

THE TREATMENT OF CANCER,  
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PRESCRIPTIONS FROM A HYPNOTISED  
WOMAN.  
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EXTRAORDINARY CASE FROM  
MIRFIELD.  
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Mr. P. P. Maitland opened an inquiry at the Mirfield Memorial Hospital on the body of Annie Taylor, aged 27, the wife of Walter Taylor, the landlord of the Volunteer Hotel, who died from cancer. It appeared that she had been treated by an unqualified practitioner named Benjamin Balme, of Ravensthorpe, who described himself as a medical herbalist. Mr. Balme was sent for by the Coroner, and elected to give evidence. He stated that Mrs. Taylor consulted him and his wife. Neither he nor his wife examined her, but Mrs. Balme, when in a hypnotic sleep, diagnosed what the patient was suffering from, and wrote out a prescription. This was made up and given to the patient. Mrs. Balme, while asleep, said Mrs. Taylor was suffering from a cancerous tumour, and that it was possible to "scale" it away. They gave her medicine and also an ointment to rub the breast where the cancer was located. Mrs. Taylor visited the house weekly, and Mrs. Balme was hypnotised. While under the influence she stated whether it was necessary or not to vary the treatment, and in this respect her instructions were carried out. Witness had recommended her to get further advice as it was a very bad case.

The Coroner: Without seeing this breast, you presumed to treat it? It was the height of presumption.

Witness: I honestly believe in what I did.

The Coroner: It was gross impertinence.

It was decided to adjourn the inquest in order that the prescriptions might be produced. Later in the afternoon Mr. Balme handed in the prescriptions, as written by his wife, which consisted of preparations from herbs.

The Coroner remarked that it seemed a most extraordinary thing that at this time in the history of the world such dark ignorance should exist. He could hardly believe it. It was gross presumption and idiotic nonsense, for a man, without seeing a cancer in a woman's breast, or examining it in any way except through the medium of a person hypnotised, to treat it.

Dr. Milne and Dr. Sproulle, who had conducted a post-mortem examination on the body that morning, gave evidence to show that death was due to cancer in the breast and secondary deposits in other organs of the body.—Dr. Milne, in answer to the Coroner, said in his opinion, if the woman had been surgically treated in the earlier stages, she would have been living now, and have had a good chance of a perfect cure. The treatment she had undergone was simply a negative one, so far as he knew of the drugs employed; but he added, sarcastically, he was not a herbalist.

The Coroner, in summing up, said if he had been told before that morning that there was any one in Yorkshire who would have believed it possible for a dangerous disease like cancer to be cured through the agency of a person hypnotised, and that person being totally ignorant of the treatment of cancer, he would have absolutely denied it with scorn. They had to decide whether the death of the woman was accelerated by the treatment which she had received, or whether he had persuaded her from going elsewhere for treatment. If so, it amounted to manslaughter.

After consulting about half an hour, the jury returned a verdict that deceased died from cancer, and they were of the opinion that no blame attached to any one.