yellow root, with red oak acorns pounded and steeped together, for the canker. These had the desired effect; and by close attention he soon got better.

**Small Pox "A Looking Glass in which We May See the Nature of Every Other Disease."  
"The Same Means that will Put Out a Large Fire will Put Out a Candle."**

This experience enabled me to relieve many others in this disease, and likewise in the canker-rash; in these two disorders, and the small pox, I found a looking-glass, in which we may see the nature of every other disease. I had the small pox in the year 1798, and examined its symptoms with all the skill I was capable of, to ascertain the nature of the disease; and found that it was the highest stage of canker and putrefaction that the human system was capable of receiving; the measles the next, and the canker-rash the third; and other disorders partake more or less of the same, which I am satisfied is a key to the whole; for by knowing how to cure this, is a general rule to know how to cure all other cases; as the same means that will put out a large fire will put out a candle.

**Comments on Simple Medication Contrasted with "Fashionable Treatment."**

Soon after my family had got well of the measles, I was sent for to see a woman by the name of Redding, in the neighborhood. She had been for many years afflicted with the cholera, and could get no relief from the doctors. I attended her and found the disorder was caused by canker, and pursued the plan that my former experience had taught me, which relieved her from the pain, and so far removed the cause that she never had another attack of the disease. In this case the cure was so simply and easily performed, that it became a subject of ridicule, for when she was asked about it, she was ashamed to say that I cured her. The popular practice of the physicians had so much influence on the minds of the people, that they thought nothing could be right but what was done by them. I attended in this family for several years, and always answered the desired purpose; but my practice was so simple, that it was not worthy of notice, and being dissatisfied with the treatment I received, I refused to do any thing more for them. After this they employed the more fashionable practitioners, who were ready enough to make the most of a job, and they had sickness and expense enough to satisfy them, for one of the sons was soon after taken sick and was given over by the doctor, who left him to die; but after he left off giving him medicine he got well of himself, and the doctor not only had the credit of it, but for this job and one other similar, his charges amounted to over one hundred dollars. This satisfied me of the foolishness of the people, whose prejudices are always in favor of any thing that is fashionable, or that is done by those who profess great learning; and prefer long sickness and great expense, if done in this way, to a simple and natural relief, with a trifling expense.

**A Typical Case.**

Soon after this, I was called on to attend a Mrs. Wetherbee, in the neighborhood, who had the same disorder (measles). She had been afflicted with the cholera for several years, having periodical turns of it about once a month; had been under the care of a number of doctors, who had used all their skill without affording her



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any relief, excepting a temporary one by stupefying her with opium and giving physic, which kept her along till nature could wear it off, when she would get a little better for a few days, and then have another turn. After hearing of my curing Mrs. Redding, they sent for me; I gave her my medicine to remove the canker, and steamed her, which gave relief in one hour. She had a very large family to attend to, having thirteen children, and before she had recovered her strength she exposed herself and had another turn; I attended again and relieved her in the same manner as before; but she could not wait till she gained her strength, and exposed herself again as before, took cold and had another turn. Her husband said I only relieved her for the time, but did not remove the cause, and being dissatisfied with what I had done, he sent for a doctor to remove the cause; who carried her through a course of physic, and reduced her so low, that she lingered along for eight weeks, being unable to do any thing the whole time; they then decided that she had the consumption, and gave her over to die. After the doctors had left her in this situation as incurable, she applied again to me; but I declined doing any thing for her, as I knew her case was much more difficult than it was before she applied to the doctor, and if I should fail in curing her, the blame would all be laid to me, or if she got well I should get no credit for it; for which reason I felt very unwilling to do any thing for her. After finishing my forenoon's work, on going home to dinner, I found her at my house, waiting for me, and she insisted so much upon my undertaking to cure her, and seemed to have so much faith in my being able to do it, that I at last told her, if she would come to my house and stay with my wife, who was sick at the time, I would do the best I could to cure her. She readily consented, and staid but three days with us; during which time I pursued my usual plan of treatment, giving her things to remove the canker, and steaming to produce a natural perspiration; at the end of the three days she went home, taking with her some medicine, with directions what to do for herself, and in a short time entirely recovered her health.

### Another Case in which the Prevailing "Fashionable" Methods of that Date are Described.

In about a year after the above case, one of this family, a young man about sixteen years old, was attacked with a fever; the doctor was sent for, who followed the fashionable course of practice, and reduced him with mercury and other poisons, so that he lingered along for three or four months, constantly growing worse, till the doctor said it was a rheumatic fever, and afterwards that he was in a decline. He had taken so much mercury that it had settled in his back and hips, and was so stiff that he could not bring his hands lower than to his knees. By this time, the doctor had given him over as incurable, and he was considered a fit subject for me to undertake with. They applied to me, and I agreed to take him home to my house, and do the best I could to cure him. It was a difficult task, for I had in the first place to bring him back to the same situation he was in when he had the fever, and to destroy the effects of the poison, and regulate the system by steaming, to produce a natural perspiration; by pursuing this plan, and giving such things as I could get to restore the digestive powers, in two months he was completely restored to health; for which I received but five dollars, and this was more grudgingly paid than if they had given a doctor fifty, without doing any good at all.

### Thomson Decides to Either Give Up Practice or Make Medicine His Business.

I began to be sent for by the people of this part of the country so much, that I found it impossible to attend to my farm and family as I ought; for the cases I had



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attended, I had received very little or nothing, not enough to compensate me for my time; and I found it to be my duty to give up practice altogether, or to make a business of it. I consulted with my wife and asked the advice of my friends, what was best for me to do; they all agreed, that as it seemed to be the natural turn of my mind, if I thought myself capable of such an important undertaking, it would be best to let my own judgment govern me, and to do as I thought best. I maturely weighed the matter in my mind, and viewed it as the greatest trust that any one could engage in. I considered my want of learning and my ignorance of mankind, which almost discouraged me from the undertaking; yet I had a strong inclination for the practice, of which it seemed impossible to divest my mind; and I had always had a very strong aversion to working on a farm, as every thing of the kind appeared to me to be a burthen; the reason of which I could not account for, as I had carried on the business to good advantage, and had as good a farm as any in the neighborhood. I finally concluded to make use of that gift which I thought nature, or the God of nature, had implanted in me; and if I possessed such a gift, I had no need of learning, for no one can learn that gift. I thought of what St. Paul says in his epistle to the Corinthians, concerning the different gifts by the same spirit; one had the gift of prophecy; another, the gift of healing; another, the working of miracles. I am satisfied in my own mind, that every man is made and capacitated for some particular pursuit in life, in which, if he engages, he will be more useful than he would if he happens to be so unfortunate as to follow a calling or profession, that was not congenial to his disposition. This is a very important consideration for parents, not to make their sons learn trades or professions, which are contrary to their inclinations and the natural turn of their minds; for it is certain if they do, they never can be useful or happy in following them.

### Questions whether He would have been More Useful, With or Without a Systematic Medical Education.

I am convinced myself that I possess a gift in healing the sick, because of the extraordinary success I have met with, and the protection and support I have been afforded, against the attacks of all my enemies. Whether I should have been more useful had it been my lot to have had an education, and learned the profession in the fashionable way, is impossible for me to say with certainty; probably I should have been deemed more honorable in the world; but honor obtained by learning, without a natural gift, or capacity, can never, in my opinion, make a man very useful to his fellow-creatures. I wish my readers to understand me, that I do not mean to convey the idea, that learning is not necessary and essential in obtaining a proper knowledge of any profession or art; but that going to college will make a wise man of a fool, is what I am ready to deny; or that a man cannot be useful and even great in a profession, or in the arts and sciences, without a classical education, is what I think no one will have the hardihood to attempt to support, as it is contrary to reason and common sense. We have many examples of some of the greatest philosophers, physicians, and divines the world ever knew, who were entirely self-taught; and who have done more honor, and been greater ornaments to society, than a million of those who have nothing to recommend them but having their heads crammed with learning, without sense enough to apply it to any great or useful purpose.



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### Arrogance of Those Practicing the "Fashionable" Mode of Disease Treatment.

Among the practising physicians, I have found, and I believe it to be a well known fact, that those who are really great in the profession, and have had the most experience, condemn as much as I do, the fashionable mode of practice of the present day, and use very little medical poisons, confining themselves in their treatment of patients to simples principally, and the use of such things as will promote digestion and aid nature; and many of them disapprove of bleeding altogether. Those of this description, with whom I have had an opportunity to converse, have treated me with all due attention and civility; have heard me with pleasure, and been ready to allow me credit for my experience, and the discoveries I have made in curing disease. The opposition and abuse that I have met with, have been uniformly from those to whom I think I can with propriety, give the name of quacks, or ignorant pretenders; as all their merit consists in their self-importance and arrogant behaviour towards all those who have not had the advantages of learning, and a degree at college.

### Contents that His Antagonists were Aggressive because he Cured Cases They could not Relieve.

This class comprises a large proportion of the medical faculty throughout our country; they have learned just enough to know how to deceive the people, and keep them in ignorance, by covering their doings under an unknown language to their patients. There can be no good reason given why all the technical terms in medical works are kept in a dead language, except it be to deceive and keep the world ignorant of their doings, that they may the better impose upon the credulity of the people; for if they were to be written in our own language, everybody would understand them, and judge for themselves; and their poisonous drugs would be thrown into the fire before their patients would take them. The ill-treatment that I have received from them, has been mostly where I have exposed their ignorance, by curing those they had given over to die; in which cases they have shown their malice by circulating all kinds of false and ridiculous reports of me and my practice, in order to destroy my credit with the people.

### Decides to Formulate and then to Teach His "System" to Others.

After I had come to the determination to make a business of the medical practice, I found it necessary to fix upon some system or plan for my future government in the treatment of disease; for what I had done had been as it were from accident, and the necessity arising out of the particular cases that came under my care, without any fixed plan; in which I had been governed by my judgment and the advantages I had received from experience. I deemed it necessary, not only as my own guide, but that whatever discoveries I should make in my practice, they might be so adapted to my plan that my whole system might be easily taught to others, and preserved for the benefit of the world. I had no other assistance than my own observations, and the natural reflections of my own mind, unaided by learning or the opinions of others. I took nature for my guide, and experience as my instructor; and after seriously considering every part of the subject, I came to certain conclusions concerning disease, and the whole animal economy, which more than forty years experience has perfectly satisfied me is the only correct theory.



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Thomson Formulates His "System," in which were Devised his Famous Remedies by Number.

I found, after maturely considering the subject, that all animal bodies are formed of the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water. Earth and water constitute the solids, and air and fire, or heat, are the cause of life and motion. That cold, or lessening the power of heat, is the cause of all disease; that to restore heat to its natural state, was the only way by which health could be produced; and that, after restoring the natural heat, by clearing the system of all obstructions and causing a natural perspiration, the stomach would digest the food taken into it, by which means the whole body is nourished and invigorated, and heat or nature is enabled to hold its supremacy; that the constitutions of all mankind being essentially the same, and differing only in the different temperament of the same materials of which they are composed; it appeared clearly to my mind, that all disease proceeded from one general cause, and might be cured by one general remedy; that a state of perfect health arises from a due balance or temperature of the four elements; but if it is by any means destroyed, the body is more or less disordered. And when this is the case, there is always an actual diminution or absence of the element of fire, or heat; and in proportion to this diminution or absence, the body is affected by its opposite, which is cold. And I found that all disorders which the human family were afflicted with, however various the symptoms, and different the names by which they are called, arise directly from obstructed perspiration, which is always caused by cold, or want of heat; for if there is a natural heat, it is impossible but that there must be a natural perspiration.

No. 1. Seeking a General Remedy to "Increase the Internal Heat, Remove all Obstructions of the System, Restore the Digestive Powers of the Stomach, and Produce a Rational Perspiration, Selects Emetic Herb (Lobelia), but It was Found Inadequate. It was Like a "Fire Made of Shavings."

Having fixed upon these general principles, as the only solid foundation upon which a correct and true understanding of the subject can be founded, my next business was to ascertain what kinds of medicine and treatment would best answer the purpose in conformity to this universal plan of curing disease; for it must, I think, be certain and self-evident to every one, that whatever will increase the internal heat, remove all obstructions of the system, restore the digestive powers of the stomach, and produce a natural perspiration, is universally applicable in all cases of disease, and therefore may be considered as a general remedy.

No. 1.\*

The first and most important consideration was to find a medicine that would establish a natural internal heat, so as to give nature its proper command. My emetic herb, (No. 1,) I found would effectually cleanse the stomach, and would very effectually aid in raising the heat and promoting perspiration; but would not hold it long enough to effect the desired object, so but that the cold would return again and assume its power. It was like a fire made of shavings; a strong heat for a short time, and then all go out.

\* Thomson's Famous Remedies, by number: No. 1, Emetics (Lobelia, typical); No. 2, Stimulants (Capsicum, typical); No. 3, Astringents (Bayberry, typical); No. 4, Bitters (Balmony, typical); No. 5, Restorative Tonics (Peach, typical); No. 6, Antiseptics (Myrrh, typical). Thomson's *Compound Tincture of Myrrh and Capsicum* became celebrated as "Number 6."



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### No. 2. The Medicine Fixed Upon to Increase the Internal Heat was Capsicum.

After much experience and trying every thing within my knowledge, to gain this important point, I fixed upon the medicine which I have called No. 2, in my patent, for that purpose; and after using it for many years, I am perfectly convinced that it is the best thing that can be made use of to hold the heat in the stomach until the system can be cleared of obstructions, so as to produce a natural digestion of the food, which will nourish the body, establish perspiration and restore the health of the patient. I found it to be perfectly safe in all cases, and never knew any bad effects from administering it.

### No. 3. Bayberry Root, combined with White Pond Lily Root Preferred. In Case the Pond Lily can not be Obtained, Hemlock, Marsh Rosemary, Sumach, Witch Hazel, Red Raspberry Leaves, or Black Cohosh may be Substituted. (Subsequently, these Remedies by Number were Continued to 6. See footnote, page 15.)

My next grand object was to get something that would clear the stomach and bowels from canker, which are more or less affected by it in all cases of disease to which the human family are subject. Canker and putrefaction are caused by cold, or want of heat; for whenever any part of the body is so affected by cold as to overpower the natural heat, putrefaction commences, and if not checked by medicine, or if the natural constitution is not strong enough to overcome its progress, it will communicate to the blood, when death will end the contest between heat and cold, by deciding in favor of the latter. I have made use of a great many articles, which are useful in removing canker; but my preparation called No. 3, is the best for that purpose, that has come to my knowledge; though many other things may be made use of to good effect.

### System of Treatment Summarized.

My general plan of treatment has been in all cases of disease, to cleanse the stomach by giving No. 1, and produce as great an internal heat as I could, by giving No. 2, and when necessary, made use of steaming, in which I have always found great benefit, especially in fevers; after this, I gave No. 3, to clear off the canker; and in all cases where patients had not previously become so far reduced as to have nothing to build upon, I have been successful in restoring them to health. I found that fever was a disturbed state of the heat, or more properly, that it was caused by the efforts which nature makes to throw off disease, and therefore ought to be aided in its cause, and treated as a friend; and not as an enemy, as is the practice of the physicians. In all cases of disease, I have found that there is more or less fever, according to the state of the system; but that all fevers proceed from the same cause, differing only in the symptoms; and may be managed and brought to a crisis with much less trouble than is generally considered practicable, by increasing the internal heat, till the cold is driven out, which is the cause of it. Thus keeping the fountain above the stream, and every thing will take its natural course.

