Sitadevi’s Sutra

Posted on May 12, 2016 by nyamhistorymed

By Emily Miranker, Team Administrator/Project Coordinator

In 1934, Sitadevi Yogendra (1912–2008) published *Yoga: Physical Education for Women*, the first book on yoga for women by a woman. Married at age 15 to Shri Yogendraji, founder of The Yoga Institute in Mumbai, they became what Sitadevi described as “the first yogi couple.” Her book enjoyed three editions in less than 10 years and has been translated into several languages. It leads the reader through a course of exercises and postures specially geared towards women, recognizing that the prevailing techniques of the teachers of her day were “based upon the physiospsychic needs of Man.”

First up in the routine are the corrective prayer poses. These instill proper posture in the body, something difficult to maintain under the “imposition of unnatural living under modern conditions”— and this was before we slouched at computers all day and cramped our fingers with constant texting.
With your posture thus improved, the next poses maintain or even increase your height. The common triangle pose (trikonasana) is among those recommended. It’s a spine-stretching equilateral triangle shape in contrast to the flashier right-triangle that frequently adorns today’s Western fitness magazine covers.

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Figure 7 in Yogendra, *Yoga: Physical Education for Women*, 1947.
Sitadevi details exercises for the trunk to develop core strength and tone, and poses to keep the sex organs healthy. She considered it the “duty of every woman to safeguard her health” as the bearers of children. She concludes with poses for the spine, which she found good for the nervous system and mental equity (samatvam).

She provides a table of the entire sequence, which should take just 30 minute to run through. “When practiced with precision and regularity, the hygienic results of these exercises are sure to become manifest in a few months. This, in turn, would inspire the essential faith and enthusiasm for their continued practice throughout the lifetime.”

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Sitadevi’s book, along with other publications of The Yoga Institute, were microfilmed and included in the Crypt of Civilization, which isn’t a videogame but rather a time capsule housed at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, GA. Consider coming by our library to read up on Sitadevi and master her healthful poses to cultivate longevity so you’ll be around for the Crypt’s opening ... in May of 8113.

References


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Young Man Freud

Posted on May 6, 2016 by nyamhistorymed

By Paul Theerman, Associate Director, Center for the History of Medicine and Public Health

The best-known photograph of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) is forbidding: cigar in hand, he appears grim-faced and imperious. The image bespeaks his complete confidence in the truth of his psychoanalytic theories, indeed in the whole venture of psychoanalysis, a field he created and, at least in the American sphere, a field that held sway in psychiatric treatment through the first half of the 20th century.

But that success was in the last half of his life. In honor of Freud’s 160th birthday, May 6, we wanted to present pictures of young Freud before his breakthrough works of the late 1890s, pictures of a man on the make in the intellectual culture of Vienna.

First, pictures of Freud with father Jakob and mother Amelie, when he was age 8 and 16, respectively, in Vienna. Born in Freiberg, Moravia, within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Freud moved with his family to Vienna within a year. That city would remain his home until he moved to London in 1938, after Austria’s annexation by Nazi Germany.
After excelling in high school, the Leopoldstädter Kommunal-Realgymnasium, Freud entered the University of Vienna at 17 and graduated with his medical degree eight years later, in 1881. Interested in neurology, he hoped for a career in academic medicine.

Here, Freud in a wedding photograph with Martha Bernays in 1886, age 27. At this point, he had been out of medical school for five years, had begun his career at Vienna General Hospital (Allgemeines Krankenhaus der Stadt Wien), and had spent five months in Paris studying with the great French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, whose work on hypnosis would prove revelatory.
And finally, a portrait of Freud in 1891, five years after starting his private practice, where using hypnosis and free association he began to develop the new discipline of psychoanalysis. His works, *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), made his reputation. The second half of his life was spent elaborating and defending his ideas within the medical profession and in broader intellectual life.
Child Health Around the Maypole

Posted on May 2, 2016 by nyamhistorymed

By Johanna Goldberg, Information Services Librarian

From 1924 through 1960, May 1 marked the celebration of Child Health Day, as described in the pamphlet *The Goal of May Day: A Year-Round Program*:

May Day as Child Health Day holds within it the power of a great vision. Its goal is to focus the interest of the nation upon perfected childhood—with the hope of a start in life free, sound and richly potential for every child...
This day has been given to the country to become, like the Maypole, a central rallying point for all the diverse activities concerned with the welfare of children....

