

Franklin and the Gout.

Small Type.

It is well known that, during the latter years of his life, Dr. Franklin was much subject to the gout. The following dialogue evinces so much of the genius and naivete of the Doctor, that it possesses sufficient internal evidence to be able to designate its author. The scene of the dialogue is laid in France, where Franklin had frequently resided.

Dialogue between Mr. Franklin and the Gout.

Mr. Franklin. Eh! Ch! Eh! What have I done to merit these cruel sufferings!

Gout.- Enough, enough; you have ate and drank too much, and over indulged those legs of yours in their indolence.

Mr. Franklin.- Who is it that thus accuses me?

Gout.- It is I, even I, the Gout.

Mr. Franklin.- What! my enemy in person?

Gout.- No! not your enemy.

Mr. Franklin.- I repeat it: my enemy: for you would at once torment my body to death, and ruin my good reputation; you reproach me as a glutton and tippler; now all the world that knows me will allow that I am neither one nor t'other.

Gout.- The world may think as it pleases: it is always very complaisant to itself, and sometimes to its friends; but I know full well that the quantity of nourishment proper for one who uses suitable exercise would be too much for another who uses none.

Mr. Franklin.- I take - Eh! eh, - as much exercise - Eh! - as I can, Madam Gout. You know my sedentary state; and, in regard to that, it would seem, Madam Gout, you might spare me a little, seeing it is not altogether my fault.

Gout.- Quite otherwise; your rhetoric and your politeness

are thrown away; your apology avails nothing. If your situation in life is a sedentary one your amusements, your recreations at least, should be active. You ought to walk or ride; or if the weather prevent that, play at billiards. But let us examine your course of life. While the mornings are long, and you have leisure to go abroad, what do you do? Why, instead of gaining an appetite for breakfast, by salutary exercise, you amuse yourself with books, pamphlets or gazettes, which commonly are not worth the reading. Yet you eat a large breakfast, four dishes of tea, enriched with cream, and one or two buttered toasts, relished with slices of hung beef, which I fancy are not the most digestible things. Immediately afterward you sit to writing at your bureau, or discourse with persons who apply to you on business; thus the time passes till one, without any kind of bodily exercise. But all this I could pardon, in regard as you say to your sedentary condition. But what is your practice after dinner. Walking in the beautiful gardens of those friends with whom you have dined, would be the choice of men of sense: yours is to be fixed down to a game of chess, where they find you thus engaged for two or three hours! This is your perpetual recreation, and the least eligible of any for a sedentary man, because, instead of accelerating the motion of the fluids, the rigid attention it requires, helps to retard the circulation, and obstruct internal secretions. Wrapt in the speculations of this wretched game, you destroy your constitution. What can be expected to result from such a course of living, but the body replete with stagnant humours, ready to fall a prey to all kinds of dangerous maladies, if I, the Gout, did not bring you relief by agitating these humors, and so purifying or dissipating them. If it was ⁱⁿ some nook or alley in Paris, deprived of walks, that you played a while at chess, who would not excuse you: but the same taste prevails with you in Passey, Antwerp, Montreuil, and Sancy: places furnished with the finest gardens and walks; and beautiful ladies, who there breathe a pure air, render the air still more inviting by their most agreeable and instructive conversation; all which you might enjoy by frequenting the walks! But all are as certainly rejected for this abominable game of chess. Pardon me, then, Mr. Franklin! But amidst

my instructions, I had almost forgot to bestow as wholesome corrections: so take a twinge—twinge.

Mr. Franklin.— Oh! Eh! Oh!— Ohhh! As much instruction as you please, Madam Gout, and as many reproaches; but pray, Madam! a truce with your corrections!

Gout.— The very reverse— I will not abate a particle of what is so much for your own good— for instance.

Mr. Franklin.— Oh! Ehkh! It's not fair to say I take no exercise, when I do very often; going out to dine and returning in my carriage.