### After making Reports of a Number of "Cases" Treated, comes an Intimation of Trouble with the "Fashionable Doctors."

Notwithstanding this desperate case was cured, to the astonishment of all who witnessed it, the doctors had so much influence over the people, and made so many false statements about it, that I got no credit for the cure. This woman's brother had said that her husband wanted to kill her, or he would not have sent for me.



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Such kind of ingratitude was discouraging to me; but it did not prevent me from persevering in my duty.

A short time after the above case happened, that woman's brother, who made the speech about me, was taken very sick, with what was called the yellow fever, and sent for me. I attended him and asked him if he wanted to die. He said no; why do you ask that? I told him, that I should suppose from the speech he made about my being sent for to his sister, that he did, or he would not have sent for me, if he believed his own words. He said he thought differently now. I attended him through the day with my new practice. To sweat him, I took hemlock boughs, and put a hot stone in the middle of a large bunch of them, wrapping the whole in a cloth, and poured on hot water till I raised a lively steam, and then put one at his feet and another near his body. I gave him medicine to raise the inward heat, and for the canker; after attending him through the day, I went home; and on calling to see him the next morning, found his fever had turned, and he was quite comfortable, so that he was soon about his business.

### Description of a "Case," chiefly of Interest as an Illustration of the Methods of Medication One Hundred Years Ago.

I was about this time sent for to see a child in Surry, a neighboring town, which was taken very sick, and was entirely stupid. I told the father of the child that it had the canker, and made use of my common mode of practice for that difficulty. Being sent for to go to Walpole, to see two young men who had been taken the day before with the prevailing fever, I left the child, with directions how to proceed with it. I then started for Walpole, and found the two young men violently attacked with the fever. They had a brother who had been attended by the doctor for above four weeks for the same disease, and was then just able to sit up. It was thought by all, the two that were attacked last, were as violently taken as the other was; and they expressed a strong wish, that they might be cured without so long a run as their brother had. I was as anxious as they were to have a short job, and exerted all my powers to relieve them, which I was enabled to do that night, and left them in the morning quite comfortable, so that they were soon able to attend to their work. The brother who had the doctor, was unable to do any thing for several months. The doctor was paid a heavy bill for his visits; but my cure was done so quick, that it was thought not to be worthy of their notice, and I never received a cent from them for my trouble. On returning to the child that I had left the day before, I found that the doctor had been there and told them that I did not know what was the matter with the child; and had persuaded them to give him the care of it. He filled it with mercury and run it down; after having given as much mercury inside as nature could move, and the bowels grew silent, he then rubbed mercurial ointment on the bowels as long as it had any effect; after which he agreed that the child had the canker very badly; but he still persisted in the same course till the child wasted away and died, in about two months after it was first taken sick. After the child was dead, its parents were willing to allow that I understood the disorder best. The doctor got twenty-five dollars for killing the child by inches, and I got nothing.

### A Journey, during which a Number of "Cases" were Treated. One being of "Cancer" again Illustrates the "Fashionable Methods" of Medication in Thomson's Day.

After returning home, I was sent for to attend a woman in the neighborhood, who had been under the care of a celebrated doctor, for a cancer in her breast. He had tortured her with his caustics, till her breast was burnt through to the



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bone; and by its corrosive nature, had caused the cords to draw up into knots; he had likewise burnt her leg to the cords. She had been under his care eleven weeks; until she was much wasted away, and her strength nearly gone. In this situation the doctor was willing to get her off his hands, and wished me to take charge of her. After some hesitation, I consented, and attended her three weeks, in which time I healed up her sores, and cleared her of the humor so effectually, that she has ever since enjoyed good health.

### Illustrative of Thomson's Aggressive Sarcasm.

I attended the funeral of a young man, one of his patients, who was sick but twenty-four hours, and but twelve under the operation of his medicine. He was as black as a blackberry, and swelled so as to be difficult to screw down the lid of the coffin; when I went into the room where the corpse was, the doctor followed me, and gave directions to have the coffin secured so as to prevent the corpse from being seen; and then began to insult me, to attract the attention of the people. He said to me, I understand, sir, that you have a patent to cure such disorders as that, pointing to the corpse. I said no, and at the same time intimated what I thought of him. He put on an air of great importance, and said to me, what can you know about medicine? You have no learning; you can not parse one sentence in grammar. I told him I never knew that grammar was made use of as medicine; but if a portion of grammar is so much like the operation of ratsbane, as appears on this corpse, I should never wish to know the use of it. This unexpected application of the meaning of what he said, displeased the medical gentleman very much; and finding that many of the people present had the same opinion that I had, it irritated him so much, that he threatened to horsewhip me; but I told him that he might do what he pleased to me, provided he did not poison me with his grammar. He did not attempt to carry his threat into execution, so I have escaped his whip and his poison; but the people were justly punished for their ingratitude and folly, in preferring death and misery, because it was done more fashionably, to a mode of practice by which they might relieve themselves in a simple and safe manner.

### A Journey to New York to Study Yellow Fever.

In the spring of the year 1806, I came to a determination to go to New York, for the purpose of ascertaining the nature of the yellow fever, having been impressed with the idea, that this disease was similar to that which had been prevalent in different parts of the country, only differing in causes which were local.

On my arrival, I looked round to find a place to board, and took up my lodgings with a Mr. Kavanagh, an Irishman, and a Roman Catholic. After spending some time in viewing the city, I applied to the Mayor of the city, and to the Board of Health, to ascertain whether I could have an opportunity to try the effect of my medicine and system of practice on the prevailing fever. They told me that I could; but that I could get no pay for it by law. I went to see Doctor Miller, who was then President of the Board of Health, and had some conversation with him upon the subject. He told me the same as the Mayor had, and inquired of me in what manner I expected to give relief; I told him my plan was to cause perspiration. He said if I could cause them to sweat, he thought there was a good chance to effect a cure.



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### Stricken with Yellow Fever, Thomson Takes a Course in His Own "System."

After spending several days in New York, I went to West Chester Creek to procure some medicine. I thought that I was going to have the yellow fever, for I felt all the symptoms, as I thought, of that disease; my strength was nearly gone, my eyes were yellow, and a noise in my head; my tongue was black, and what passed my bowels was like tar. I was among strangers, and had little money; I went to the house of a Quaker woman, and asked to let me stay with her that day; she gave her consent. Had but little medicine with me, and could find nothing that I could relish but salt and vinegar; I used about half a pint of salt, and double that quantity of vinegar, which gave me relief, and I gained so much strength, that the next day I was able to return to the city of New York. On my arrival there, I was so weak that it was with the greatest difficulty I could walk to my boarding house, which was about forty rods from the place where we landed. I immediately took Nos. 2 and 3, steeped, and No. 4; in a short time, I began to have an appetite; the first food that I took was a piece of smoked salmon, and some ripe peach sauce. I soon recovered my strength and was able to be about. This satisfied me that I had formed a correct idea of this fatal disease; that it was the consequence of losing the inward heat of the body, and bringing it to a balance with the surrounding air; and the only method by which a cure can be effected, is by giving such medicine as will increase the fever or inward heat to such a degree as to get the determining power to the surface, by which means perspiration will take place, and which is called the turn of the fever; if this is not accomplished either by medicine, or by nature being sufficient to overcome the disease, mortification will be as certain a consequence as it would be if a person was strangled. The reason why they lose their strength in so short a time, is because it depends wholly upon the power of inward heat; and as much as they lose of that, so much they lose of their strength and activity.

### An Advocate of Pure and Good Food, thus Anticipating the Government Crusade Nearly a Century Later.

I will here make a few remarks upon the food taken into the stomach, which is of the utmost importance to the preservation of health. While I was in New York, I took particular notice of their manner of living; and observed that they subsisted principally upon fresh provisions, more particularly the poorer class of people; who are in the habit in warm weather of going to market at a late hour of the day, and purchasing fresh meat that is almost in a putrid state, having frequently been killed the night previous, and being badly cooked, by taking it into the stomach, will produce certain disease; and I am convinced that this is one of the greatest causes that those fatal epidemics prevail in the hot season, in our large seaports. Mutton and lamb is often drove a great distance from the country, and having been heated and fatigued, then are cooled suddenly, which causes the fat to turn to water; and often when killed, are in almost a putrid state, and the meat is soft and flabby. Such meat as this, when brought into the market on a hot day, will turn green under the kidneys in two or three hours, and taken into the stomach will putrify before it digests, and will communicate the same to the stomach, and the whole body will be so affected by it, as to cause disorders of the worst kind. If people would get into the practice of eating salt provisions in hot weather, and fresh in cold, it would be a very great preventive of disease. One ounce of putrid flesh in the stomach is worse than the effect



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produced by a whole carcass on the air by its effluvia. Much more might be said upon this important subject; but I shall defer it for the present, and shall treat more upon it in another part of the work. It is a subject that has been too much neglected by our health officers in this country.

### Illustrative of Thomson's Methods of Procuring Remedies.

In November, I went to Plum Island to collect medicine; on my way I called on Joseph Hale, Esq., of Pepperell, and engaged him to come down with his wagon in about three weeks, to bring back what medicine I should collect. I went by the way of Newburyport; and after being on the Island three or four days, collected such roots as I wanted and returned to that place.

### Introducing Dr. French. The Beginning of Thomson's Persecution, or Prosecution, as One Looks at the Matter.

While there, being in a store in conversation with some persons, there came in a man from Salisbury mills, by the name of Osgood, who stated that he was very unwell, and that his wife lay at the point of death, with the lung fever; that she had been attended by Dr. French, who had given her over. One of the gentlemen standing by, told him that I was a doctor, and used the medicine of our own country. He asked me if I would go home with him, and see his wife. As I was waiting for Mr. Hale, and had nothing to do, I told him I would, and we immediately started in the chaise for his home, which was about six miles. On our arrival, he introduced me to his wife as a doctor who made use of the medicine of our country; and asked her if she was willing that I should undertake to cure her. She said if I thought that I could help her she had no objection. I gave my opinion that I could, and undertook, though with some reluctance, as I was in a strange place, and no one that I knew. I proceeded with her in my usual method of practice, and in about fourteen hours her fever turned, and the next day she was comfortable, and soon got about.

This cure caused considerable talk among the people in the neighborhood, who thought very favorably of me and my practice; but it soon came to the ears of Dr. French, who was very much enraged to think one of his patients, that he had given over, should be cured by one whom he called a quack; and attempted to counteract the public impression in my favor, by circulating a report that the woman was getting better, and sat up the greatest part of the day before I saw her; but this was denied by the woman's husband, and known by many to be false.

While I remained in this place, waiting for Mr. Hale to come down with his wagon to carry home my medicine, I was called on to attend several cases, in all of which I was very successful; most of them were such as had been given over by the doctors. One of them was the case of a young man, who had cut three of his fingers very badly, so as to lay open the joints. Dr. French had attended him three weeks, and they had got so bad that he advised him to have them cut off, as the only alternative. The young man applied to me for advice. I told him if I was in his situation, I should not be willing to have them cut off till I had made some further trial to cure them without. He requested me to undertake to cure him, to which I consented and began by clearing the wound of mercury, by washing it with weak lye; I then put on some drops, and did it up with a bandage, which was kept wet with cold water. While I was dressing the wound, a young man, who was studying with Dr. French, came in and made a great fuss, telling the young man that I was going to spoil his hand. I told him that I was accountable



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for what I was doing, and that if he had any advice to offer I was ready to hear him; but he seemed to have nothing to offer except to find fault, and went off, after saying that Dr. French's bill must be paid very soon. I continued to dress his hand, and in ten days he was well enough to attend to his work, being employed in a nail factory. Soon after, I saw him there at work, and asked him how his fingers did; he said they were perfectly cured; he wished to know what my bill was for attending him. I asked him what Dr. French had charged, and he said he had sent his bill to his mother, amounting to seventeen dollars; I told him I thought that enough for us both, and I should charge him nothing.

### After a Number of Journeys, in which his "System" was Used Continually, Thomson again Meets Dr. French.

After stopping at Pelham three weeks, in which time I had as much practice as I could attend to, I went to Salisbury Mills, where I was very cordially welcomed by all those who had been attended by me the season before. I was called on to practise in this place and Newburyport, and my success was so great that it caused much alarm among the doctors, and a class of the people who were their friends, who did all they could to injure me, and destroy my credit with the people. A considerable part of the patients, who were put under my care, were such as the doctors had given over, and those being cured by me, had a tendency to open the eyes of the people, and give them a correct understanding of the nature of their practice, and convince them that a simple and speedy cure was more for their interest and comfort, than long sickness, pain, and distress; besides having to pay exorbitant doctors' bills, for useless visits and poisonous drugs, which had no other effect than to prolong disease, and destroy the natural constitution of the patient.

Among those doctors who seemed so much enraged against me, for no other reason that I could learn, than because I had cured people whom they had given over, and instructed them to assist themselves when sick, without having to apply to them; there was none that made themselves so conspicuous as Dr. French. I had considerable practice in his neighborhood, and was very successful in every case; this seemed to excite his malice against me to the greatest pitch; he made use of every means in his power, and took every opportunity to insult and abuse me both to my face and behind my back. A few of the inhabitants who were his friends, joined with him, and became his instruments to injure me; but a large proportion of the people were friendly to me, and took great interest in my safety and success. The doctor and his adherents spread all kinds of ridiculous reports concerning me and my practice, giving me the name of the old wizzard; and that my cures were done under the power of witchcraft. This foolish whim was too ridiculous for me to undertake to contradict, and I therefore rather favored it merely for sport; many remarkable circumstances took place tending to strengthen this belief, and some of the silly and weak-minded people really believed that I possessed supernatural powers. This will not appear so strange, when we take into view, that the people generally were ignorant of my system of practice, and when they found that I could cure those diseases that the doctors, in whom they had been in the habit of putting all their confidence, pronounced as incurable; and that I could turn a fever in two days, which would often take them as many months, they were led to believe that there was something supernatural in it.



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### Thomson Becomes Aggressively Sarcastic.

A man who was one of the friends of Dr. French, and who had been very inimical to me, doing all in his power to injure and ridicule me, sent word one day by a child, that his calf was sick, and he wanted me to come and give it a green powder and a sweat. Knowing that his object was to insult, I returned for answer, that he must send for Dr. French, and if he could not cure it, I would come, for that was the way that I had to practise here.