The American Child Health Association (ACHA)—an organization founded by Herbert Hoover in 1923 with the merging of the American Child Hygiene Association and the Child Health Organization—began Child Health Day in 1924. The ACHA was inspired by the success of National Baby Week, an observance that spread awareness of infant care to millions by 1919 (clearly, awareness days and weeks are not a new phenomenon). The ACHA was also motivated by Congressional inaction (also not a new phenomenon); President Wilson had called for a child health program in 1919, to no avail.

Aida de Acosta Breckinridge, wife of President Wilson’s Assistant Secretary of War Henry Breckinridge (and intriguingly, the first woman to pilot an aircraft solo), thought up May Day as Child Health Day and ran with the idea. Through her efforts, three million department stores nationwide handed out booklets on child health. Magazines like Women’s World and Literary Digest promoted the day. In 1928, President Calvin Coolidge officially declared Child Health Day a national celebration. It remains one today, though in 1960, Child Health Day moved to the first Monday in October.

By 1928, when the ACHA released The Goal of May Day, the organization viewed May Day—Child Health Day as a time to celebrate the past year’s child welfare successes and plan for the year ahead. As the pamphlet emphasizes, May Day—Child Health Day activities occurred thanks to the efforts of community groups and local governments rather than through centralized ACHA planning, “each [group] coloring [May Day] with its own interpretation and using it according to its needs.” The Goal of May Day provides these organizations tips and lists of further resources to plan events and to improve child health year-round.
The challenge was significant: the pamphlet states that 18,000 mothers died in childbirth in the United States each year. In 1924, cites the pamphlet, “the stillbirth rate was 3.9 per 100 live births.” While infant deaths from diarrhea and enteritis were down by 1928, those from congenital malformation, birth injuries, and premature birth had risen. And between infancy and school age, fifty percent of deaths came from diphtheria, recently preventable by vaccine.1

On a larger scale, the pamphlet offers a community health inventory to spur local government to improve child health, with questions ranging from “Have you a safe water supply?” to “Is there a tuberculosis clinic?” to “Is there an organized course of study for the education of the school child in health?”
For community groups, the pamphlet recommends consulting with national organizations—the Girl Reserves, Boy Scouts, Jewish Welfare Board, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Child Study Association, and more—to plan programs and events like home demonstrations, distribution of health-related literature, community clean ups, health dramatizations, athletics, and exhibits.¹

¹“The parochial school had its health float on May Day.” In *The Goal of May Day*, 1928.

⁴“4-H girls club learn from the home demonstration agents.” In *The Goal of May Day*, 1928.
The American Child Health Association closed in 1935. During its 12 years of existence, it raised about $5 million for child-focused community services.\(^2\) And the observance of Child Health Day continues some 92 years after it began, though no longer around a Maypole.

References


“How Many Stamens Has Your Flower?” The Botanical Education of Emily Dickinson

By Anne Garner, Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts

So unsuspected violets
Within the fields lie low,
Too late for striving fingers
That passed, an hour ago.

Emily Dickinson (1858)\(^1\)

Emily Dickinson fell early and fast for flowers. Her poetry is full of the blooms and buds that signal the awakening of spring. There’s her crocus, “Spring’s first conviction” [Letter 891] “stir[ring] its lids,” (J10) her May-Flower, “pink small and punctual,” (J 3) and her “chubby” daffodil with its “yellow bonnet” (J 10 and J4), among an army of many other blossoms that decorate her pages.

As her biographer Alfred Habegger has noted, the poet spent hours as a girl in the 1840s roaming the woods and fields near her Amherst, Massachusetts home, looking for flowers. In many cases, these were sent to friends, but the poet also kept some for herself. Her first assembled collection was not, as one might expect, a collection of writing, but a collection of plant specimens.\(^2\)
Dickinson likely began her herbarium when she was 14, in 1845. It has been fully digitized by Harvard’s Houghton Library (all 66 pages can be viewed here). Several of the texts that influenced Dickinson’s flower collection are available in our library.

In 1845, Dickinson was enrolled in both botany and Latin at Amherst Academy. Coursework in both subjects was instrumental in her identification and labeling of plants.

In use at Amherst during Dickinson’s time was Almira Lincoln Phelps’ textbook, *Familiar Lectures on Botany*, first published in 1829. Phelps, a pioneer educator and only the second woman elected a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, was the sister of the American education reformer...
Emma Willard. Phelps probably taught at Amherst Academy for at least one term, using the *Familiar Lectures*. Her textbook was certainly known and used by Dickinson.