Gout.— This, of all imaginable exercise, is the most slight and insignificant, if you allude to the motion of a carriage suspended on springs. In observing the degrees of heat obtained by the different kinds of movements, one may form an estimate of the quantity of exercise given by each. Thus for example, if you turn out to walk in winter with cold feet, in an hours time, you will be in a glow all over; ride on horse-back, the same effect will scarcely be produced by four hours ^{round} ~~round~~ trotting: but if you loll in such a carriage as that, you may go a journey, and gladly enter the last inn to warm your feet by a fire. Flatter yourself, then, no longer that half an hours sitting in your carriage deserves the name of exercise. Providence has appointed few to roll in carriages— to all he has given a pair of legs, which are in truth machines infinitely more commodious and serviceable. Be grateful, then, and make a proper use of yours. Would you know how they forward the circulation of your fluids in the very action of transporting you from place to place; observe when you walk, that all your weight is alternately thrown from one leg to the other; this occasions a great pressure on the vessels of the foot, and repels their contents. When relieved by the weight being thrown on the other foot, the vessels of the first are allowed to replenish, and by a return of the weight, this repulsion again succeeds: thus accelerating the circulation of the blood. The heat produced in any given time, depends on the degrees of this acceleration; the fluids are shaken, the humours attenuated, the secretions are facilitated, and all goes well; the cheeks are ruddy, and health is established. Behold

your fair friend at Anteuil; a lady who received from
countess nature more really useful science, than half a dozen
such pretenders to philosophy as you have been able to
extract from all your books; when she honours you with a visit
it, it is on foot; she walks all hours of the day, and leaves
indolence and its concomitant maladies to be endured by
her horses. — See at once the preservative of her health and
personal charms. On the other hand, when you arrive
at Anteuil, it is in your carriage, though it is no farther
from Passey to Anteuil, than from Anteuil to Passey.

Mr. Franklin. — Your reasonings grow very tiresome.

Gout. — I stand corrected, I will be silent and continue my
office: take this, and this.

Mr. Franklin. — Oh! Ohh! — Talk on, I pray you!

Gout. — No, no; I have a good number of twinges for you
this night, and the rest you may be sure of to-morrow.

Mr. Franklin. — What, with such a fever! Eh! Eh! —
I shall go distracted, can no one bear it for me?

Gout. — Ask that of your horses; they have served you
faithfully.

Mr. Franklin. — How can you so cruelly sport with my
torments?

Gout. — I am very serious: I have here a list of your
offences against your own health distinctly written, and
can justify every stroke inflicted on you.

Mr. Franklin. — Let's hear it then.

Gout. — It's too long a detail; you shall have it briefly.

Mr. Franklin. — Proceed — I am all attention.

Gout. — Can you remember how often you have appointed
the following morning for a walk in the grove of Boulogne,
in the garden de la Muette, or in your own, and that you
violated your promise; alledging, at one time it was too cold,
at another time too warm, too windy, too moist, or too what
else you pleased; when in truth it was too nothing but your in-
superable love of ease.

Mr. Franklin. — That I confess may have happened some
times, probably ten times in a year.

Gout. — Your confession is very imperfect; the gross amount is

one hundred and ninety nine times.

Mr. Franklin.— Is it possible?

Gout.— So possible, that it is fact; you may rely on the accuracy of my statement. You know Mr. B—'s gardens, and what fine walks they contain; you know the handsome flight of an hundred steps which lead from the terrace above to the level below. You have been in the practice of visiting this able family twice a week after dinner, and it being a maxim of your own invention, that, "one may take as much exercise in walking a mile up and down stairs, as in ten on level ground," what an opportunity was here for you to exercise in both these ways? Did you embrace it, and how often?

Mr. Franklin.— I cannot at once answer this question.

Gout.— I will do it for you; not once.

Mr. Franklin.— Not once!

Gout.— Even so; all the summer you went there at six o'clock. You found the charming lady, with her lovely children and friends, eager to walk with you and entertain you with their agreeable conversation: and what has been your choice? Why to sit on the terrace, satisfying yourself with ^{the} fine prospect, and passing your eye over the beauties of the garden below, but without taking one step to descend and walk about in them. On the contrary you call for tea, and the chess-board; and so! you are occupied in your seat till nine o'clock; and that, beside two hours play after dinner: then instead of walking home, which would have bestirred you a little, you stooped into your carriage. How absurd to suppose that all this carelessness can be reconcileable to good health without any interposition?

Mr. Franklin.— Now I am convinced of the justness of poor Richards remark, that "Our debts and our sins are always greater than we think for."

Gout.— So it is! you philosophers are sages in their maxims, and fools in their conduct.

Mr. Franklin.— But do you charge among my crimes that I return in a carriage from Mr. B—'s.

Gout.— Certainly: for having been seated all the while, you cannot object to the fatigue of the day, or want the indul-

gence of a carriage.

Mr. Franklin.- How would you advise me then to employ my carriage?