### After a Journey, and a Rest at Home, Thomson Again Invades the Territory of Dr. French, who Prepares for Him a Trap.

In the year of 1808, I went again to Salisbury, and on my way there, stopped at Pelham, and attended and gave relief in several cases of disease. On my arrival at Salisbury Mills, where I made it my home, I was immediately called on to practise in that place and the adjacent towns. Many came to me from different parts, whose cases were desperate, having been given over by the doctors, such as humors, dropsies, mortifications, fellons, consumptions, &c. Fevers were so quickly cured, and with so little trouble, that many were unwilling to believe they had the disease. My success was so great, that the people generally were satisfied of the superiority of my mode of practice over all others. This created considerable alarm with the doctors, and those who sided with them. Dr. French seemed to be much enraged, and having failed to destroy my credit with the people by false reports, and ridiculous statements of witchcraft, shifted his course of proceeding, and attempted to frighten me by threats, which only tended to show the malice he bore me; for no other reason, that I could conceive of, as I had never spoken to him, than because of my success in relieving those he had given over to die. He would frequently cause me to be sent for in great haste to attend some one in his neighborhood, who was stated to be very sick; but I saw through these tricks, and avoided all their snares. It seemed to be his determination, if he failed in destroying my practice, to destroy me. Being in company one day at Salisbury village, with Mr. Jeremiah Eaton, of Exeter, whose wife was under my care for a dropsical complaint, I was sent for four times to visit a young man at the house of Dr. French; the last time, a man came on horseback in the greatest haste, and insisted that I should go and see him. I asked why Dr. French did not attend him; he answered that he had rather have me. Being convinced, from the appearance of things, that it was an attempt to put some trick upon me, I refused to go, and the man returned. In a short time after, Dr. French came into the village, and Mr. Eaton, who was present when they came after me, asked him what ailed the young man at his house; he said nothing, but that he was as well as anybody. This revealed the whole secret. Mr. Eaton then asked him why he caused me to be sent for so many times, under a false pretence. He said to see if I dared to come into his neighborhood; that he did not care how much I practised on that side of the river; but if I came on his, he would blow my brains out; that I was a murderer, and he could prove it. Mr. Eaton observed that it was a heavy accusation to make against a man, and that he ought to be made to prove his words, or to suffer the consequence; that his wife was under my care, and if I was a murderer, he ought to see to it. Dr. French again repeated the words, with many threats against me, and showed the spite and malice of a savage.



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### Thomson has Dr. French Arrested, Wins His Case, and Resumes His Practice.

Mr. Eaton and others of my friends considered my life in danger; and came immediately to me and related what had been said by the doctor; and advised me to be on my guard. I had to pass his house every day to visit my patients; but did not consider myself safe in going in the night, nor in the day time without some one with me. I continued in this manner for several days, and finding his malice towards me to be as great as ever, and still continuing his threats; with the advice of my friends, I was induced to have resort to the law for protection. I went to Newburyport and entered a complaint against him before a magistrate, who granted a warrant, and he was brought before him for a trial. My case was made out by fully proving his words; he asked for an adjournment for three hours to make his defence, which was granted. He then brought forward evidence in support of his character, and proved by them that he had always been a man of his word. The Justice told him that he thought he proved too much, and to his disadvantage, for it had been fully proved that he had made the threats alleged against him, and to prove that he was a man of his word, went to satisfy the court that the complaint was well grounded. He was laid under two hundred dollars bonds to keep the peace and appear at the next court of common pleas. He appeared at the next court, was ordered to pay all the cost, and was discharged from his bail. This was an end of our controversy for that time; but his malice continued against me long after; seeking every means to destroy me and prevent my practising, that he could devise; but proceeded with more caution, which caused me a great deal of trouble and much suffering, as will be hereafter related.

I continued to practise in this place, and had as many patients as I could possibly attend upon, notwithstanding the opposition I constantly met with from the doctors and their friends; for with all their arts and falsehoods they were not able to prevent those laboring under complaints, which they had found could not be removed by the fashionable mode of treatment, from applying to me for relief; none of whom but what were either cured or received great relief by the practice. Some of the most extraordinary cases I shall give a particular account of for the information of the reader.

### Dr. French Seeks Revenge.

Previously to my difficulty with Dr. French, as has been before mentioned, Mrs. Eaton and another woman by the name of Lifford, came to me at Salisbury Mills from Exeter. Their complaint was dropsy; and were both desperate cases, having been given over by the doctor who had attended them. Mrs. Eaton was swelled to such a degree, that she could not see her knees as she sat in a chair, and her limbs in proportion. I felt unwilling to undertake with them, as I considered there would be but little chance of a cure; and declined doing any thing for them, and sent them away, stating that there was no place that they could get boarded. They went away as I supposed to go home; but they soon returned, and said they had found a place where they could stay, and a young woman had agreed to nurse them. I undertook with them very reluctantly; but could not well avoid it. I gave them some medicine, and it operated favorably on both, especially on Mrs. Lifford; then gave strict orders to the nurse, to attend them attentively through the night, and keep up a perspiration; but she almost totally neglected her duty, spending her time with the young people. On visiting them in the morning I was very much hurt to find my directions neglected. Mrs. Lifford



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was quite poorly; and stated to me that the nurse had neglected her, and that she had got her feet out of bed; her perspiration had ceased, and other symptoms appeared unfavorable.

I attended upon her through the day and did all I could to relieve her, but could not raise a perspiration again. She continued till the next night about midnight and died. My hopes of doing her any good were small; but think that if she had not been neglected by the nurse, there might have been some small chance for her, as the first operation of the medicine was so favorable. Her bowels were in a very bad state, and had been almost in a mortified condition for three weeks, and what passed her was by force, and very black.

This caused great triumph among my enemies, and Dr. French tried to have a jury on the body; but he could not prevail; for the circumstances were well known to many, and all that knew anything about it, cleared me from all blame. The nurse said that I did all I could, and if there was any blame it ought to fall on her and not on me. So they failed in their attempt to make me out a murderer; but this case was laid up to be brought against me at another time.

### Thomson Meditates on Contrasts.

This shows what may be done by the folly of people, and the malice and wickedness of designing men, who care more for their own interested ends, than for the health and happiness of a whole community. The fashionable educated doctor may lose one-half his patients without being blamed; but if I lose one out of several hundred of the most desperate cases, most of which were given over as incurable, it is called murder.

### In Dr. Shephard, Thomson at last Finds an Appreciative Physician Observer.

As soon as I could get the patients under my care in a situation to leave them, I left Salisbury Mills, and went to Exeter, and commenced practising in my usual way, and was applied to from all parts. I had not so many to attend as I had in some places; but they were all of the most desperate nature, such as had been given over by the doctors, in all of which I met with great success. Many of the cases had been attended by Dr. Shephard; he had attended with me upon his patients at Salisbury; was a very plain, candid sort of a man, and treated me with much civility. I well remember his first speech to me, which was in the following words: "Well, what are you doing here, are you killing or curing the people?" I replied, you must judge about that for yourself. "Well," said he, "I will watch you, not for fear of your doing harm, but for my own information; I wish you well, and will do you all the good I can." I always found him candid and friendly, without any hypocrisy. He once called on me to visit with him one of his patients in the town where he lived, who had the rheumatism in his back and hips. The doctor had attended him about two months, and said he had killed the pain, but his back was stiff, so that he could not bring his hands below his knees. I attended him about forty-eight hours, and then went with him to see the doctor, which was half a mile; the doctor appeared to be much pleased to see him so well, and have the use of his limbs; for he could stoop and use them as well as he ever could. He said that he was as glad for the young man's sake as though he had cured him himself. He frequently came to see Mrs. Eaton, whom I was attending for the dropsy; and expressed much astonishment at the effect the medicine I gave had in relieving her of a disease which he had considered incurable. At one time when conversing with her upon her situation, and finding



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her so much better, having been reduced in size above fifteen inches, he expressed himself with some warmth on the occasion, saying, that it was what he had never seen or heard of being done before, and what he had considered impossible to be done with medicine. Addressing himself to me with much earnestness, inquired how it was that I did it. I replied, you know doctor that the heat had gone out of the body, and the water had filled it up; and all I had to do was to build fire enough in the body to boil away the water. He burst into a laugh, and said that it was a system very short.

### Again Illustrating "Fashionable" Medication of that Date, and Thomson's Opinion of Disease.

While practising in Exeter, I had many desperate cases from the different parts of the country, and from Portsmouth. One from the latter place I shall mention, being different from what I had before witnessed. A woman applied to me who had the venereal, in consequence, as she stated, of having had a bad husband; which I believed to be true. She had been attended by the doctors in Portsmouth for nearly a year, who had filled her with mercury, for the purpose of curing the disorder till the remedy had become much worse than the disease. Her case was alarming, and very difficult; she was brought on a bed, being unable to sit up; and seemed to be one mass of putrefaction. I proceeded with her in my usual way of treating all cases where the system is greatly disordered, by giving medicine to promote perspiration, steaming to throw out the mercury, and restore the digestive powers; and in three weeks she returned home entirely cured. Another woman came to me from the same place, who had been sick five years, which had been in consequence of having had the same disease, and the doctors had filled her with mercury to kill the disorder, as they called it, then left her to linger out a miserable existence. When she stated her case to me, I felt very unwilling to undertake with her, apprehending that it would be very uncertain whether a cure could be effected, having been of so long standing; but she insisted upon it so strongly, that I could not put her off. After attending upon her three weeks, however, her health was restored, and she returned home well; and in less than a year after, she had two children at one birth. She had not had a child for eight years before. This disease is very easily cured in the first stages of it, by a common course of medicine, being nothing more than a high stage of canker seated in the glands of certain parts of the body, and if not cured, communicates to the glands of the throat and other parts; by giving mercury, the whole system is completely disordered, and although the disease may disappear, it is not cured; and there is more difficulty in getting the mercury out of the body of one in this situation, than to cure a dozen of the disease who have not taken this dangerous poison.

### The Medical Profession "Alarmed" and for the Second Time Charge Thomson with "Witchcraft."

While in Exeter, I had a case of a young man, son of Col. Nathaniel Gilman, who was in a decline. He was about fourteen years old, and had been troubled with bleeding at the nose. They had made use of such powerful astringents, with corrosive sublimate snuffed up his nose, that the blood vessels in that part seemed to be shrunk up, and his flesh much wasted away; I carried him through a course of medicine, and gave an equal circulation of blood through the body, and stopped its course to the head; then raised a natural perspiration, restored the digestive powers, and regulated the system, so as to support the body with food instead of



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medicine. In a short time he recovered his health so that he commanded a company of militia at the alarm at Portsmouth, during the late war.

My success while at this place, and the many extraordinary cures I performed, gained me great credit among the people; but the medical faculty became much alarmed, and made use of every artifice to prejudice them against me. The foolish stories about witchcraft, which had been made a handle of at Salisbury, were repeated here, with a thousand other ridiculous statements for the purpose of injuring me; but I treated them with contempt, as not worthy of my notice, except in some instances, to amuse myself with the credulity of the ignorant, who were foolish enough to believe such nonsense.

**Thomson Invades the Territory of Dr. Manasseh Cutler. (See Bulletin, Lloyd Library No. VII, for Portrait and History of Cutler.) Again He Lays Up Trouble for Himself.**

Some time towards the close of the summer, while I was at Exeter, I was sent for to go to Portsmouth to see a young man by the name of Lebell, who was in a very dangerous situation, supposed by his friends to be in a dying state, having been given over by Drs. Cutler and Pierpont, at ten o'clock that morning. I arrived about two in the afternoon. He had been attended by the two doctors above named for upwards of a month, to cure the venereal; they had filled him with mercury, so that he had swelled all over with the poison. The doctors pronounced it to be the dropsy. His legs had been scarified to let off the water; the disorder and the mercury had gained the power, and nature had submitted. I at once pronounced it to be a desperate case, and told the French Consul, who had the care of him, that I could give no encouragement that I could do him any good; but he was very solicitous for me to do something for him. I told him the only chance was to raise perspiration, and that twenty-four hours would determine his case; for he would either be better in that time, or be dead. The idea of perspiration caused him to urge me to try; and he said if I could effect it, he would give me one hundred dollars; the doctors had tried for a month, and could not succeed. I gave him some medicine, then put on the clothes by degrees, until he was shielded from the air, and he sweat freely in about an hour. The two doctors were present, and seemed astonished at my success; they walked the room, talked low, then went out. I staid with him till six o'clock, and the symptoms seemed to be favorable; he sweat profusely, and spit much blood. I told the nurse to keep him in the same situation till I returned; went out and was gone about an hour, and came back again with Mr. Underwood. When we came into the room, found that the doctors had taken him out of bed and sat him in a chair, and opened the window against him. I told them that their conduct would cause his death, and I would do no more for him; but should give him up as their patient.

It appeared to me that they were afraid I should cure him, and thus prove the superiority of my practice over theirs; for they had tried a month to get a perspiration, without success, and I had done it in one hour. The man fainted before I left the room. I went home with Mr. Underwood and staid that night, and left them to pursue their own course; the man died before morning. Instead of getting the hundred dollars, as was agreed, I never got a cent for all my trouble of coming fifteen miles, and returning back again on foot; and besides this loss, afterwards,—when I came to be persecuted by the faculty,—the above two doctors gave their depositions against me, in which I was informed they swore that I killed this man, notwithstanding they had given him over to die the



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morning before I saw him, and they had taken him out of my hands, as above stated. On being informed that they were trying to support a complaint against me, I got the depositions of Mr. Underwood and others, who were knowing to the facts, to contradict these false statements. On finding that I was determined to oppose them, and prove what they had sworn to be all false, they thought proper to drop the matter; but I was informed they had sworn that my medicine was of a poisonous nature, and if it did not cause the patient to vomit soon after being taken, they would certainly die. It is unnecessary for me to contradict this, for its incorrectness and absurdity is too well known to all who have any knowledge of the medicine I use.

### After a number of Journeys is Called by a Man Who Heard that he, Thomson, "Sweat His Patients To Death." Description of Treatment.

I was frequently in Portsmouth to visit those who had been sent to me to be attended upon at Exeter. Sometime in September in 1808, when there, I was called on to visit Mr. Richard Rice, who was sick with the yellow fever, as it was called. The reason for his sending for me, was in consequence of having heard the reports of the doctors, that I sweat my patients to death. He conceived an idea that if he could sweat, he should be better; but they would not allow him to be kept warm, taking the clothes off of him, and keeping the windows and doors open; no fire was permitted in the room, while he was shivering with the cold. The plan was to kill the fever, and to effect this with more certainty, the doctor had bled him, and told his sister that he had given him as much ratsbane as he dared to give, and if that did not answer he did not know what would.

I began to give him medicine a little before night, and in one hour perspiration took place. He was so weak that he was unable to help himself. In the morning the doctor proposed to bleed him; but he was dismissed. I was with him till the symptoms were favorable, and then left him in the care of three persons whom I could confide in. After I was gone, Dr. Brackett came into the room where the patient was, in a great rage, saying that they were killing him; for the mortification would soon take place, in consequence of keeping him so warm. He was asked by one of those present, in which case mortification was most likely to take place, when the blood was cold and thick, or warm and thin. He suspected some quibble, and would not give an answer; and it was immaterial which way he answered; for in either case he had no grounds to support an argument upon, but what might be easily refuted. After he had failed in the interference with those who had the care of the patient, he went to his wife and other relations, and tried to frighten them; but he did not succeed, for they were well satisfied with what was doing.