In the prefatory note to *Familiar Lectures*, Phelps describes how as a teacher of botany she struggled to find suitable textbooks, and composed the lessons within to fill this gap. Benjamin Smith Barton’s *The Elements of Botany*, while beautifully illustrated, was very out of date by the late 1820s, and written in an archaic language unsuitable for young students.
Familiar Lectures, sometimes called Mrs. Lincoln’s Botany, became the standard textbook for young students, and went through at least 39 editions. The volume contains a prefatory note directed at teachers that tells us about Phelps’ pedagogical style, and what Dickinson may have experienced in her classroom:

Each member is presented with a flower for analysis...The names of the different parts of the flower are then explained; each pupil being directed to dissect and examine her flower as we proceed...After noticing the parts...the pupils are prepared to understand the principles on which the artificial classes are founded, and to trace the plant to its proper class, order, & c. At each step, they are required to examine their floors, and to answer simultaneously the questions proposed; as, how many stamens has your flower?

Phelps taught her students the Linnaean system of identifying specimens: the number of stamens in a flower would determine its class, and the number of pistils, its order. Successive editions of Phelps’ text acknowledged the new “natural” system of classification, a system that moved away from stamen and pistil counting, but
discarded the new method as too complex for students.  

Dickinson’s biographer Alfred Habegger emphasizes Phelps’ belief that botany was a subject well-suited to females, and that Dickinson herself characterized plants most frequently as female, and, by extension, as central to the role of playing female:

That the poet thought of flowers as female suggests her love of plants owed more to culture than science…Pressed between the pages of a letter, they became a medium of exchange between her and her friends, those of her own sex especially. Cultivated indoors, especially after a conservatory was added to the Dickinson Homestead, they became a consuming avocation.¹¹

Emily Dickinson seems to have consulted another book for the organization of her specimens. That book was Amos Eaton’s Manual of Botany, for the Northern and Middle States of America.
Eaton, a botanist and geologist, had mentored Phelps during her time at Emma Willard's Female Seminary in Troy. It was Eaton who had first encouraged the publication of *Familiar Lectures*. Dickinson likely used Eaton's manual to identify the specimens she gathered on walks in the woods. She labelled her specimens in accordance with Eaton's Linnaean numbering system, in which the class and order correspond to number of stamens and pistils, probably unaware that by this time, the method had been largely discounted.

Dickinson also consulted Edward Hitchcock's *Catalogue of Plants growing without cultivation within thirty miles of Amherst College* in the creation of her herbarium. The text Dickinson used was published in 1829, but our copy, revised by Edward Tuckerman, dates to 1875. Hitchcock was president at nearby Amherst College, and the area's most eminent naturalist. He's especially remembered for his geological contributions (Hitchcock led the first geological survey in Massachusetts after studying dinosaur footprints). "Hitchcock's guide includes many rare plants native to Massachusetts also collected by Dickinson, including the very rare strawberry blite, cancer root (found near Mt. Holyoke), and verbena (found in South Hadley)."
Dickinson refers to Hitchcock in an 1877 letter to T.W. Higginson:

“When Flowers annually died and I was a child, I used to read Dr Hitchcock’s Book on the Flowers of North America. This comforted their Absence—assuring me they lived.” [Letter 488]12

Dickinson seems to have confused the authorship of the book she mentions above; here, too, she’s likely referring to Eaton’s *Manual of Botany for North America*.  

Phelps, Eaton, and Hitchcock’s texts all influenced Dickinson’s impressions of the natural world in girlhood. As a mature poet, as her physical reach and exploration of the natural world became more and more limited, the plants familiar to her from girlhood stuck, fixing their roots all the more deeply in her mind.

Perhaps you’d like to buy a flower?  
But I could never sell.  
If you would like to borrow  
Until the daffodil
Unties her yellow bonnet
Beneath the village door,
Until the bees, from clover rows
Their hock and sherry draw,

Why, I will lend until just then,
But not an hour more!\(^1\)

References


3. Habegger, 154.


6. Habegger, 155.


8. Rudolph, 1162.


11. Habegger, 156.

12. Rudolph, 1163.

13. Habegger, 158.


From Central Park to the Front Lines: Frederick Law Olmsted and the Sanitary Commission

Posted on April 26, 2016 by nyamhistorymed

By Paul Theerman, Associate Director, Center for the History of Medicine and Public Health

