

DEATH OF SAMUEL THOMSON

"See, when the patient's taken sick,
Coldness has gained the day;
And fever comes as nature's friend,
To drive the cold away."

Some men advocate one thing and practice another. It is said of a renowned prohibition orator, who had been criticised for using alcoholic liquids: "Do as I say, not as I do." Such as this can not be charged against Samuel Thomson. Fanatically zealous in his cause, an advocate of the Thomsonian Course of Medication in all that the course implied, he passed from life heroically partaking of lobelia, enemas, and the recognized Thomsonian syrups, teas, etc. Indeed, September 22, 1843, he ordered a full "course of medicine," although he knew full well that his earthly end was near. Heroically he fought death until, at last, on the morning of October 4, 1843, came the ending of it all.

This Bulletin would be incomplete without a description of the last days of this interesting personage. We accordingly reproduce from the *Botanico-Medical Recorder*, November, 1843, the report of Mr. Nathaniel S. Magoon, of Boston, who cared for Thomson in his last illness.

[From the Thomsonian Manual.]

Mr. Editor: Having been requested by the friends and relatives of Dr. Samuel Thomson to give an account of his last sickness and the medical treatment he received during that sickness, and thinking the public who are favorable to his system, may also feel interested in the subject, I have written the following report which I sent you for publication in the Manual:

SICKNESS AND DEATH OF SAMUEL THOMSON.

For the last three or four years Doctor Thomson had been in the enjoyment of tolerable health for a man of his age; and although subject to attacks of diarrhoea, still, by a careful attention to himself, he soon checked its progress and restored his health; and by his own medicines, and always by his own directions. His health for the last year had not materially varied from what it had been for the period above stated, until the first of August last, when the relax set in and continued until the 26th of September; as he had been so accustomed to being up in the night, and of having his own way of treating himself when this complaint was on him, nothing serious was thought of it, until he expressed his fears that he could not hold out much longer, without a more thorough resort to medicine. Medicines of an astringent nature were then prepared by his directions, which relieved him in two

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days—during which time he had administered to him six enemas. On Friday, September 22, he observed that he must have a course of medicine.—My wife observed that it was near night, he had better take some canker tea, then, and take the emetic in the morning, to which he assented; the tea when taken vomited him.

Saturday morning, Sept. 23, he got up and dressed himself as usual, went into the yard; he was told that he ought not to go out; he replied that the air was clear and bracing, and would not hurt him. He soon returned to his room, and ordered an emetic of tincture of lobelia, in vegetable jelly; which was got, and in the absence of the nurse he took part of it, sitting by the fire, which made him sick—when the nurse returned she told him that he had done that which he had cautioned others against doing, by taking the emetic when exposed to the air, and advised him to go to bed; he replied he would if someone would help him undress—he was never known to ask to be helped in undressing before. He had a stimulating enema—and was assisted to bed, and had steaming stones put to his back and feet, and he then ordered more emetic mixed, but when offered him he delayed $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour before taking it. His emetic was prepared of tincture of lobelia in vegetable jelly, and a tumbler of canker tea; he drank pretty freely of pennyroyal tea, porridge, &c., and threw up a larger quantity of cold phlegm, than was usual for him to when taking a course. His course operated well, and he was washed with spirit and rubbed with flannel, and put into a clean bed. He appeared cheerful and joked freely; through the night he drank often of composition tea and porridge.