The patient was much out by spells, sometimes imagining himself to be a lump of ice; but my directions were pursued by the person I left in charge of him during the night, keeping up a perspiration, in the morning he was much relieved, and had his right mind. He had no pain except in the lower part of the bowels; to relieve which he was very anxious that I should give him some physic. I opposed this, being confident that it would not do in such putrid cases. He was so urgent, however, I gave him some, which operated very soon; and the consequence was, that it reinforced his disorder, and threw him into the greatest distress. He asked for more physic, but I told him that I would not give him any more, for I was satisfied of the impropriety of giving it in such cases, and I have never given any since. It checked the perspiration, and drew the determining



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powers from the surface inward; so that I had to go through the same process again of raising perspiration, and vomiting, which was much more difficult than at first, and it was with the greatest attention that I was able to keep off the mortification for twelve hours that he was kept back by taking this small dose of physic. I kept up the perspiration through Friday and Saturday, and on Sunday morning when I called to see him, he was up and dressed. On asking how he did, he said as strong as you are, and took me under his arm and carried me across the room. On Monday he was down on the wharf attending to his business.

This cure caused considerable talk in the town, and because it was done so quick, the doctors said that there was but little ailed aim, and he would have got well himself if he had taken the physic and been left alone; but those who saw it were convinced to the contrary; others doubted, and said among themselves, how can a man, who has no learning, and never studied physic, know how to cure disease?

### Outward and Inward Heat.

I continued to practise in Portsmouth and vicinity during this autumn, and while there, was sent for to go to Salisbury, to see a child that had been attended by a woman for several days, who I had given information to, but they said the perspiration would not hold; and they wished for further information. On seeing the child, I at once found that they had kept about an equal balance between the outward and inward heat; when they gave medicine to raise the inward heat and start the determining power to the surface, they at the same time kept the outward heat so high as to counteract it. After explaining to them the difficulty, I raised the child up and poured on to it a pint of cold vinegar, and it immediately revived. Applied no more outward heat, but only to shield it from the air; and gave the warmest medicine inward, on the operation of which, the child grew cold and very much distressed. As soon as the inward heat had gained the full power, and drove the cold out, the circulation became free, and the child was relieved from pain and fell asleep; the next day the heat was as much higher than what was natural, as it had been lower the day before; and when heat had gained the victory over cold, the child gained its strength and was soon about, perfectly recovered.

### Again Trespasses on Territory of Dr. French, is Arrested, Fined and Reprimanded.

I had not practised in Salisbury before, since I went to Exeter, which was in June, and my returning there seemed to give Dr. French great offence. He had been to see the child mentioned above, and tried to discourage the people from using my medicine; and threatened them that he would have them indicted by the grand jury, if they made use of any without his consent; his threats, however, had very little effect, for the people were well satisfied of the superiority of my practice over his. About this time the bonds for his good behavior were out; I did not appear against him, and when the case was called, the court discharged him and his bail, on his paying the cost. The action was brought on a complaint in behalf of the Commonwealth; but I had caused another action of damage to be brought against him, which was carried to the Supreme Court, and tried at Ipswich the spring following. I employed two lawyers to manage my case, and brought forward two witnesses to prove my declaration, who swore that the defendant made the assertion, that I was guilty of murder and he could prove it. His lawyer admitted the fact, but pleaded justification on the part of his client,



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and brought witnesses on the stand to prove that what he had said was true. The young woman who nursed Mrs. Lifford, and by whose neglect she took cold, swore to some of the most ridiculous occurrences concerning the death of that woman, that could be uttered, which were perfectly contradictory to every thing she had before confessed to be the truth. Another young woman, the daughter of a doctor at Deerfield, made a statement, to make it appear that I was the cause of the death of the three children, who died as has been before related. I had no knowledge of ever seeing this woman, and have since ascertained that she was not at the house but once during the sickness, and then did not go into the room where the sick were; and her exaggerated account must have been made up of what she had heard others say.

These things were a complete surprise to me, not thinking it possible that people could be induced to make such exaggerated statements under the solemnity of an oath. I could have brought forward abundance of testimony to have contradicted the whole evidence against me if there was time, but not expecting that the cause would have taken the course it did, was unprepared. There appeared to be a complete combination of the professional craft against me, of both the doctors and lawyers, and a determination that I should lose the cause, let the evidence be what it might. My lawyers gave up the case without making a plea; and the judge gave a very partial charge to the jury, representing me in the worst point of view that he possibly could, saying that the evidence was sufficient to prove the facts against me, and that if I had been tried for my life, he could not say whether it would hang me or send me to the state prison for life. The jury of course gave their verdict against me, and I had to pay the cost of the court.

The counsel for Dr. French asked the judge whether a warrant ought not to be issued against me, and I be compelled to recognize to appear at the next court, to which he answered in the affirmative. This so frightened my friends, that they were much alarmed for my safety, and advised me to go out of the way of my enemies, for they seemed to be determined to destroy me. I went to Andover to the house of a friend, whose wife I had cured of a cancer, where I was very cordially received, and staid that night. The next day I went to Salisbury Mills, and made arrangements to pay the cost of my unfortunate lawsuit.

### The Lovett Case, the Beginning of Thomson's Famous Trial.

While practising in Beverly, was called on by a Mr. Lovett, to attend his son, who was sick, as they supposed with a bad cold; some thought it a typhus fever. I was very much engaged in attending upon the sick at the time, and could not go with him; he came after me three times before I could go. On seeing him, found that he complained of a stiff neck, and appeared to be very stupid, and had no pain. His aunt, who took care of him, said that he would certainly die, for he had the same symptoms as his mother, who died a short time before. I gave some medicine which relieved him; the next day carried him through a course of the medicine, and he appeared to be doing well. Being called on to go to Salem, I left him in the care of Mr. Raymond, with particular directions to keep in the house and not expose himself. This was on Wednesday, and I heard nothing from him, and knew not but what he was doing well, till the Sunday afternoon following, when I was informed that he was worse. I immediately inquired of Mr. Raymond, and learned from him that he had got so much better, he had been down on the side of the water, and returned on Friday night; that the weather was very cold, being in the month of December; that he had been



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chilled with the cold, and soon after his return had been taken very ill; he staid with him on Saturday night, and that he was raving distracted all night; that he had not given any medicine, thinking he was too dangerously sick for him to undertake with.

I told the young man's father, that it was very doubtful whether I could do any thing that would help him; but that I would try, and do all I could. I found that the patient was so far gone that the medicine would have no effect, and in two hours told him that I could not help his son, and advised him to call some other advice; this was said in presence of Elder Williams, and Mr. Raymond. Mr. Lovett made answer that if I could not help his son, he knew of none who could; and was very desirous for me to stay with him all night, which I did, and stood by his bed the whole time. He was much deranged in his mind till morning, when he came to himself, and was quite sensible. I then again requested the father to send for some other doctor, as I was sensible that I could do nothing for him that would be of any benefit. He immediately sent for two doctors, and as soon as they arrived, I left him in their care. The two doctors attended him till the next night about ten o'clock, when he died. I have been more particular in giving the history of this case, because two years after it was brought as a charge against me for murdering this young man. The father and friends expressed no dissatisfaction at the time, in regard to my conduct, except they thought I ought not to have neglected the patient so long; but it was a well known fact, that I attended as soon as I knew of his being worse, and that the whole cause of his second attack was owing to his going out and exposing himself, and could not be imputed as any fault of mine.

After a Period of Practice in Various Localities, came Thomson's "Treatment" of Captain Trickey.

Some time this season I was sent for to attend Captain Trickey, who was very sick. I examined him and was confident that I could not help him, and took my hat in order to leave the house. His family insisted on my stopping and doing something for him; but I told them that I thought he was in a dying state, and medicine would do no good. I told his son that in all probability, he would not be alive over twenty-four hours, and that he had better go for some other help, for I could do him no good. I told the wife that I should give no medicine myself, but as they had some in the house that they knew the nature of, she might give some of it to her husband, which she did. Two doctors were sent for; the first one that arrived bled him, and he soon breathed very short, and grew worse; the other doctor came, and said that his breathing short was in consequence of the medicine I had given him; but by this he did not gain credit, for all the family knew to the contrary; and the woman soon after told me of his speech. The patient continued till the next day about ten o'clock, and died. Soon as he was dead, the doctors and their friends spared no pains to spread the report in every direction, that I had killed this man with my screw auger, a cant name given to my emetic herb, in consequence of one of my patients, when under the operation of it, saying that it twisted in him like a screw auger. This was readily seized upon by the doctors, and made use of for the purpose of trying to destroy the reputation of this medicine by ridicule. They likewise gave similar names to several other articles of my medicine, for the same purpose; and represented them as the names by which I called them. They had likewise given me several names and titles, by way of reproach; such as the sweating and steaming doctor; the Indian doctor; the old wiz-



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zard; and sometimes the quack. Such kind of management had a great effect on the minds of many weak minded people; they were so afraid of ridicule, that those whom I cured were unwilling to own it, for fear of being laughed at for employing me.

The circumstance of the death of the above mentioned Capt. Trickey, was seized upon by the doctors and their friends, and the most false and absurd representations made by them through the country, with the intention of stopping my practice, by getting me indicted for murder, or to drive me off; but my friends made out a correct statement of the facts, and had them published, which put a stop to their career for that time. I continued my practice, and had a great number of the most desperate cases, in most of which I was successful. The extraordinary cures I had performed, had the tendency to make many people believe, that I could cure every one who had life in them, let their disease be ever so bad; and where I had attended on those who were given over as incurable, and they died, whether I gave them any medicine or not, the report was immediately circulated that they were killed by me, at the same time the regular doctors would lose their patients every day, without there being any notice taken of it. When their patients died, if appearances were ever so much against their practice, it was said to be the will of the Lord, and submitted to without a murmur; but if one happened to die that I had any thing to do with, it was readily reported by those interested in destroying my credit with the people, that I killed them.

**Arrest, Imprisonment and Trial.** In this, but for the Testimony of Dr. Cutler, Thomson would Probably have Fared Much Worse. This (see note, page 37) Marks the Beginning of the Medical Laws in America.

I shall now proceed to give the particulars of one of the most important circumstances of my life, in as correct and impartial a manner as I am capable of doing from memory; in order to show what I have suffered from the persecutions of some of the medical faculty, for no other reason, as I conceive, than that they feared my practice would open the eyes of the people, and lessen their importance with them; by giving such information as would enable them to cure themselves of disease, without the aid of a doctor; and from many others, who were governed altogether by the prejudices they had formed against me by the false reports that had been circulated about my practice, without having any other knowledge of me. Many of the latter, however, have since been convinced of their error, have a very favorable opinion of my system, and are among my best friends.

After practising in those parts through the season of 1809, I went home to Surry, where I remained a few weeks, and returned back to Salisbury. On my way there, I made several stops in different places where I had before practised, to see my friends and to give information to those who made use of my medicine and practice. On my arrival at Salisbury, my friends informed me that Dr. French had been very busily employed in my absence, and that he and a Deacon Pecker, who was one of the grand jury, had been to Salem, to the court, and on their return had said that there had been a bill of indictment found against me for wilful murder. They advised me to go off, and keep out of the way; but I told them I should never do that; for if they had found a bill against me, the government must prove the charges, or I must be honorably acquitted. About ten o'clock at night Dr. French came to the place where I stopped, with a constable, and made me a prisoner in behalf of the commonwealth. I asked the constable to read the warrant, which he did; by this I found that Dr. French was the only complainant,



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and the justice who granted the warrant, ordered me before him to be examined the next morning. I was then taken by the constable to Dr. French's house, and keepers were placed over me to prevent me from escaping. While at his house and a prisoner, Dr. French took the opportunity to abuse and insult me in the most shameful manner that can be conceived of, without any provocation on my part. He continued his abuse to me till between two and three o'clock, when he took his horse and set out for Salem to get the indictment. After he was gone, I found on inquiry of the constable, that after he had been before the grand jury and caused me to be indicted, he came home before the bill was made out, and finding that I was at Salisbury, fearing I might be gone, and he should miss the chance of gratifying his malicious revenge against me, he went to a brother doctor, who was a justice of the peace, before whom he made oath, that he had probable ground to suspect, and did suspect, that I had with malice aforethought, murdered sundry persons in the course of the year past, whose names were unknown to the complainant; upon which a warrant was issued against me, and I was arrested as before stated, in order to detain and keep me in custody, till the indictment could be obtained.

In the morning I was brought before the said justice, and he not being ready to proceed in my examination, the court was adjourned till one o'clock; when I was again brought before him, and he said he could not try me until the complainant was present, and adjourned the court again till near night. The constable took me to his house in the mean time, and put me in a back room and left me alone, all of them leaving the house. When they came back, some of them asked me why I did not make my escape, which I might very easily have done out of a back window; but I told them that I stood in no fear of the consequence, having done nothing whereby I ought to be punished; that I was taken up as a malefactor, and was determined to be convicted as such, or honorably acquitted. Just before night, Dr. French arrived with a Sheriff, and ordered me to be delivered up by the constable to the Sheriff; and after Dr. French had again vented his spleen upon me by the most savage abuse that language could express, saying that I was a murderer, and that I had murdered fifty, and he could prove it; that I should be either hung or sent to the State prison for life, and he would do all in his power to have me convicted. I was then put in irons by the sheriff, and conveyed to the jail in Newburyport, and confined in a dungeon, with a man who had been convicted of an assault on a girl six years of age, and sentenced to solitary confinement for one year. He seemed to be glad of company; and reminded me of the old saying, that misery loves company. I was not allowed a chair or a table, and nothing but a miserable straw bunk on the floor, with one poor blanket which had never been washed. I was put into this prison on the 10th day of November, 1809; the weather was very cold, and no fire, and not even the light of the sun, or a candle; and to complete the whole, the filth ran from the upper rooms into our cell, and was so offensive that I was almost stifled with the smell. I tried to rest myself as well as I could, but got no sleep that night, for I felt something crawling over me, which caused an itching, and not knowing what the cause was, inquired of my fellow sufferer; he said that it was the lice, and that there was enough of them to shingle a meeting-house.

In the morning there was just light enough shone through the iron grates, to show the horror of my situation. My spirit and the justness of my cause prevented me from making any lamentation, and I bore my sufferings without complaint. At breakfast time I was called on through the grates to take our miserable breakfast;



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it consisted of an old tin pot of musty coffee, without sweetening or milk, and was so bad as to be unwholesome; with a tin pan containing a hard piece of Indian bread, and the nape of a fish, which was so hard I could not eat it. This had to serve us till three o'clock in the afternoon, when we had about an equal fare, which was all we had till the next morning. The next day Mr. Osgood came from Salisbury to see me, and on witnessing my miserable situation, he was so much affected, that he could scarcely speak. He brought me some provisions, which I was very glad to receive; and when I described to him my miserable lodgings, and the horrid place I was in, he wept like a child. He asked liberty of the jailor to furnish me with a bed, which was granted, and brought me one, and other things to make me more comfortable. The next day I wrote letters to my family, to Dr. Fuller, and to Judge Rice, stating to them my situation.

The bed which was brought me, I put on the old one, and allowed my fellow sufferer a part of it, for which he was very thankful. I had provisions enough brought me by my friends for us both, and I gave him what I did not want; the crusts and scraps that were left, his poor wife would come and beg, to carry to her starving children, who were dependent on her. Her situation and that of her husband were so much worse than mine, that it made me feel more reconciled to my fate; and I gave her all I could spare, besides making his condition much more comfortable, for which they expressed a great deal of gratitude.