We are fortunate at the Academy to look out over Central Park—one of the jewels of the city of New York. The park got its start in the 1850s, and took shape due to the visionary efforts of two men, landscape architects Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903). In the 1860s Olmsted—whose birthday we celebrate today—was instrumental in one of the great medical and public health efforts of the 19th century: the organization of relief to Union soldiers in the Civil War. As executive secretary of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, he coordinated voluntary efforts to support the Army’s medical department in the war effort.\(^1\)
Olmsted was a restless person, continually trying on new roles. He first made his mark in journalism, publishing his observations of life in the South after three tours through the region in 1850s. He offered a scathing depiction of slavery, the resistance of southern society to change, and the degrading effects of the institution on society as a whole. Olmsted became an abolitionist when that was still a minority position, and a reformer throughout his life.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Olmsted's superintendence of the Central Park project was limited due to disputes with the city, and he contacted Henry W. Bellows, a New York Unitarian minister, for help in securing a position. Bellows drafted him to head up, as executive secretary, a newly chartered private institution, the U.S. Sanitary Commission, of which Bellows was a founding Commissioner. Broadly modeled on the British example in the Crimean War, the Sanitary Commission addressed two persistent needs in the delivery of medical services in wartime. The first was that the standing army of the United States was relatively minuscule, and its medical department equally so. At the outbreak of the war, the army had some 16,000 men at arms, a portion of whom defected to the Southern cause. Through volunteers and conscription, the number of men serving eventually reached 2.5 million over the four years of the war, with perhaps half a million in uniform at the height of the conflict. As the volunteer army geared up so did the medical corps, but by any measure the medical service of the army was largely inadequate for the task.

And the medicine of the army seemed inadequate as well. The Sanitary Commission as he organized it had a paid professional staff and a corps of medical inspectors to review military camp conditions and advise military physicians. The inspectors also relayed requests for supplies back to the Commission’s offices in Washington, where central office staff would work to fill requests from donations.

Olmsted also lobbied to induce Congress and Cabinet officials for assistance through reformed laws and sympathetic appointments. He put his work into the overall context of reform for the good of the nation: “service on the Commission was part of his patriotic duty. It would strengthen the fighting power of the nation by assuring the health of the soldiers and by making the best use of goods and money contributed by the public.”

Though Olmsted thought his service—and the war for that matter—would last a matter of weeks, it did not. Several times he was called to the field. During the series of battles that constituted the Peninsula Campaign—Union General George B. McClellan facing Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston in the spring and summer of 1862—Olmsted found himself organizing the evacuation of wounded Union troops to ships, amid a chaos of
competing orders and information. During this period, he wrote a series of letters back to the Commission, and over the next year he took his letters and those of another unnamed Commission member and edited them into *Hospital Transports: A Memoir of the Embarkation of the Sick and Wounded from the Peninsula of Virginia in the Summer of 1862*. Designed to lay out the work of the Commission and solicit donations, the book also provided a gripping account of life just behind the front lines. The Academy’s copy was donated from the English branch of the U.S. Sanitary Commission—set up in London to coordinate donations from Americans abroad and sympathetic Britons—and is inscribed by Edmund Crisp Fisher, the Secretary of the branch.\(^4\)

Olmsted’s work with the Commission ended in the fall of 1863. He was not able to maneuver among the competing factions, especially between eastern and western branches of the Commission, nor readily subject himself to the control of the Commission’s executive committee. He went to California to manage a ranch caught up in the confusion of competing gold rush claims; when he returned to the East two years later, he devoted himself to landscape architecture. But as he left, he knew that he had tried, and at times succeeded, in providing a trained professional cadre of medical doctors and reformers to coordinate care to wounded soldiers.
and to better their conditions under arms. His work prefigured broader efforts leading into World War I—in such organizations as the Red Cross—in the scope of their ambition and in the vision of their success.\(^5\)

**References**


4. A copy is available online, and the book has been recently edited by Laura L. Behling and re-released.

5. There are many excellent books on Frederick Law Olmsted: for further reading, consider Witold Rybczynski, *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the 19th Century* (1999), and Justin Martin, *Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted* (2012).

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**Medical Rhymes**

By Danielle Aloia, Special Projects Librarian

In 1884, Dr. Hugo Erichsen (1860-1944) published *Medical Rhymes*, a collection of rhymes and illustrations from a variety of sources. The subtitle speaks volumes of the book's contents: "A collection of rhymes of ye Ancient Time, and Rhymes of the Modern Day; Rhymes Grave and Rhymes Mirthful; Rhymes Anatomical, Therapeutical and Surgical, all sorts of Rhymes to Interest, Amuse and Edify all Sorts of Followers of Esculapius."

Erichsen wrote in his preface that "The purpose of my book is to amuse the busy doctor in leisure hours. Some of the serious poems will no doubt furnish food for reflection." Erichsen, was a busy doctor himself, working as a Detroit physician, a prolific writer, and proponent of cremation.\(^2\)

In the introduction of *Medical Rhymes*, Willis P. King, M.D., writes, "There are a thousand and one things in the life of every doctor which are calculated to cause him to 'break out' with violent attacks of rhyming." Poetry was one area of life where normally stoic doctors could break free of societal expectations.