Sunday morning, Sept. 24, he got up and eat a light breakfast, sat by the fire, and as he appeared dull, he was asked how he felt, after his course? He replied he felt as much refreshed as a boy who had been whipped; he then laid down, and on being asked if he thought the emetic did not operate well the day before; he said, no, the lobelia did not do justice, that it seemed to raise a load from the stomach part way, which fell back heavy like a lump of lead. He was asked if he would have another emetic on Monday. He said that he did not wish for anything stronger than the cough syrup, with a little lobelia to raise the phlegm gradually. He then ordered enemas of slippery elm, nerve powder, a small quantity of cayenne and milk, all scalded together. He was asked why he ordered them in that way, and replied that they were to strengthen him, for his throat was so sore that he could not swallow; this to be continued until he was restored; seeming to express some doubt that he should ever recover. Soon fell asleep, and then slept an hour, when he awoke, took some chicken broth and appeared more comfortable. He said that his bowels felt much relieved, and that his disease was principally in the gland of his throat. He then took a short ride, the weather being clear, and returned in good spirits and sat up until after tea; he was watched with, and during the night he drank freely of composition tea, and porridge, but rested quietly, and in the morning we thought him recovering. He got up and took some breakfast, and wished to go out, but on being advised not to, he concluded it was not best, and took an enema prepared as before, he soon went to bed, had steaming stones to his feet, and as he complained of severe pain at the stomach, No. 6, with hot water, and sweetened, were given, which soon relieved him. He was again urged to take an emetic, but refused, and when asked what would relieve him if he did not take an emetic, he replied, time and simple medicines, if anything. In the afternoon, he wished to get up and be shaved, which was done—and on attempting to go to bed again, he could not without help; he was asked why he could not walk better? and replied that his rupture—which he had been troubled

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with for a number of years, and considerably so for three years past—had fell again. The man who shaved him, said the doctor had considerable of a high fever, when the nurse repeated the following lines in his poems—

“See, when the patient’s taken sick,
Coldness has gained the day;
And fever comes as nature’s friend,
To drive the cold away.”

When this verse was repeated, he smiled and said that is right.

He then asked for No. 5 syrup, which was given, and had flannel wet in brandy applied hot to his body—and his head, feet, legs and hands, were rubbed with essence of pennyroyal—the flannels would be quite dry in an hour, and required to be renewed often. At 6 o’clock, P. M., got him up, and administered an enema, soaked his feet in hot water, bathed him with spirit, and put in bed again, and through the night he rested comfortably.

Tuesday 26, he took porridge for breakfast, and followed a similar treatment as on Monday, sat up only to have his bed made; next day he took a spoonful of lobelia herb steeped and strained, which vomited him and raised a large quantity of phlegm, and he appeared relieved—he was rubbed again with warm spirit and rested well at night.

Thursday 28, treated him much the same as the two preceding days, until about twelve o’clock, when his right leg from the knee down to the foot became cold, and it was with great exertions by rubbing and applying steaming stones that the natural warmth was restored, the left leg grew cold in about an hour, and the same means restored it that had been applied to the other. He said but little during the day, being much inclined to sleep; occasionally wandering in mind on waking. Fears were expressed to him, that unless he took more hot medicines he would die, to which he replied that he did not wish to live; through the night, he occasionally revived and then failed again, and appeared gradually losing strength, and during the next day remained about the same.

During this time, all of the prescriptions were of his own ordering, and all made known to him; when he got up, put his feet into warm water and he had a steaming stone before him and a blanket thrown over his head, as he said it relieved the distress in his throat. His medicines were now simple and soothing preparations to ease his throat and help expectoration, and nourishing food and enemas to sustain nature; but age and infirmities were unable to bear up under such complicated and severe sickness, and he gradually failed until the morning of the 4th of October, when he dropped away like going to sleep. He died highly respected and deeply lamented.

N. B. Last year about Thanksgiving time, the Doctor expressed a belief that he should die before spring; stated that his father was found dead in his bed and that he thought that he should die very sudden, and was often unwilling to be left alone on that account. Several times during the summer, said that he should die in the fall, expressed his firm belief that he should not see seventy-five years, which would have been his age in February, 1844. In November and December last, he frequently mentioned that he believed that he should die before spring, and arranged some of his business with me, at his own suggestion. Last summer he had an appointment to visit Baltimore, or gave his friends encouragement that he should go in September or October, but a few weeks before his death.

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On being asked if he was going, he said, No; he had rather die at home. About three weeks before his death he had some disappointment in settling some business, he was apprehensive that he had lost a considerable sum of money, which was a source of great perplexity and worryment to him, and no doubt tended to fatigue and weaken him.

Respectfully yours,

Boston, October 26, 1843.

NATH'L S. MAGOON.

THE END.