In a few days after my confinement, Judge Rice came to see me, and brought with him a lawyer. On consulting upon the case, they advised me to petition to the Judges of the Supreme Court to hold a special court to try my cause; as there would be no court held by law, at which it could be tried, till the next fall, and as there could be no bail for an indictment for murder, I should have to lay in prison nearly a year, whether there was any thing against me or not. This was the policy of my enemies, thinking that they could keep me in prison a year, and in all probability I should not live that time; and their ends would be fully answered.

I sent on a petition agreeably to the advice of my friends, and Judge Rice undertook to attend to the business and do every thing to get the prayer of the petition granted. He followed the business up with great zeal, and did every thing that could be done to effect the object. I think he told me that he or the lawyer, Mr. Bartlett, had rode from Newburyport to Boston fifteen times in the course of three weeks, on the business. At length Judge Parsons agreed to hold a special court at Salem, on the 10th day of December, to try the cause, which was one month from the day I was committed. My friends were very attentive and zealous in my cause, and every preparation was made for the trial.

During this time the weather was very cold, and I suffered greatly from that cause, and likewise from the badness of the air in our miserable cell, so that I had not much life or ambition. Many of my friends came to see me, and some of them were permitted to come into the cell; but the air was so bad and the smell so offensive, that they could not stay long. My friend, Dr. Shephard, came to see me, and was admitted into our dungeon. He staid a short time, but said it was so offensive he must leave me; that he would not stay in that place a week for all Newburyport. On Thanksgiving Day we were taken out of our cell and put in a room in the upper story, with the other prisoners, and took supper together; they consisted of murderers, robbers, thieves, and poor debtors. All of us tried to enjoy our supper and be in as good spirits as our condition would permit. The most of their complaints were of the filthiness and bad condition of the prison, in



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which we all agreed. Before it was dark I and my companion were waited upon to our filthy den again. There was nothing in the room to sit upon higher than the thickness of our bed; and when I wrote any thing, I had to lay on my belly, in which situation I wrote the Medical Circular, and several other pieces, which were afterwards printed.

After I had been in prison about two weeks, my son-in-law came to see me. I had before my imprisonment sent for him to come to Portsmouth on some business, and on hearing of my being in prison, he immediately came to Newburyport to see me. He seemed much more troubled about my situation than I was myself. I felt perfectly conscious of my innocence and was satisfied that I had done nothing to merit such cruel treatment; therefore my mind was free from reproach; for I had pursued the course of duty, which I conceived was allotted me by my Maker, and done every thing in my power to benefit by fellow-creatures. These reflections supported me in my troubles and persecutions, and I was perfectly resigned to my fate.

About this time, a lawyer came into the prison and read to me the indictment, which was in the common form, that I, with malice aforethought, not having the fear of God before my eyes, but moved by the instigation of the devil, did kill and murder the said Lovett, with lobelia, a deadly poison, &c.; but feeling so perfectly innocent of the charges, which the bill alleged against me, it had very little effect upon my feelings; knowing them to be false, and that they had been brought against me by my enemies, without any provocation on my part.

In the morning of the day that was appointed for me to be removed to Salem for trial, I was taken out of my loathsome cell by the jailor, who gave me water to wash myself with, and I was permitted to take my breakfast by a fire, which was the first time I had seen any for thirty days, and could not bear to sit near it in consequence of its causing me to feel faint. As soon as I had eaten my breakfast, the iron shackles were brought and put on my hands, which I was obliged to wear till I got to Salem. The weather was very cold, and the going bad; we stopped but once on the way, the distance being about twenty-six miles. On our arrival, I was delivered over to the care of the keeper of the prison in Salem, and was confined in a room in the second story, which was more comfortable than the one I had left. I was soon informed that Judge Parsons was sick, and had put off my trial for ten days; so I had to reconcile myself to the idea of being confined ten days more without fire. However I was not without friends; Elder Bolles and Capt. Russell came to see me the first night, and Mrs. Russell sent her servant twice every day with warm coffee, and other things for my comfort, for which I have always been grateful; and Mrs. Perkins, whom I had cured of a dropsy, sent for my clothes to wash against the day of my trial.

Many of my friends came to Salem to attend my trial; some as witnesses, and others to afford me any assistance in their power. A few days before my trial, Judge Rice and Mr. Bartlett, whom I had employed as my lawyer, held a consultation with me, as to the arrangements necessary to be made; when it was decided that it would be best to have other counsel; and Mr. Story was agreed upon, who engaged in my cause. I had also engaged Mr. Bannister, of Newburyport, to assist in the trial; but he was of no benefit to me, and afterwards sued me for fifty dollars, at fifty miles distance, to put me to great expense. In order to be prepared for the trial, my counsel held a consultation together, and examined the principal witnesses in the defence. Mr. Bolles, Judge Rice, and several others gave great satisfaction as to the value and usefulness of the medicine, and the



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variety of cures that had been performed with it within their knowledge. Dr. Fuller, of Milford, N. H., was present and made many statements in my favor, as to the value of the medicine, and advised to have Dr. Cutler, of Hamilton, summoned, which was done. Every thing was done by my friends that was in their power, to assist me and give me a chance for a fair trial, for which I shall always feel very grateful.

On the 20th day of December, 1809, the Supreme Court convened to hear my trial, at which Judge Parsons presided, with Judges Sewall and Parker, assistant Judges. The case was called about ten o'clock in the morning, and the chief justice ordered me to be brought from the prison and arraigned at the bar for trial. I was waited on by two constables, one on my right and the other on my left, in which situation I was brought from the jail to the court-house and placed in the bar. The court-house was so crowded with the people, that it was with much difficulty we could get in. After I was placed in the criminal seat, a chair was handed me and I sat down to wait for further orders. Here I was the object for this great concourse of people to look at; some with pity, others with scorn. In a few minutes I was directed to rise and hold up my right hand, to hear the indictment read, which the grand jury had upon their oaths presented against me. It was in common form, stating that I had with malice aforethought, murdered Ezra Lovett, with lobelia, a deadly poison. I was then directed by the court to plead to the indictment, guilty, or not guilty; I plead not guilty, and the usual forms, in such cases, were passed through, the jury called and sworn, and the trial commenced.

The Solicitor General arose, and opened the case on the part of the Commonwealth, and made many hard statements against me, which he said he was about to prove; he stated that I had at sundry times killed my patients with the same poison. The first witness called to the stand, on the part of the government, was Mr. Lovett, the father of the young man that I was accused of killing. He made a tolerable fair statement of the affair in general, particularly of coming after me several times before I could attend; though I think he exaggerated many things against me, and told over several fictitious and ridiculous names, which people had given my medicine, by way of ridicule, such as bull-dog, ram-cat, screw-auger, and belly-my-grizzle; all of which had a tendency to prejudice the court and jury against me; and I also thought that he omitted to tell many things in my favor, that must have been within his knowledge; but there was nothing in his evidence that in the least criminated me, or supported the charges in the indictment.

The next witness called, was Dr. Howe, to prove that I had administered the poison alleged in the indictment. He stated that I gave the poison to the said Lovett, and produced a sample of it, which he said was the root of lobelia. The Judge asked him if he was positive that it was lobelia; he said he was, and that I called it coffee. The sample was handed round for the court to examine, and they all appeared to be afraid of it, and after they had all satisfied their curiosity, Judge Rice took it in his hand and ate it, which very much surprised them. The Solicitor General asked him if he meant to poison himself in presence of the court. He said it would not hurt him to eat a peck of it, which seemed to strike the court with astonishment. Dr. Howe was then called at my request for cross-examination, and Mr. Story asked him to describe lobelia, how it looked when growing, as he had sworn to it by the taste and smell. This seemed to put him to a stand, and after being speechless for several minutes, he



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said he had not seen any so long, he should not know it if he should see it at this time. This so completely contradicted and did away all that he had before stated, that he went off the stand quite cast down.

Dr. Cutler was called on to inform the court what the medicine was that Dr. Howe had declared so positively to be lobelia, and after examining it, he said that it appeared to him to be marsh-rosemary, which was the fact. So far, all they had proved against me was, that I had given the young man some marsh-rosemary, which Dr. Cutler had declared to be a good medicine.

Some young women were brought forward as witnesses, whom I had no knowledge of ever seeing before. They made some of the most absurd and ridiculous statements about the medicine, that they said I gave the young man, that were probably ever made in a court of justice before; some of which were too indecent to be here repeated. One of them said that I crowded my puke down his throat, and he cried murder till he died. This was well known to be a falsehood, and that the story was wholly made up by my enemies, as well as what had been before stated by those women, for the purpose of trying to make out something against me. I had two unimpeachable witnesses in court, ready to swear that I never saw the young man for more than fourteen hours before he died, during all which time he was in the care of Dr. Howe; but by not having an opportunity to make my defence, in consequence of the government not making out their case against me, could not bring them forward.

John Lemon was the next witness brought forward on the part of the Commonwealth, and was directed to state what he knew about the prisoner at the bar. He stated that he had been out of health for two years, being much troubled with a pain in his breast, and was so bad that he was unable to work; that he could get no help from the doctors; that he applied to me and I had cured him in one week; and that was all he knew about the prisoner at the bar. By this time Judge Parsons appeared to be out of patience, and said he wondered what they had for a grand jury, to find a bill on such evidence. The Solicitor General said he had more evidence which he wished to bring forward.

Dr. French was called, and as he had been the most busy actor in the whole business of getting me indicted, and had been the principal cause, by his own evidence, as I was informed, of the grand jury finding a bill against me, it was expected that his evidence now would be sufficient to condemn me at once; but it turned out like the rest, to amount to nothing. He was asked if he knew the prisoner at the bar; he said he did. He was then directed to state what he knew about him. He said the prisoner had practised in the part of the country where he lived, with good success; and his medicine was harmless, being gathered by the children for the use of the families. The Judge was about to charge the jury, when the Solicitor General arose and said, that if it was not proved to be murder, it might be found for manslaughter. The Judge said, you have nothing against the man, and again repeated that he wondered what they had for a grand jury.

In his charge to the jury, the Judge stated that the prisoner had broken no law, common or statute, and quoted Hale, who says, any person may administer medicine with an intention to do good; and if it has the contrary effect from his expectation, and kills the patient, it is not murder, nor even manslaughter. If doctors must risk the lives of their patients, who would practise? He quoted



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another clause of law from Blackstone, who says, where no malice is, no action lies.\*

The charge being given to the jury, they retired for about five minutes, and returned into court and gave in their verdict of **Not Guilty**.

I was then honorably acquitted, without having had an opportunity to have my witnesses examined, by whom I expected to have proved the usefulness and importance of my discovery before a large assembly of people, by the testimony of about twenty-five creditable men, who were present at the trial; besides contradicting all the evidence produced against me. After the trial was over, I was invited to the Sun Tavern to supper, where we enjoyed ourselves for the evening. When we sat down to the table, several doctors were present, who were so offended at my being acquitted, that they left the table, which made me think of what the Scripture says, that "the wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are as bold as a lion."

During the evening, I consulted with my friends upon the subject of prosecuting Dr. French, and making him pay damages for his abuse to me when a prisoner at his house, in saying that I had murdered fifty, and he could prove it; and after having had a fair chance, and having failed to prove one, it was thought to be a favorable opportunity to make him pay something for his conduct towards me, in causing me so much suffering, and for the trouble he had made me and my friends. A prosecution was agreed upon, and to bring the action in the county of York. Judge Rice agreed to be my bail, and likewise he undertook to pay my lawyers and witnesses for the above trial, and paid Mr. Bartlett forty dollars that night. Mr. Story was paid twenty dollars by a contribution of my friends in Salem. I staid at Mrs. Russel's that night; I had but little sleep, for my mind was so much agitated, when I came to consider what I had gone through, and the risk I had run in escaping the snares of my enemies, with the anxiety of my family till they got the news of my acquittal, that sleep fled from my eyelids, and I was more confused than when in prison.

The next day I went to Salisbury, and stopped with Mr. Osgood, where I was first arrested. Mrs. Osgood and a young woman who had been employed by me as a nurse, assisted to clean my clothes, and clear me of some troublesome companions I had brought with me from the prison; and when I had paid a visit to all my old friends, who were very glad to see me, I went to Portsmouth, to recover my health, which was very much impaired, by being confined forty days in those filthy and cold prisons, in the coldest part of a remarkably cold winter. My friends attended upon me, and carried me through a regular course of medi-

\* As the learned Judge could find no law, common or statute, to punish the accused, he directed or advised those present to stop this quackery, as he called it, and for this purpose, to petition the Legislature to make a law that should make it penal for all who should practise without license from some medical college; to debar them of law to collect their debts; and if it should not answer, to make it penal by fine and imprisonment.

This hint, thus given by the Judge, was seized upon first in Massachusetts; from thence it has spread to nearly all the States in the Union. From this source may be traced all those unconstitutional laws which have been enacted in relation to this subject, and all those vexatious suits which I have had to attend in many of the States, from Massachusetts to South Carolina, more or less almost every year since. But I have been able to break them down by my patent being from higher authority, which Judge Parsons could not prevent, or perhaps he never thought of. He however made his own report, and handed it to the reporter, which is published in the 6th volume of Massachusetts, Reports, and is resorted to by all the enemies of the practice, for a defence against the system.



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cine; but the first operation of it had little effect, in consequence of my blood being so much chilled, and it was a long time before I could raise a perspiration that would hold. I am confident that I should not have lived through the winter in prison, and believe that this was their plan; for which reason they managed to have me indicted for murder; knowing in that case there could be no bail taken, and there would be no court at which I could be tried, for nearly a year, I should have to lay in prison during that time, and that I should probably die there; or in any case, they would get rid of me for one year at least, whether there was any thing proved against me or not; and in that time, the doctors and their dupes would be enabled to run down the credit of my medicine, and put my practice into disrepute among the people; but I have been able, by good fortune, and the kind assistance of my friends, to defeat all their plans.

### Retribution.

Most of those who have been instrumental in trying to destroy me and my practice, have had some judgment befall them as a reward for their unjust persecutions and malicious conduct towards me. I was credibly informed that Deacon Pecker, one of the grand jury that found a bill against me, went with Dr. French, to hunt up evidence to come before himself, in order to have me indicted. A short time after I was put in prison, he had a stroke of the palsy, and has remained ever since, [1822,] one half of his body and limbs useless. Dr. French, one year after I was acquitted, was brought to the same bar in which I was placed, and convicted for robbing a grave yard of a dead body, which it was reported he sold for sixty dollars. He lost all his credit, and was obliged to quit his country.\*

### Again Invades Dr. French's Territory and Prosecutes Him for Damages, but Loses the Case.

In the month of January of 1810, I returned home to my family, and staid till I had in some measure recovered my loss of health by imprisonment. In March I returned to Portsmouth, and after taking the advice of my friends, made arrangements for prosecuting Dr. French. The prosecution was commenced, and he was summoned before the court of common pleas, in the County of York. Judge Rice undertook the principal management of the business, and became my bail. The action was called and carried to the Supreme Court by demurrer, which was to set at Alfred, in October. I attended with my witnesses, and expected to have gone to trial; and after waiting several days to know what the defence was going to be, the counsel for the defendant made their plea of justification. I found that their plan was to prove that I had murdered sundry persons whom I had attended, and by that means to make it out that any one had a right to call me a murderer; and that for this purpose, Dr. French had been to every place where I had practised, collecting every case of the death of any that I had attended in this part of the country, and had made out eight cases, all of which have been before mentioned in this narrative, most of whom had been given over by the doctors, as past cure, and the others known to be desperate cases. He had obtained the depositions of all that were prejudiced against me, and had collected a mass of evidence to support his defence. After finding what their plan was, it was thought necessary for me to go to all the places where they had been, and

\* I do not pretend that these things followed on account of their treatment to me; but I only state them as matters of fact; for so it happened.