Erichsen divided his book into seven chapters: Anatomical Lore, For Ye Student Men, The Doctor Himself, Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics, and Miscellaneous Poems. All poems are given attribution, where available, and some include illustrations.

This selected poem includes a little anecdote as to its origins:
This next poem is attributed to a London medical student and is quite telling of the time, where K is for kreosote and O is for opium. This one even has a little repeating chorus!
Let's not forget the book's compiler. Erichsen included a poem of his own, "The Physician," in which he pays tribute to all the good a doctor does to "save another life."

THE STUDENT'S ALPHABET.

Oh, A was an artery, filled with injection;
And B was a brick, never caught at dissection.
C were some chemicals, lithium and borax;
D played the deuce with the bones of the thorax.

CHORUS.—

Taken in short-hand with minute accuracy.
Fol de rol lol,
Fol de rol lay,
Fol de rol, tol de rol, tol de rol, lay.

E was an embryo in a glass case;
And F a foramen that pierced the skull's base.
G was a grinder, who sharpen'd the tools;
And H means the half-and-half drunk at the schools.
Fol de rol, etc.

I was some iodine, made of sea-weed;
J was a jolly cock, not used to read.
K was some kerosene, much over-rated;
And L was the lies which about it were stated.
Fol de rol lol, etc.

M was a muscle, cold, flabby and red;
And N was a nerve, like a bit of white thread.
O was some opium, a fool chose to take;
And P were the pins used to keep him awake.
Fol de rol lol, etc.

Q was the quacks, who cure stammer and squint.
R was raw from a burn, and wrapped close in lint.
S was a scalpel, to eat bread and cheese;
And T was a tourniquet, vessels to squeeze.
Fol de rol lol, etc.

U was the uneiform bone of the wrist.
V was the vein which a blunt lancet missed.
W was wax from a syringe that flowed;
X, the 'xaminers, who may be blowed!
Fol de rol lol, etc.

Y stands for you all, with best wishes sincere;
And Z for the zanies who never touch beer.
So we've got to the end, not forgetting a letter;
And those who don't like it may grind up a better.

—London Medical Student.

— "The Student's Alphabet." In Erichsen, Medical Rhymes, 1884. Click to enlarge.
The image below accompanies a 12-page poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes, M.D. The poem, "Rip Van Winkle, M.D.,” recounts the story of young Rip as a doctor who took a “vigorous pull” of “Elixir Pro,” then fell off his horse fast asleep. For 30 years he lay, until the sounds of Civil War battle woke him. But his doctoring was no use, as his methods were 30 years out of date. When he consulted with the modern day doctors, they cried murder and suggested he go back to sleep. Today, he can be found by his mildew-y air.
Want more *Medical Rhymes*? You're in luck: [The book is available in full online](#).

**References**


3. Ibid.

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Presenting Grey Literature at the 13th International Conference on Urban Health

The conference focused on Place and Health and included a joint program with the American Association of Geographers. Combining data from geography with health data is one way to develop better models for urban and population health, and those involved in fields as diverse as urban planning, transportation, housing, and education all need to be at the table.

During the conference, two themes particularly relevant to the GreyLit Report emerged: the need for a better definition of urban health and the importance of interdisciplinary research. These are important concepts for the GreyLit Report when collecting and providing access to urban health resources, helping us to identify and understand topics that cross disciplines.

We had an opportunity to appeal to the cross-disciplinary audience of researchers during two conference sessions, providing a brief explanation of what grey literature is and ways to search for it beyond traditional databases. In brief, grey literature is produced by think tanks, university centers, government agencies, and other organizations. It can be published as reports, fact sheets, data sets, white papers, and more. It provides current research on trending topics and is used to communicate findings to stakeholders and policy-makers.

Some forms of grey literature can be found in traditional databases, such as PubMed or Web of Science, but the majority is not indexed or organized in systematic ways. To help solve this problem, the Academy Library developed the GreyLit Report in 1999 to collect these reports and make them accessible. During the presentations, we emphasized the importance the GreyLit Report places on interdisciplinary research. We collect reports related to public health in all sectors, to truly make a one-stop-shop for urban health.