Gout.- Burn it if you choose; you would at least get heat out of it once in this way; or, if you reject this proposal, here's another for you: take notice of the poor peasants who work the vineyards and grounds about the villages of Passey, Anteuil, Chaillois, &c. you may daily among these deserving creatures, find four or five old men and women, bent and perhaps crippled under the weight of years, and by over-straining and too long continued labour. These people, after a most fatiguing day, have to trudge a mile or two to their smoky huts. Order your coachman to set them down. See, there's an act for you, of importance to the good of your soul; and at the same time, after your visit to the B-s if you return on foot, that will be good for your body.

Mr. Franklin.- Ah! how fatiguing you are.

Gout.- Let us return to my office; it should be remembered, I am your physician.

Mr. Franklin.- Whhh! the devil of a physician!

Gout.- What an ungrateful man are you to say so! Is it not I, in the character of your physician, who saved you from the palsy, the dropsy, and apoplexy? one or other of which would have done for you long ago but for me.

Mr. Franklin.- I submit, and thank you for the past, but intreat the discontinuance of your visits for the future for in my mind one had better die, than be cured so dolefully. Permit me, Madam Gout, just to hint that I have not been unfriendly to you - I never feed physician or quack of any kind to enter the list against you: if you then don't leave me to my repose, it may be said you are ungrateful too.

Gout.- I scarcely acknowledge that as any objection. As to quacks, I despise them: they may kill you, indeed, but cannot affect me. And as to regular physicians, they are at least convinced, that the gout, in such a subject as you are, is no malady, but a remedy: and wherefore cure a remedy? - but to our business - There -

Mr. Franklin.- Oh! - for heavens sake quit; and promise faithfully never more to play chess, but to exercise

daily, and live temperately.

Gout.- I know you too well.- You promise fair, but, after a few months of good health, you'll return to your old habits: your fine promises will be forgot like the form of last year's clouds.- Come, then; we'll finish the account. But I leave you with an assurance of visiting you again at a proper time and place; for your good is my object; and you are now sensible that I am your real friend.

Primitive Tea-Parties in New York.

The company commonly assembled at three o'clock, and went away about six; unless it was in winter time, when the fashionable hours were a little earlier, that the ladies might get home before dark. The tea-table was crowned with a huge earthen dish, well stored with slices of fat pork, fried brown, cut up into morsels, and swimming in gravy. The company, being seated around the genial board, and each furnished with a fork, evinced their dexterity in launching at the fattest pieces in this mighty dish;— in much the same manner as sailors harpoon porpoises at sea or our Indians spear salmon in the lakes. Sometimes the table was graced with immense apple-pies, or saucers full of preserved peaches and pears; but it was always sure to boast an enormous dish of balls of sweetened dough, fried in hog's fat, and called doughnuts,— a delicious kind of cake, at present scarce known in the city, excepting in genuine Dutch families.

The tea was served out of a majestic delft tea-pot ornamented with paintings of fat little Dutch shepherds and shepherdesses tending pigs— with boats sailing in the air, and houses built in the clouds, and sundry other ingenious Dutch fantasies. The beaux distinguished themselves by their adroitness in

replenishing this pot, from a huge copper tea-kettle, which would have made the pigmy macaronies of these degenerate days sweat merely to look at it. To sweeten the beverage, a lump of sugar was laid beside each cup; and the company alternately nibbled and sipped with great decorum, until an improvement was introduced by a shrewd and economic old lady, - which was, to suspend a large lump directly over the tea-table, by a string from the ceiling, so that it could be swung from mouth to mouth.

At these primitive tea-parties, the utmost propriety and dignity of deportment prevailed. No flirting nor coquetting, no gambling of old ladies, nor hoyden chattering and romping of young ones - no self-satisfied strutting of wealthy gentlemen, with their brains in their pockets, nor amusing conceits, and monkey divertissements, of smart, young gentlemen with no brains at all. On the contrary, the young ladies seated themselves demurely in their rush-bottomed chairs, and knit their own woollen stockings, nor ever opened their lips, excepting to say, "Yes, sir," or "Yes, madam," to any question that was asked them; behaving, in all things, like decent, well educated damsels. As to the gentlemen, each of them tranquilly smoked his pipe, and seemed lost in the contemplation of the blue and white tiles, with which the fire-places were decorated.

The parties broke up without noise and without confusion. They were carried home by their own carriages, that is to say, by the vehicles nature had provided them, excepting such of the wealthy as could afford to keep a waggon. The gentlemen gallantly attended their fair ones to their respective abodes, and took leave of them with a hearty smack at the door; which, as it was an established piece of etiquette, done in perfect simplicity and honesty of heart, occasioned no scandal at that time, nor should it at ^{the} present - if our great grandfathers approved of the custom, it would argue a great want of reverence in their descendants to say a word against it.