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get evidence to contradict these highly colored and exaggerated statements, and I was under the necessity of requesting a delay of the trial for one week, which was granted. I proceeded immediately, and took the depositions of those who were knowing to the facts; but found that these were not sufficient, and went again to Deerfield, and summoned two men to appear at court, and give their verbal testimony. When I had got ready to come to trial, the defendant was not ready, and got it put off to the next term, which would be holden at York the next year. In the spring, before the setting of the court, I went to the clerk's office to find what the depositions were that were filed against me; and the whole appeared to be a series of exaggerated statements, made by those who were governed by their prejudices, without having but very little, if any, knowledge of the facts, more than what they obtained by hearsay. This caused me to redouble my diligence to get witnesses to appear on the stand to contradict their testimony, on each case they had alleged against me.

On the day appointed for the trial, every thing was prepared on my part to have a fair hearing. Judge Parsons was on the bench, and seemed, as I thought, to be determined to have the case go against me; for he appeared to know every thing that was to be in the defence beforehand. I made out my case by proving the words uttered by the defendant, which were in my declaration. They then proceeded in the defence, to make out the eight cases of murder, which were alleged against me. The first was the case of a man by the name of Hubbard, of Eliot, who had been dead above two years, the particulars of which I have before stated. The witness brought to support this case, told a very lamentable and highly colored story; and I brought on the stand a very respectable witness, who completely contradicted the whole statement.

The next cases brought up, were the three children of Mr. Fulsom, of Deerfield, the particulars of which have been before related. A number of depositions were read, which the defendant had obtained of those that had been my enemies, and who knew nothing of the matter, more than hearsay reports among themselves. They gave a very highly colored account of my treatment of the children; so much so, that it would appear by their stories, that I had taken them in health, and had roasted them to death; never saying a word about the fifteen that I cured, some of which had been given over by the doctors. To rebut the evidence that was produced to prove that I had killed those children, I brought on to the stand, two respectable witnesses, who were knowing to all the circumstances, being present at the time of my attending the family. They gave a correct and particular account of all the circumstances as they took place; of the situation of the family when I first saw them, and the violence of the disorder; how the doctors had lost all their patients that had been attacked with the disorder before I came; with the number that I cured by my mode of practice; and that the doctors afterwards adopted my plan, and saved the lives of a number by it. The Judge interrupted them and read some of the depositions over again; but these witnesses stated that they were not true, and went on to give some of the particulars of the opposition I met with in my practice from those very persons, whose depositions had been read, when the Judge seemed put out, and attempted to stop them, saying they had said enough. They said that having sworn to tell the whole truth, they felt it their duty to do it.

They next brought on the case of a woman who had died at Beverly, that I attended, and with it the case of Ezra Lovett, whom I had been tried for murdering. I was very glad to have this case brought up again, as I wished to have



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an opportunity to prove all the facts relating to it, which I had been prevented from doing on my trial, in consequence of being acquitted without making any defence. The evidence brought forward to support this case, were the depositions of those who had testified against me on my trial at Salem; they were pretty near the same as then given. After those depositions were read, I called on to the stand Elder Williams and Mr. Raymond, who gave all the particulars of my attending upon the young man, as has been before related, which completely contradicted all the depositions they had read in the case. The Judge interrupted these witnesses, and read the deposition of the girl, who stated that I crowded my pukes down the patient's throat, and he cried murder till he died. They both positively testified, that there was not a word of it true; for when he died, and for twelve hours before, he was under the care of Dr. Howe, during which time I did not see him. As to the woman in Beverly, whom they tried to make out that I murdered, it was proved by these witnesses, that she was in a dying condition when I first saw her, and that I so stated it as my opinion at the time, and that my medicine would not help her.

The next case was that of Mrs. Lifford, who died at Salisbury, the particulars of which have been before given. The evidence brought to prove this case of murder, was the deposition of the woman who nursed her, and by whose neglect the patient took cold, after the medicine had a very favorable operation, and appearances were much in her favor; in consequence of which she had a relapse, and I could not produce any effect upon her by the medicine afterwards. This woman confessed at the time, that she was the only one to blame, and that no fault ought to be attached to me; but she afterwards was influenced by Dr. French to turn against me, and made threats that she would swear to any thing to injure me. After her deposition was read, I brought witnesses on the stand, who completely contradicted every thing contained in it; but the Judge read her deposition to the jury, and directed them to pay attention to that in preference to the witnesses on the stand.

The eighth and last case was that of the son of Thomas Neal, of Portsmouth, who was very violently attacked, and was attended by Dr. Cutter. I was called on at night to attend him, and thought there was a possibility of helping him; but the man with whom he lived, would not consent that I should do anything for him, and I went away, after telling them that he would be either worse or better before morning, and if he was worse he would die. I was called to visit him in the morning, and was informed that he was worse, and that his master had consented to have me attend upon him. I told his father it was undoubtedly too late; but he insisted upon it so much, I attended, and told them the chance was very small for doing him any good, as I considered it a desperate case. After being very hardly urged by his friends, I gave him some medicine, but it had no effect, and about sun-down he died. The doctor who attended him was brought forward to prove that I murdered the patient. If I recollect rightly, he swore that the patient had the dropsy in the brain, and that the disorder had turned, and he was in a fair way to recover; but I came and gave him my poison pukes, and killed him. I brought forward evidence who swore to the facts as I have above related them, and that the doctor would give no encouragement of helping the patient. The father of the young man gave his evidence, and stated that the son was in a dying situation when I gave him medicine; but the Judge interrupted him, and asked if he was a doctor, to which he answered no. He then



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said the doctor has stated that his disorder had turned, and he was getting better; are you going to contradict the doctor? and thus managed to do away his testimony.

I have thus given a brief sketch of the evidence in the eight cases, which were attempted to be proved as murder, in order to make out justification on the part of the defendant, with my defence to the same, in as correct a manner as I am able from memory; and am confident that every circumstance as I have related it, can be substantially proved by living witnesses. After the evidence was gone through, the lawyers on both sides made their pleas, making the case on my part as good and as bad as they could. The Judge then gave his charge to the jury, which was considered by those who heard it, to be the most prejudiced and partial one that had ever been heard before. He made use of every means to raise the passions of the jury, and turn them against me; stating that the defendant was completely justified in calling me a murderer, for if I was not guilty of wilful murder, it was barbarous ignorant murder; and he even abused my lawyers for taking up for me, saying that they ought to be paid in screw-augers and bull-dogs. The people that were present were very much disgusted at his conduct, and they expressed themselves very freely upon the subject. It was said by some, that our courts, instead of being courts of justice, had become courts of prejudice. One man said that he hoped Judge Parsons would never have another opportunity to sit on a cause; which prediction turned out true, for he soon after had a stroke of palsy, and as I am informed, died before the next court met. The jury brought in their verdict of justification on the part of the defendant, and threw the whole cost on me, which amounted to about two thousand dollars.

When I found how the case was going to turn, I went to Portsmouth, and soon after made arrangements to pay the costs. Judge Rice was my bail, and undertook to pay all the bills that I had not paid at the time. On my settlement with him, I owed him six hundred dollars for money that he had advanced on my account; for which I had no way to secure him, but by giving him a mortgage on my farm; which I did, and it was put on record, and never known to any of my friends till I had paid it up. He charged nothing for all his time and trouble, through the whole of my persecutions and trials, for which, and for his kindness and friendship on all occasions, I shall ever consider myself under the greatest obligations.

### Attesting to the Fact that the "Fashionable" Doctors and Thomson had not yet Buried the Hatchet.

About the first of June, 1811, I received a letter from Eastport, where I had been the fall before and shown some of my mode of practice. Some of the people in that place were so well satisfied with it, that seven men had subscribed their names to the letter, requesting me to come there and practise in the fevers, which prevailed in those parts. I left the care of my business at Portsmouth with Mr. Carpenter, my apprentice, and immediately took passage for Eastport, where I arrived about the middle of June. I was very gladly received by those who had wrote to me, and by those with whom I had become acquainted when there before. I agreed to practise under the protection of those who had sent for me, until I had convinced them of its utility, to which they consented, and promised me all the assistance in their power. I was soon called on to practise, and had all the most desperate cases that could be found, in all of which I met with very great success. The first cases I attended in presence of the committee, were five des-



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perate cases of consumption. These patients were all relieved in three weeks, and were all living this present year, (1831.) While attending these people, I was called upon to attend a young man on board a vessel, who had his foot bruised to pieces by a block falling from mast-head, weighing thirteen pounds. It being done five days before I saw him, it was mortified, and the whole body in convulsions. I took off three toes and set the fourth, and cured him in five weeks with the usual practice. While attending him, I had to pass a doctor's shop. A scythe was thrown at me, point first, about the distance of two rods. It passed between my feet without doing any injury. In consequence of this assault, I sent word to all the doctors who had opposed me, that for the politeness with which they had treated me, I would compensate them by taking off the burden of being called up at night, and thus breaking their rest, and would give them the chance of laying in bed until noon, without being disturbed by their patients.

Indicating that Notwithstanding His Protests, Thomson Believed in Witchcraft or some "Baffling" Influence Outside the Natural.

While practising here, I frequently heard of the abuse and scandal towards me and my practice, from Mrs. Lovett, the old woman before mentioned, as the nurse of her son's wife, whom I cured of the dropsy. This old woman was a singular character, and was called a witch by the people; I have no faith in these kind of things, yet her conduct, and certain circumstances that took place, were very extraordinary, and puzzled and astonished me more than any thing I had ever met with, and which I have never been able to account for to this day. Mr. Carpenter was attending a man, where this woman often visited, who had the consumption, and his child, which was sick and had fits. He came to me and said that the medicine he gave would not have its usual effect; that the emetic, instead of causing them to vomit, would make them choke and almost strangle. I attended them myself, and on giving the medicine, it would operate on the man, and not on the child at one time, and the next time on the child and not on him. Sometimes the child would lay in fits, for a whole night, and nothing would have any effect upon it; in the morning it would come out of them and appear to be bright and lively. I had never known the medicine to fail of producing some effect before, where the patient was not so far gone as not to have life enough left to build upon. I can give no reason for this strange circumstance, satisfactory to myself, or which would be thought reasonable by the readers. The old woman, before mentioned, was frequently in and out of the house where the man and child were, and seemed to be very much interested about them; when she was gone the child would frequently go into violent fits, and when I steamed it, it was said the old woman would be in great distress. It caused much conversation among the neighborhood; they believed it to be the power of witchcraft; and that the old woman had a control over the destinies of the man and child, and was determined to destroy them, in order to get her revenge on me. I have no belief in these things; but must confess that her strange conduct, and the extraordinary circumstances attending the whole affair, baffled me more than any thing I had ever met with before. I was unable to do anything for these two patients, except sometimes by a temporary relief. They continued to grow worse, and finding it not in my power to do them any good, I left them, and they both soon after died.



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Decides to "Patent" his System of "Thomsonian Treatment." The Famous Beginning of American Patent Medicines. (See note, page 37.)

When I had maturely considered the subject in all its bearings, and exercised my best abilities in devising some plan by which I could extricate myself from the dangers which threatened me on every hand; and to prevent those rights, which twenty years labor, with much suffering and great expense had given me a just claim to, from being wrested from me; I finally came to the conclusion that there was only one plan for me to pursue with any chance of success; and that was to go on to Washington, and obtain a patent for my discoveries; and put myself and medicine under the protection of the laws of my country, which would not only secure to me the exclusive right to my system and medicine, but would put me above the reach of the laws of any state.

After coming to the conclusion to go on to the seat of government and apply for a patent, made all necessary preparation for the journey, and started from Portsmouth on the 7th of February, and arrived at Washington on the 23d. The next day after my arrival, I waited on Capt. Nicholas Gilman, of Exeter, showed him my credentials, and asked his advice, what I must do to obtain my object. He said that he thought it could not be made explicit enough to combine the system and practice, without being too long; he however advised me to carry my petition to the patent office; which was then under the control of Mr. Monroe, Secretary of State. I went to the patent office and found that Dr. Thornton was the Clerk, and presented him my petition. He asked me many questions, and then said I must call again; I called again the next day, and he said the petition was not right; that I must specify the medicine, and what disorder it must be used in; he said that those medicines in general terms to cure every thing, was quackery; that I must particularly designate the medicine, and state how it must be used, and in what disease. I then waited on Martin Chittenden, late governor of Vermont, who was at Washington, and asked his assistance; he was from the same town where my father lived, and readily consented. We made out the specifications in as correct a manner as we could, and the next day I carried them to the patent office, and gave them to Dr. Thornton; he complained much about its being too short a system, and put me off once more. I applied again and asked him for my patent; but he said I had not got the botanic names for the articles, and referred me to Dr. Mitchell, of New York, who was in the House of Representatives. I applied to him, and requested him to give the botanic names to the articles mentioned in my petition. He wrote them, and I carried them to Dr. Thornton; but he was unable to read some of the names, one in particular; he said I must go again to Dr. Mitchell, and get him to give it in some other words, and not tell him that he could not read it. I went, and the doctor wrote the same word again, and then wrote, or "Snap-dragon;" which I carried to Dr. Thornton, and requested him to put in the patent my names, and record it for himself, snap-dragon, or any other name he chose. He then talked about sending me to Philadelphia, to Dr. Barton, to get his names.

I found he was determined to give me all the trouble he could, and if possible to defeat my getting a patent, and I intimated that I should go with my complaint to Mr. Monroe, upon which he seemed a little more disposed to grant my request, and said he would do without Dr. Barton's names. He then went to work to make out the patent, and when he came to the article of myrrh, he found much fault about that, and said it was good for nothing. I told him that I paid for the patent,



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and if it was good for nothing it was my loss. After much trouble, I got it made out according to my request, and the medicine to be used in fevers, colics, dysenteries and rheumatism; he then asked me if I wanted any additions, and I told him to add, "the three first numbers may be used in any other case to promote perspiration, or as an emetic," which he did. I then had to go to the treasury office and pay my money and bring him duplicate receipts. After all this trouble, I at length succeeded in obtaining my patent according to my request, which was completed and delivered to me on the third day of March, 1813.