During the presentation, participants learned about Google Custom Search (using Google to search specific websites and document types), Twitter, and the GreyLit Report as three resources relevant to finding grey literature. Still, depending on the resource used for search, altering keywords may be necessary to get relevant results. What terms one discipline uses may be defined differently in another. For example, the word mobility
can have multiple meanings. In urban health, it usually means how people get from place to place, but when searching Google or Twitter one can get results for mobile technologies and physical disabilities. We clarified that the terms used in searching are very important to the relevance of the results. Often, searches in Google and Twitter need to be weeded through to find relevant results. We also presented some criteria for evaluating such results: authority, credibility, affiliation, purpose, and conflict of interest.

The GreyLit Report is much easier to search than Google or Twitter. Because we collect, archive, and index reports from all sectors, its focus limits irrelevant results. Users do not have to wade through millions of results, but have a credible, authoritative selection from which to choose.

At the end of each session, we opened up a conversation with participants to see what their concerns were in regard to grey literature and how the GreyLit Report may help them in their research. This produced an intimate, lively discussion. Participant concerns about grey literature included how to promote their own grey literature and ideas to enhance the Report. One idea is to add canned (one-click) searches on specific urban health topics. Another idea is to add the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals with links to reports in those areas so that users can easily find grey literature for specific sustainable development goals in urban health. We will work on enhancing the GreyLit Report website, and more importantly, we will think about ways to help promote this growing body of research for users.

A Thousand Ways to Please

By Johanna Goldberg, Information Services Librarian

To celebrate National Poetry Month, we are sharing poems from our collection throughout April.

Two of my favorite books in the library’s collection have, by all accounts, not aged well.

Novelized household and cooking guides, A Thousand Ways to Please a Husband (1917) and its sequel, A Thousand Ways to Please a Family (1922), present the life of Bettina, her husband Bob, their oft-visiting friends and family, and in the sequel, their son Robin and daughter Sue. Bettina constantly doles out advice to her friends (who, as this is fiction, are always happy to receive it), including this look back on how to select a refrigerator in the 1910s:
That Bettina sure knows everything.

Both books span the course of a year, and each month begins with a poem. Here are the poems for April from both volumes:
APRIL.

Tell me, housewife blithe and fair,
   How does your garden grow?
Crisp and green the lettuce there,—
     Onions, row by row,—
Radishes beyond compare!
Spring and I with tender care
     Watch them well, you know!
And from May:

April poem from Weaver, *A Thousand Ways to Please a Family*, 1922.
MAY.

Scrub and polish,—sweep and clean,—
Fling your windows wide!
See, the trees are clad in green!
Coax the spring inside!
Home, be shining fair to-day
For the guest whose name is May!

— May poem from Weaver, *A Thousand Ways to Please a Husband*, 1917.
Though the gender politics are dated, the household advice based on nearly 100-year-old technologies and trends, and the food not always tempting to the modern palate, these books (both available in full online) remain fascinating looks into an idealized home life in the 1910s and early 1920s.

— May poem from Weaver, *A Thousand Ways to Please a Family*, 1922.

Cupid Out of Sorts—Is Advised to Take a Turkish Bath

Near Çemberlitas Square in Istanbul, a stone’s throw away from the Grand Bazaar, stands the ethereal Çemberlitas hammam, built in 1584. At first glance, one might think the frontispiece of David Urquhart’s *Manual of the Turkish Bath* depicts this famous Turkish bath, with its domed vaults and cut-away star windows.
It does not. Instead, the engraving depicts a proposed new construction in 19th-century London.

By the 1870s, these baths, modeled on Turkish hammams, were scattered across England and America, largely through the efforts of Scotsman David Urquhart.

In the mid-19th century, Urquhart, an antiquarian and diplomat who had travelled widely in Spain, Morocco, and Turkey, ignited a wave of enthusiasm for public baths in Britain. He wrote about the dry hot-air bath, or hammam, he visited in Turkey in his travelogue, *The Pillars of Hercules*.

Urquhart’s ideas gelled when he met Irish physician Richard Barter. In 1843, Barter opened the first public bath facility of its kind in the UK designed for medical benefits and fitted with Russian-style baths. In 1856, Barter invited Urquhart to visit, and the two devised a new “improved Turkish bath,” using dry heat to maximize the medical benefits.¹

In 1861, Urquhart spoke to the Medical Society of London, arguing that the Turkish bath could alleviate a long list of illnesses. Urquhart believed that visiting the Turkish bath was beneficial to pregnant women and could aid digestion. He also championed its potency as a remedy for bronchitis, asthma, fever, diabetes, syphilis, baldness, and a handful of other maladies, including dementia and insanity.²

By the following decade, Urquhart’s bath at his Riverside home in England was well known, and served as an early model for other baths, including the first bath in London, on Bell Street in 1860. The celebrated Victorian
dermatologist Erasmus Wilson describes his visit to Riverside in the 1850s:

We arrive at the door of the Frigidarium; we loosen the latches of our shoes, and we leave them behind the lintel; the portal opens and we enter. The apartment is small, but it is sunny and bright; throughout the glass doors we see a balcony festooned with the tendrils of the rose…

The Riverside bath was comprised of a hot room, built directly over the part of the floor with the hottest air underneath (240-250 F); followed by a second hot room, kept at 170F; and, down a set of marble steps, a third area with a divan, kept at 150F. Soft pillows were available for comfortable reclining in each space.

Wilson describes an adjacent washing area enclosed by a curtain:

We seat ourselves on the clean marble at the edge of the Lavaterina; our host plays the soft pad of gazul over the head,
the back, the sides; we complete the operation on the limbs and feet ourselves; Basin after basin of warm water rinses the gazul and the loosened epidermis from the surface, and we rise...

After this scrub-down, Wilson visited the *piscina*, a square pool, for a cold water plunge. Wilson explains that typically this might be followed by a second washing, a warm Turkish towel, and a period of relaxation.

In 1862, Urquhart supervised the construction of another London bath at 76 Jermyn Street (the hammam depicted in the first image of this post). After several decades of popularity with Londoners it closed because of disuse. A bomb destroyed the facility in April 1941.
Manual of the Turkish Bath presents many of Urquhart’s arguments for the health benefits of the Turkish bath in Socratic dialogue form. It is also notable for its case histories. A paper by Arthur Leared, “Treatment of Consumption by the Turkish Bath” notes the improved health of several patients he treated at 76 Jermyn Street. Leared reports that a 17-year-old wood engraver whose sister and mother died of phthisis and suffered from the same disease improved markedly with treatment:

April 16th—Twenty-first week of Bath treatment; has had about fifty baths in all. Is now in all respects going on well. Sleeps well, and has no night-sweats; appetite good; bowels regular; cough almost gone. Has worked ten hours a day for last two months, except on days when he takes a bath.

By the 1860s, Urquhart’s new Turkish bath had caught the notice of the Brooklyn physician Dr. Charles Shepard. Shepard’s 1873 pamphlet praised Urquhart’s revival of the bath, and promoted a new bath established by Shepard in Brooklyn Heights.

The pamphlet takes as its conceit the suggestion that even Cupid needs a pick-me-up sometimes:
The narrative unfolds with charming illustrations:

The pamphlet includes Shepard’s plan for his Brooklyn Heights bath. New Yorkers were encouraged to visit 9am to 9 pm, all days of the week except for Sundays. It remained open until 1913.
Plan and prices of the Turkish Baths in Brooklyn Heights. In Shepard, *The Turkish Bath*, 1873.
View of Brooklyn, showing the location of the Hammam. In Shepard, *The Turkish Bath*, 1873. Click to enlarge.
Whether in London or Brooklyn, these 19th and early 20th century baths provided centers of calm in a bustling city. As David Urquart said:

Well can I recall the Hammam doors which I have entered, scarcely able to drag one limb after the other, and from which I have sprung into my saddle again, elastic as a sinew and light as a feather.5

References

1. This was the Hydropathic Establishment of St. Anne’s in Cork. In many parts of Europe today, the “Turkish bath” is known as the “Irish-Roman bath.” See victorianturkishbath.org.


4. Soap.
Beyond “The Yellow Wallpaper”: Silas Weir Mitchell, Doctor and Poet

By Johanna Goldberg, Information Services Librarian

To celebrate National Poetry Month, we are sharing poems from our collection throughout April.

Today, Silas Weir Mitchell (1829–1914) is best known as the purveyor of the Rest Cure, made infamous by Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s short story “The Yellow Wallpaper.” But while he was alive, he was renowned as a pioneering doctor of nervous diseases and a successful author.

Mitchell began his medical career researching rattlesnake venom. With the outbreak of the Civil War, he shifted focus, beginning work as a contract surgeon at Philadelphia’s Turner’s Lane Hospital, specializing in nervous diseases.
Here, he treated and studied patients with nervous system injuries and syndromes, including one he named causalgia (a form of neuropathic pain). These studies informed his numerous pamphlets and books and helped establish his reputation as a father of American neurology. After the war, Mitchell continued his research at the Philadelphia Orthopaedic Hospital and Infirmary for Nervous Diseases. He determined that eyestrain could cause headache, and also discovered the rare vascular pain disorder erythromelalgia, or Weir Mitchell's disease.
More controversially, Mitchell also developed the Rest Cure, a treatment for the now passé diagnoses of neurasthenia (physical and mental exhaustion) and hysteria. Women most often received the Rest Cure, which typically involved six to eight weeks of isolation, bed rest, a high calorie diet, massage, and electrotherapy. Though the Rest Cure seems problematic to modern eyes, it was an accepted and popular practice for decades, seen as a valuable alternative to drug treatment.