### Interviews the Celebrated Medical Authorities of that Date, Drs. Barton and Rush, of Whom He Speaks Highly.

The next day after I had completed my business was the day of inauguration of the President of the United States; and I had the curiosity to stay and see the ceremonies on that occasion. After the ceremonies were over I went to the stage office and found that the seats were all engaged for a fortnight; and was obliged to stay till the 13th before I could get a passage. I then took passage in the stage and came on to Philadelphia, where I remained several days for the purpose of seeing Drs. Rush and Barton, to confer with them upon the subject of introducing my system of practice to the world. I spent considerable time with Dr. Barton; but Dr. Rush was so much engaged, that I was unable to have but little conversation more than stating my business. He treated me with much politeness; and said that whatever Dr. Barton agreed to, he would give his consent, so that my business was chiefly with the latter gentleman. I asked him many questions concerning my system and patent, and requested his advice of the best mode of introducing it. He advised me to make friends of some celebrated doctors, and let them try the medicine, and give the public such recommendation of it as they should deem correct. I told him that I feared that if I should do so, they would take the discovery to themselves, and deprive me of all credit or benefit from my labors, and asked him if he thought that would not be the case. He said it might with some, but he thought there were some of the profession honorable enough not to do it. I asked him if he would make a trial of it himself, and give it such credit as he should find it to deserve. He said that if I would trust it in his hands, he should be pleased, and would do justice to me and the cause. I accordingly left some of the medicine with him, with directions how to use it; but before I received any return from him, he died; and Dr. Rush also died some time previous; by which means I was deprived of the influence of these two men, which I was confident would otherwise have been exerted in my favor.

Thomson in an Interview with Barton Criticises the Prevalent Medical Treatment and Points Out the Absurdity of Bleeding to Cure Disease. "It appeared to me very extraordinary to bleed twenty times to cure the most fatal disease ever known; the same manner of treatment would kill one-half of those in health."

During my interviews with Dr. Barton, we had much conversation upon the subject of the medical skill, and he being quite sociable and pleasant, I expressed myself very freely upon the fashionable mode of practice, used by the physicians of the present day. He acknowledged there was no art or science so uncultivated as that of medicine. I stated to him pretty fully my opinion of the absurdity of bleeding to cure disease; and pointed out its inconsistency, inasmuch as the same method was made use of to cure a sick man as to kill a well beast. He laughed and said it was strange logic enough.



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While in the city of Philadelphia, I examined into their mode of treating the yellow fever; and found to my astonishment that the treatment prescribed by Dr. Rush was to bleed twice a day for ten days. It appeared to me very extraordinary to bleed twenty times to cure the most fatal disease ever known; and am confident that the same manner of treatment would kill one half of those in health. This absurd practice being followed by the more ignorant class of the faculty, merely because it has been recommended in some particular cases by a great man, has, I have not the least doubt, destroyed more lives than has ever been killed by powder and ball in this country in the same time. Those I met in the streets, who had escaped the fatal effect of bleeding, mercury, and other poisons, carried death in their countenance; and on conversing with them, they said they had never been well since they had the fever; that they took so much mercury and opium, they were afraid that they were in a decline.

**After a Series of Journeys, Introducing His "System," Establishing Agencies, and Selling Patent Rights to His System of Practice, Thomson is again Disappointed in Financial Affairs.**

This season I went to Eastport, and collected some money to pay my friend Rice; and thinking to make some profit, laid it out in fish, and sent it to Portland, consigned to my friend Fickett. When I went there myself, sold the fish to him. I afterwards made a settlement with him, and took his note for one hundred and sixty-three dollars, which he agreed to pay Judge Rice; as he was going to Boston in a short time, and he would call on him at Portsmouth for that purpose. I then went home to see my family, and in about six months after, returned to Portsmouth, and on calling on Judge Rice, found to my surprise that Mr. Fickett had not paid the money, that he had failed, and there was no chance for me to get any thing of him. So I was again disappointed in my expectations of paying this demand, and it appeared to me that all my hard earnings would be sacrificed to pay the expense of persecutions; but my friend Rice was very indulgent; and instead of complaining, did all he could to encourage me and keep up my spirits.

**Meets a Disaster that "Was Taken Advantage of by His Enemies."**

In 1814 returned to Portsmouth, which place I made the principal depot of my medicines; having previous to my returning from the Eastward, made arrangements with my agents to supply them, and all others who had purchased the rights, with such medicine as they might want, by their applying to me for them. I had laid in a large stock, the value of which I estimated to be about one thousand dollars. I went to Boston and Salem, to procure some articles that could not be obtained elsewhere, in order to complete my stock; when absent, the great fire took place at Portsmouth, and all my stock of medicine was consumed. This was a very serious loss to me, not only in a pecuniary point of view, but it disarranged all my plans, and put it out of my power to supply those who I knew depended upon me for all such articles as were most important in the practice. The season was so far advanced that it was impossible to obtain a new recruit of most of the articles; and I was obliged to collect a part of what had been sent to different places, in order to be able to supply, in the best manner I could, such demands for medicine, as I should be called on for. In doing this, I was put to great trouble and expense, and in order to make myself whole, was under the necessity of raising the price of the medicine fifty per cent.; this caused much grumbling and complaint from the members of the societies in different places, and was taken advantage of by my enemies to injure me all they could.



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### Concerning Two Remedies and Further Trouble with Infringers on His Patented System of Medication.

After staying in Washington a few days, we went to Alexandria where we remained about a week, in which time I collected some cyprus bark, which is known there by the name of poplar, and what we call poplar, is by them called quaking-asp, on account of the constant shaking of its leaves.

During this summer, I visited Eastport, Portland, Charlestown, South Reading and other places where societies had been formed, or rights sold to individuals, to give information to the people; and in all places where I went, found the book of directions, which had been clandestinely obtained and published by the doctors and others, to injure me by stopping the sale of rights, selling at 37½ cents. I was under the necessity of putting an advertisement in the papers, cautioning the people against this imposition, which put a stop to their sale; but great pains were taken by my enemies to circulate them among the people; and this is the way that some of my articles of medicine came to be made use of through the country in colds, such as cayenne, ginger, &c. In 1815 I published another edition of my book of directions, and secured the copy right; but this was reprinted at Taunton, and I advertised it as before, and stopped its progress.

### Marsh Rosemary Becomes Scarce, but Thomson finds that it is "Too Cold and Binding."

In the fall of the year 1815, I went to Cape Cod to procure some marsh-rosemary, and collected a quantity, carried it to Portsmouth and prepared it for use. This is the last time I have collected any of this article, and as it becomes scarce, think I shall make no more use of it. It is too cold and binding, without using a large share of bayberry bark and cayenne with it, to keep the saliva free. I have found other articles as substitutes, which answer a better purpose, such as hemlock bark, which I have of late made use of and found very good, white lily roots, witch-hazle and raspberry leaves, and sumach berries; the last article is very good alone, steeped and sweetened, and is as pleasant as wine; it is good for children in cases of canker, especially in long cases of sickness when other articles become disagreeable to them.

### Thomson Experienced Much Trouble with Persons Who Bought His "System Rights." Ever in a Turmoil, He Decides at last that Whoever "Purchases a Right for Himself and Family is Entitled to All the Privileges."

I formed those who purchased the rights, into a society; and they chose a committee, whom I authorized as agents to sell rights and medicine; but this caused a jealousy among the rest of the members, who said I gave privileges to some more than to others.

I have formed four societies, and given them certain privileges, by allowing them part of the profits on the sale of rights and medicine; but as soon as there was any funds, it has always created uneasiness among the members. Some of the ignorant and selfish, would call for their dividends, as though it was bank stock, instead of feeling grateful for the advantages they enjoy by having their diseases cured, and their minds relieved from the alarming consequences of a disease, with a trifling expense. I have since altered my plan, and now have but one society. Every one who purchases a right for himself and family, becomes a member of the Friendly Botanic Society, and is entitled to all the privileges of a free intercourse with each other, and to converse with any one who has



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bought a right, for instruction and assistance in sickness, as each one is bound to give his assistance, by advice or otherwise, when called on by a member. In this way much more good can be done, and there will be much more good-will towards each other, than where there is any money depending.

**In the Decline of Life, Disconsolate and Disappointed at Men's Ingratitude, Thomson Concludes to Appoint a "Suitable Agent" to Care for his Business. He Selects Elias Smith.**

After having discovered a system, and by much labor and constant perseverance reduced it to practice, in a manner that had given general satisfaction to all who had become acquainted with it, and having secured the same by patent, in order that I might reap some benefit from my discovery, to support me in my old age, having by a long series of attendance on the sick, both as physician and nurse, become almost worn out, I came to the determination to appoint some suitable person, who would do justice to me and the cause, as a general agent, to take the lead in practice, and give the necessary information to those who should purchase the rights, which would enable me to retire from practice and receive a share of the profits as a reward for my long sufferings. After considerable inquiry, I became acquainted with Elias Smith, who was recommended as a man in whom I could confide, and who was every way qualified as a suitable person to engage in the undertaking. I found him in Boston, and in very poor circumstances; having been for many years a public preacher, but in consequence of his often changing his religious principles and engaging in different projects in which he had been unsuccessful, he was now without a society or any visible means of supporting himself and family. He readily engaged with me, and promised to do every thing in his power, to promote my interest and extend the usefulness of my system of practice.

I sold him a family right in December, 1816, and was in his family during the winter, for the purpose of instructing him in the practice, to qualify him to attend upon the sick and give information to others. I put the utmost confidence in his honor, and spared no pains in communicating to him, without any reserve whatever, all the knowledge I had gained by my experience, both by practice and verbal instruction; under the expectation, that when he became sufficiently acquainted with the system and practice, I should be rewarded for my trouble, by his faithfully performing his duty towards me, according to his promise. I shall make no remark upon my being disappointed in all my expectations in regard to Mr. Smith's conduct, and the treatment I received from him after he had gained a knowledge of the practice from me, to enable him to set up for himself; but shall proceed to give a short account of what took place during my connection with him.

**Comes now a Series of Troubles in which Smith and Thomson Disagree, and, as usual, Thomson Becomes an Enemy of His Friend.**

In the winter of 1819, I went to Philadelphia, and previous to my going made arrangements with Mr. Smith to publish a new edition of my book of directions; we revised the former edition, and made such additions as we thought would be necessary to give a complete and full description of my system, and the manner of preparing and using the medicine; and I directed him to secure the copy-right according to law. I left the whole care with him, to arrange the matter, and have it printed. On my return to Boston in March, he had got it done; but in a manner



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very unsatisfactory to me, for he had left out twelve pages of the most useful part of the remarks and directions, and it was otherwise very incorrectly and badly printed. I asked him the reason of this, and he said a part of the copy had got mislaid, and the printer had not done his work well. I had no idea at the time, that he had any design in having this pamphlet printed in the manner it was; but his subsequent conduct would justify the belief that he had previous to this, formed a plan to usurp the whole of my system of practice, and turn every thing to his own advantage; for he has since attempted to satisfy the public, that my system was no system; and has brought forward this very book, which was printed under his own inspection, and arranged by him, as a part of his proof, that I was incapable of managing my own discoveries, and of communicating the necessary information in an intelligible manner to make my system of practice useful to those who purchased the rights. It is a well known fact, that some of the most essential parts of the directions were to be verbal; and I had allowed him ten dollars each, to give the proper instructions to all those to whom he sold the rights.

Another circumstance that I have recently found out, goes to show a dishonesty in design, to say the least of it. He deposited the title page of the above mentioned pamphlet, and obtained a certificate from the clerk, in the name of Elias Smith, as proprietor, and caused it to be printed in the name of Samuel Thomson, as author and proprietor. What his intentions were in thus publishing a false certificate, I shall not attempt to explain; but leave the reader to judge for himself.

### **Smith, now in Open Rebellion, Publishes a Book that Conflicts with Thomson's Exclusive Right to the "System."**

In May, 1820, Mr. Smith collected together those in Boston who had bought rights of me or my agents, and formed them into a society, under a new name; he wrote a constitution, which they signed; and the members paid one dollar entrance, and were to pay twelve and a half cents per month assessment, for which he promised them important instructions and cheap medicine. He was appointed president and treasurer, and after he had obtained their money, the meetings were discontinued, and the society was broken up in the course of nine months. In this he appears to have taken the lead of all those who had purchased the right of me, and make them tributary to himself.

In November, I returned from the country and found that he had advertised, without my knowledge or consent, in the Herald, a periodical work published by him at that time, "proposals for publishing by subscription, a book to contain the whole of the system and practice discovered by Samuel Thomson, and secured to him by patent. The price to subscribers to be five dollars. By Elias Smith." This mostly stopped the sale of rights, for no one would purchase a right of me or my agents at twenty dollars, when they had the promise of them at five. I went to him to know what he meant by his conduct, in issuing these proposals; he plead innocence, and said he had no improper design in doing it.

### **Thomson and Smith Now Separate.**

I was now under the necessity of doing something in order to counteract what had been done by Mr. Smith, in publishing the above proposals; and came to the determination to issue new proposals for publishing a narrative of my life as far as related to my practice, with a complete description of my system of practice in curing disease, and the manner of preparing and using the medicine secured to me



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by patent; the price to subscribers to be ten dollars, including the right to each of using the same for himself and family. Mr. Smith undertook to write the proposals and get them printed; after they were struck off, I found he had said in them, by Samuel Thomson and Elias Smith; all subscribers to be returned to the latter. I asked him what he meant by putting his name with mine; he said in order to get more subscribers. I said no more about it at that time, and let them be distributed.

When I settled with him the last time, I asked him what he would charge me to prepare my manuscript for the press; he said he thought we were to write it together; I asked him what made him think so; he said because his name was on the proposals with mine; I admitted this; but told him the reasons he had assigned for putting his name to it without my consent or knowledge. He then intimated that he thought he was to be a partner with me; I asked him what I ever had of him to entitle him to an equal right to all my discoveries. To this he made no reply; but said he would write it, and we would agree upon a price afterwards. I told him no; I must know his price first. He said he could not tell within fifty dollars. I then told him we would say no more about it. This conversation, together with his conduct in regard to the proposals, convinced me beyond all doubt, that his design was to destroy me, and take the whole business to himself. I felt unwilling to trust him any longer, and took all my books and manuscripts from his house.

### Thomson Enters Suit for Infringement of Patent, to find it "Improperly Made Out."

He continued to practise and prepare medicine, bidding me defiance. I made several attempts to get an honorable settlement with him, without success. I employed three persons to go to him and offer to settle all our difficulties by leaving them to a reference; but he refused to do any thing, continued to trespass, and made use of every means to destroy my character by abusive and false reports concerning my conduct, both in regard to my practice and private character. Finding that I could get no redress from him, I put an advertisement in the papers, giving notice that I had deprived him of all authority as my agent; and cautioning the public against receiving any medicine or information from him under any authority of mine. He redoubled his diligence in trespassing, and prepared the medicine and advertised it for sale under different names from what I had called it. I found there was no other way for me to do, but to appeal to the laws of my country for justice, and brought an action against him for a trespass on my patent, to be tried at the Circuit Court, at the October term, 1821. The action was continued to May term, when it was called up, and the Judge decided that the specifications in my patent were improperly made out, not being sufficiently explicit to found my action upon. In consequence of which I had to become non-suited, and stop all further proceedings against him, till I could make out new specifications and obtain a new patent from the government.

### Closes the "Narrative of the Life of Samuel Thomson" with a Bitter Complaint Concerning Man's Ingratitude.

Mr. Smith has lately [1822] published a book in which he has given my system of practice with directions for preparing and using the vegetable medicine secured to me by patent, and my plan of treatment in curing disease as far as he knew it. In the whole of this work there is not one principle laid down or one idea suggested, except what is taken from other authors, but what he has obtained from my written or verbal instructions; and still he has the effrontery to publish it to the world as



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his own discovery, without giving me any credit whatever, except he has condescended to say that "Samuel Thomson has made some imperfect discoveries of disease and medicine, but has not reduced any thing to a regular system." This assertion will appear so perfectly ridiculous to all those who have any knowledge of my practice, that I shall forbear making any comment upon it. It is true that he has made alterations in the names of some of the preparations of medicine, but the articles used, and the manner of using them, are the same as mine. It is also a well known fact, that he had no knowledge of medicine, or of curing disease, until I instructed him; and if what he says be true, the effect has been very remarkable, in as much as his magnetical attraction has drawn all the skill from me to himself, by which he has taken upon himself the title of Physician, and left me nothing but the appellation of Mr. Thomson, the imperfect projector.

I have been more particular in describing Mr. Smith's conduct, because it has been an important crisis in the grand plan for which I have spent a great part of my life, and suffered much, to bring about; that of establishing a system of medical practice, whereby the people of this highly favored country may have a knowledge of the means by which they can at all times relieve themselves from the diseases incident to our country, by a perfectly safe and simple treatment, and thereby relieve themselves from a heavy expense, as well as the often dangerous consequences arising from the employing those who make use of poisonous drugs and other means, by which they cause more disease than they cure; and in which I consider the public as well as myself have a deep interest. I have endeavored to make a correct and faithful statement of his conduct, and the treatment I have received from him; every particular of which can be substantiated by indisputable testimony if necessary. I now appeal to the public, and more particularly to all who have benefited by my discoveries, for their aid and countenance, in supporting my just rights against all encroachments, and securing to me my claims to whatever of merit or distinction I am honorably and justly entitled. While I assure them that I am not to be discouraged or diverted from my grand object by opposition, or the dishonesty of those who deal deceitfully with me; but shall persevere in all honorable and fair measures to accomplish what my life has principally been spent in fulfilling.

### ADDITIONS IN THE SECOND EDITION. 1825.

Proceeds to Take Legal Evidence with the Object of Preventing Infringement of His "Patent," which had been Issued January 28th, 1823.

After having failed in my attempt to obtain justice, by prosecuting Elias Smith for trespass, as has been before related, I found it necessary to adopt some new plan of procedure, in order to meet the universal opposition I have in all cases met with from not only the medical faculty, but from all those who belong to what are called the learned professions. When I obtained my patent, I had good legal advice in making out the specifications, besides, it was examined and approved by the Attorney General of the United States; and it was said at the time of the trial, by several gentlemen learned in the law, to be good; and that the very nature and meaning of the patent was, that the compounding and using the articles specified in manner therein set forth, was what I claimed as my invention.

There was, however, no other way for me to do, but to obtain another patent; and immediately after the above decision, I set about getting one that would meet the objections that had been made to the first. In making new specifications, I had the assistance of several gentlemen of the law, and others, and every precaution was taken to have them according to law; but whether my second patent will be



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more successful than the first, time must determine. It embraces the six numbers, composition or vegetable powders, nerve powder, and the application of steam to raise perspiration; and to put my claim beyond doubt, I added at the end as follows, viz.: "The preparing and compounding the foregoing vegetable medicines, in manner as herein described, and the administering them to cure disease, as herein mentioned, together with the use of steam to produce perspiration, I claim as my own invention." My second patent is dated January 23, 1823.

### Enters Suit Against Elias Smith for Commission Money Due on Patents, Wins His Suit, and Rejoices in his Victory.

At the time I failed in my attempt against Elias Smith, in consequence of the decision against the correctness of the specifications of my patent, as has been before related, I had a number of notes for rights sold, among them were two against a person, who had previously expressed great zeal in my cause, for a right for himself, and one for his friend. During the pending of the trial, he took sides with Smith; and after the decision, came to the conclusion, or, as I suppose, was told by Smith, that the notes could not be collected by law, and refused to pay them. I did not wish to put him to cost, and therefore let the business rest, in hopes he would think better of it and pay me according to contract; but after waiting until the notes were nearly outlawed, and he still refusing to pay, I put one of them in suit, and the action was tried before the Boston Police Court. The defence set up was, that the contract was void, in consequence of the failure of the patent; and also that there was no value received.

The trial was before Mr. Justice Orne, and was managed by Mr. Morse, for the plaintiff, and Mr. Merrill, for the defendant. On this trial, as on all others in which I have been engaged, there seemed to be the same fixed prejudice against me and my system of practice. The Judge took several days to make up his judgment, and finally decided in my favor, giving me the full amount of my claim; thus settling the principle, that obligations given for family rights were good in law. This was the first time I have ever had a chance to prove the utility of my medicine and system of practice, before a court of law; having always before been prevented by some management of the court.

A writer has lately come forward and published a series of numbers in the Boston Patriot, under the title of "Eclectic," who appears well qualified, and seems disposed to do me and my system of practice justice, by laying before the people a correct view of my case.

### ADDITIONS IN THE THIRD EDITION. 1831.

#### Appoints an Agent, John Locke, Who Turns Traitor and Unexpectedly Involves Thomson in Morgan's Masonic Controversy.

In all this time, I had never thought or mistrusted that there was a plot laid against me, either by him (Locke), my agent, or the committee, or with all combined, nor until about the end of the second year, which now seems but too obvious. Having recently returned from the West, I was at Mr. Locke's house, and showed him a newspaper which contained an account of the masonic outrage at Batavia. After reading it, he flew into a great passion, and accosted me as though I had made the story. I tried to argue the case with him; but in vain. He called me by as many hard names as he could well think of, and occasionally, the words "lie," and "fool," were in the compound.



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### **Another Agent, House, Now Refused to Pay his Commission.**

I have tried repeatedly to get a settlement with Col. House, my principal agent, but cannot effect it. He has paid me nothing for the large number of rights sold in about ten years, nor will he render any account. I know not how many books he has sold, as he took them whenever he wanted, in my absence. When I called on him last to settle, he said he had lost his account of credit. Here is the result of ten years agency! Besides which, I lent him and his partner, ten years ago, two hundred dollars, one of which he has paid in printing, the other he refuses to pay. I might mention many other circumstances which would go to show a decided hostility against me, and a determination to raise Mr. Locke, if possible at my expense; but I forbear, for they have neither built him up, nor put me down. I have paid no attention to all this opposition; but have kept on in a straight forward course, attending to the preparing of good medicine and supplying all those who wished for it.

### **Describes His Travels and Troubles, Tells of Counterfeit Books and Agents' Concerns.**

Since my last edition was printed in Boston, I have been six times in and through the State of Ohio. In the year 1825, I appointed Charles Miles, as agent in Ohio, and furnished him with seventy-two books for family rights. On his way home he purchased a number of counterfeit books, of David Rogers, of Geneva, I understood about one hundred, more or less. He went down into the central part of the State, and in the course of eighteen months sold about ten thousand dollars worth of rights, and imposed on the inhabitants at a great rate. Some he sold for seventy-five dollars, some twenty-five, others twelve, and he would leave but one book for four rights. When he came round again, he would borrow my book and leave the other, and sell my book again to another set of four or five; and so continued until he had sold all mine, and nearly all the others. In the fall of 1826, Horton Howard caused a letter to be sent to me, giving an account of Miles's conduct, and requesting me to come on to see about it. I arrived in January, 1827, and, following after Miles, I found his conduct to be as had been stated. I published handbills, and otherwise showing that he had no authority from me to do as he had done. I revoked his agency, and pacified the rage of the people as well as I could, by restoring the family right to those to whom he had so improperly sold it, and besides this, I lost a great part of what he owed me.

### **Horton Howard, of Ohio, Prints Books, Sells Patent Rights to Thomson's Treatment and Keeps the Money, about \$80,000.**

In January of the same year, I made Horton Howard agent for the Western country, with authority to print my book, and in three and a half years, he had printed about six thousand copies, and sold about four thousand rights, with the assistance of his sub-agents, amounting in all to about eighty thousand dollars. I tried at several different times to come to an honorable settlement with him, until August, 1830, at which time he utterly refused to give me an account from beginning. I then had but one alternative, either to bring an action against him in the court of chancery, or else take what he was willing to give. I chose the latter, by which I sacrificed about seven-eighths of what should have been coming to me. I took his notes for four thousand dollars, in two annual payments, two thousand dollars each year. I revoked his agency in two days afterwards, August 9, 1830, and ap-



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pointed four other agents in his stead, and took about two thousand copies of books, and left them with my other agents.

**Reform Medical College Started in New York City and Another in Worthington, Ohio.\* This Thomson considers "Villainous."**

But the dernier resort of the doctors will be to get my practice into their own hands, and under their own management, if possible. Finding that I should succeed in my Botanic practice, certain individuals of them have set up what they call a reformed college, in New York, where they have adopted my practice as far as they could obtain a knowledge of it from those who had bought the right of me, and would forfeit their word and honor to give them instruction. And finding that the Botanic practice gained very fast at the West, they have established a branch of their reformed college in Worthington, Ohio. I saw Dr. Steel, last winter, who is the President of that Institution, I was introduced to him by Mr. Sealy, a member of the Senate, and Dr. Steel was introduced to me as President of said college. I asked him if he was President of that reform which was stolen from Thomson, in New York. This seemed to strike him dumb on the subject. At the same place, a few evenings after, I was introduced to one of the practitioners under this reform, who studied and was educated at the college in New York, and was one of the instructors at Worthington. I asked him if he ever saw any of my books in the college in New York. He said he had accidentally seen one there. I replied, then you accidentally confess that my books were studied in that college. I then asked him whether they used the lobelia. He said they did. I then named the cayenne, rheumatic drops, bayberry and nerve powders. He confessed they used them all in manner and form, as I had laid down in my books. I am, therefore, satisfied that if my medicine were taken from them, their Institution would not be worth one cent. But, to have bought the right, would have been too mean for such dignitaries; but, to steal it from a *quack*, was, perhaps, in their estimation, much more honorable!!! Every honest man who hears any of the doctors speak of those colleges with approbation, ought to upbraid them with these facts.

**Sums Up and Closes His Narrative by Consoling Himself in that the Result of his Trials and Persecutions has been a Blessing to Humanity. Relates that He Has a Stock of Golden Seal and Madagascar Cayenne, and calls Attention to the Gross Adulterations in Commercial or "American Cayenne."**

Thus I have given a few prominent items, though but a small proportion of my experience, sufferings, perplexities and difficulties, since the second edition of this work was published. But much of that which operated to my disadvantage, as an individual, served to extend the knowledge and practice of the system. This gives me consolation in the midst of all my trials; and considering the Botanical practice as being now well established, I think it is for me to retire from the field of contest and war with either learned ignorance or legal opposition.

I have collected about three hundred weight of the golden seal the year past, and a large quantity of cayenne from the island of Madagascar; nearly three tons. I have sent to the southern States nearly twenty barrels, floured, which is a great help in the agues of that country.

And here it is proper to remark, that great impositions are practised on what

\*This, in 1845, was moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, its name changed to "The Eclectic Medical Institute." From that date to the present it has been uninterruptedly continuous and usually prosperous. (See Felter's History of the Eclectic Medical Institute.)



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is called the American cayenne. The doctors have declared it to be poison, and destructive to health, and I think they have made it as bad as they have represented it to be. It appears to be mixed with some red paint or mineral. When burnt, it leaves about two-thirds of the quantity, of the blackest substance. When taken inwardly, it produces violent vomiting, and ought to be shunned as a mad dog. There is but little or none sold at the groceries for ordinary purposes but of this kind. The only safe way to detect the poison, is to try it by burning. If it be pure, there will be a proportion of ashes as of other vegetables, and of a light color; if it be bad, the ashes will not only be black, but there will be double, and perhaps triple or quadruple the quantity there should be for the quantity burnt.

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### NOTICE.

I hereby appoint ABNER KNEELAND, editor of the Boston Investigator, Agent, generally, but not exclusively, throughout the United States, to receive and answer my letters, to sell the Rights to my Botanical System of Practice in Medicine, and my Books containing a Narrative of my Life and System of Practice, and to attend to all matters and things expressed or implied in the above agency, especially during my absence, the same as I should or could do if present, and the agencies of E. G. House and John Locke, are hereby revoked. SAMUEL THOMSON.

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### TO THE PUBLIC.

THE Subscriber having been appointed Agent for Dr. SAMUEL THOMSON, as above stated, all letters intended for the Doctor, may be addressed either to him or to the Subscriber, as all the Doctor's letters come into the box of the Investigator, and of course into the hands of the Subscriber, who will keep Family Rights, with the Books containing the System of Practice, constantly for sale at the Investigator Office; and who will appoint sub-agents, with the advice and consent of the Doctor, when, and wherever they shall be thought necessary, and will also keep the Medicine for sale at the same prices, and as low as it can be bought of the Patentee, and the patronage in this line, which the public are disposed to give, will be gratefully received by the public's obedient servant,

ABNER KNEELAND.

I will here relate an anecdote, which may be of use to some. At the time of my taking up my first large hive, we asked some neighbors in, to eat honey. I gave away about one hundred weight of honey, with biscuit and butter answerable. Before the season came round, I bought a few pounds in presence of one of the men who partook most liberally of the bounty. He asked, "Have you got rid of all your honey?" I replied, "Yes." "Why," said he, "you should not have been such a fool as to have given it all away." Here I made a notch in my memory. The next fall I took up my bees, and carried honey enough to Walpole, to fetch ten dollars. This I thought better than to be twitted for giving it away. However, in the course of the fall, I was in company with the same man; he asked, "Have you taken up your bees?" "Yes," was the answer. He rejoined, "And did you ask in the neighbors to eat honey?" My answer was, "No; I carried it to Walpole and sold it." He replied, "Why, they say you are a *hog* for not asking them."



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I replied, "You have learned me a lesson, which I had not thought of; when I gave my honey all away, I was a *fool*; and when I kept it, I was a *hog*; therefore, unless I am a hog at least half of the time, I cannot live." The conclusion is this. When a man begins the world, if he means to escape censure, he must observe a proper medium between being a *hog* and a *fool*, in the estimation of his neighbors, but if he has any thing which to them will be as sweet as honey, he must not keep all, nor give all away.—[A specimen of Thomson's philosophy.]

Now, reader, just take a general survey of the calamities of the world. The condition of a great portion of mankind is truly deplorable, and has been ever since the healing art was lost, and the plants and herbs of the field and forest ceased to be used as medicine; and since poison minerals of the rankest dye were substituted in their stead by Paracelsus, who in consequence was called a *hater of mankind*. Dr. Robinson says, "Paracelsus gave the tartrite of antimony, because it burnt up the stomach and lungs like hell fire." If this expression be true, I think it sufficient to prove the truth of his being a hater of mankind. In addition to this physic dealer and hater of mankind, comes Sydenham, who introduced bleeding to cure disease. These two plagues being joined in matrimony, against the life and health of mankind, I think, have caused the greatest plagues that ever infested the earth. The writer says that after Sydenham introduced bleeding into the practice of physic, in the space of one hundred years, "more died with the lancet alone, than all that perished by war in that time."—[A specimen of Thomson's opinion of "Fashionable Medicine" and its effects.]