And what about men experiencing neurasthenia? For them, Mitchell developed the West Cure. Men—including Walt Whitman and Theodore Roosevelt—were sent West to “engage in vigorous physical activity ... and to write about the experience.” The different treatments used for the same diagnosis—neurasthenia—speak volumes to how differently men and women can be viewed and medicalized.

In addition to his medical research and private practice, Mitchell also enjoyed a career as an author. He published numerous short stories, 19 novels, a biography of George Washington, and 7 books of poetry. We have one of these poetry books, *A Psalm of Deaths and Other Poems* (available in full online), in our collection. We feature two poems from the volume here.

When Mitchell wrote “Of Those Remembered” in 1899, he was no stranger to loss: he had experienced the death of his father (1858), his first wife (1862), his mother (1872), and his sister (1874) in quick succession, along with the deaths of so many Civil War soldiers.

Of Those Remembered

There is no moment when our dead lose power;  
Unsignaled, unannounced they visit us.  
Who calleth them I know not. Sorrowful,  
They haunt reproachfully some venal hour  
In days of joy, and when the world is near,  
And for a moment scourge with memories  
The money changers of the temple-soul.  
In the dim space between two gulfs of sleep,  
Or in the stillness of the lonely shore,
They rise for balm or torment, sweet or sad,
And most are mine where, in the kindly woods,
Beside the child like joy of summer streams,
The stately sweetness of the pine hath power
To call their kindred comforting anew.

Use well thy dead. They come to ask of thee
What thou hast done with all this buried love,
The seed of purer life? Or has it fallen unused
In stony ways and brought thy life no gain?
Wilt thou with gladness in another world
Say it has grown to forms of duty done
And ruled thee with a conscience not thine own?
Another world! How shall we find our dead?
What forceful law shall bring us face to face?
Another world! What yearnings there shall guide?
Will love souls twinned of love bring near again?
And that one common bond of duty held
This living and that dead, when life was theirs?
Or shall some stronger soul, in life revered,
Bring both to touch, with nature's certainty,
As the pure crystal atoms of its kind
Draws into fellowship of loveliness?

The volume closes with a poem perfect for National
Poetry Month: “Of a Poet” (1886).

Of a Poet
Written for a child

He sang of brooks, and trees, and flowers,
Of mountain tarns, of wood-wild bowers
The wisdom of the starry skies,
The mystery of childhood's eyes,
The violet's scent, the daisy's dress
The timid breeze's shy caress
Whilst England waged her fiery wars
He praised the silence of the stars,
And clear and sweet as upland rills
The gracious wisdom of her hills.
Save once when Clifford's fate he sang,
And bugle-like his lyric rang,
He prized the ways of lowly men,
And trod, with them, the moor and fen.
Fair Nature to this lover dear
Bent low to whisper or to hear
The secrets of her sky and earth,
In gentle Words of golden Worth.

References


The following are the “best” books about mental health and history at the Columbia Psychiatry Patient Library during my tenure. Best Mental Health Books: History. A Historical Reader: The New York Times and Madness, 1851-1922 by William Jiang, MLS “The entire raison d’être for this mental health historical reader of the “paper of record”, The New Times, is to give the reader a window on the past and to include the reader on a journey of a time long ago. What people come away with when, they see the original articles written by and about Sigmund Freud or his famous “psychanalysis” as well as th The Histology Handbook is a clear, concise reference book that will provide the user with the information and understanding to assist in the performance and troubleshooting of histology related tasks and help us all succeed in our common pursuit of “the perfect slide”. The book contains both basic information to facilitate the understanding of staining theory, as well as specific procedures that can be utilized in the histology laboratory. These are seriously researched history books that are also highly readable, selected systematically from the hundreds that are published every year. We’ve been interviewing the judges of the Wolfson, all professional historians, annually since 2018. In choosing topics to approach experts for their recommendations on, we’ve focused on important events and key figures, like World War II or Gandhi or the American Civil War. Over the past decade, we’ve spoken with many eminent historians and asked them to recommend the best books in their field. The resulting interviews and reading lists help bring together some of the most important history books ever written—as well as the unmissable books being published today.