

Practical Counsel on Home Treatments

by Ellen G. White

(Written March 10, 1897, from "Sunnyside," Cooranbong, N.S.W., to "Dear Brother Semmens.")

I have just sent you a telegram. In a letter written to Brother Lacey, the father of Herbert Lacey, Sister Lacey was describing, I think, the treatment you were giving Brother Lacey--the ice, etc., used to keep down the fever.

I feel that the ice used is a mistake. The light which has been given me in reference to several critical cases has been represented to me as a sick child I had in charge, and in every case the directions given were, Do not apply ice to the head (but cool water); apply hot fomentations (to the bowels, stomach, and liver). This will quell the fever much sooner even than cold. The reaction after the cold applications raised the fever, in the place of killing it.

This direction has been given me again and again. In some cases the ice applications may be warrantable, but in most cases they are not advisable. If the invalid has any vitality, the system will send the blood to where the cold is, and very often the system has no power for this taxation. Brother Herbert has low vitality. Some cases may endure this other kind of treatment, but I greatly fear for Brother Lacey, if it is continued. Use hot water; in nine cases out of ten it will do a more successful work than the cold ice would do.

I cannot now write out all the cases I have handled under the light given me of God, but every case has worked favorably. I have given these directions to physicians of repute, those not of our faith and those of our faith, and in every case, even in fevers, they have reported success in treating with hot water in the place of cold water or applications of ice.

My husband and myself were urgently requested to go from Battle Creek to Allegan, in the case of Dr. Lay's wife, to pray for her, for there was little hope of her life. We went about 35 miles. No one had been in her room to see the woman but her husband, Dr. Lay, and the physician in that place. We inquired the reason of her prostration. They said it was hemorrhage from the lungs. My husband inquired, "What are you doing?" Dr. Lay responded, "Putting on cold compresses."

We then told the doctors that they were doing the worst thing for the woman that they could do. They should keep hot water bags to her feet, and hot water bags to her lungs and stomach. The cold water or ice water to the lungs was diverting the blood from limbs and body to meet the cold application, and another hemorrhage would certainly appear soon. "Why," the doctors said, "this is sensible; why did we not consider, and reason from cause to effect?"

The cold was immediately replaced by hot, and she was much more comfortable. She had been lying [in bed] for three days. They had not dared to move her for fear of hemorrhage. Her clothing was removed the next day, and she began to feel natural. Dr. Lay said, "You have, by your counsel, saved the life of my wife." He was the most grateful man I ever saw. She lived for about twenty years after that sickness.

There was another woman, greatly respected in Allegan, who was full of malaria. She came to the sanitarium for treatment. She had been under treatment two weeks, but received no benefit. One night I dreamed that Dr. Lay came to me with much perplexity expressed in his countenance. I said, "What is it, Doctor?" He said, "I am put to my wits' end to know what to do in the case of Sister G. She does not improve at all." Said I, "Dr. Lay, what influence would it have on cold tallow to put it in cold or tepid water?" "None at all," he said. "I have no more to say," I said; "a word to the wise is sufficient." The next day Dr. Lay came to our house, and desired an interview with me. He repeated the words in my dream, and I gave the same answer. I said, "Give her as hot treatment as she can bear." "Why did I not think of this myself?" he said. He acted upon the light given, with perfect success.

We were then living on our farm, 80 miles from Battle Creek. The snow had been very deep, and the rain had set in, and made the water standing in the road a river. Brother Wilson, father of the Brother Wilson now in Tasmania, had been sick, and a telegram was sent for Dr. Lay to come immediately. His father was in a terrible state of erysipelas. The brother of father Wilson came to see me early one morning, and presented the case before me. I said, "I cannot go, Brother Wilson," for Brother King was receiving treatment at our house. He had been kicked by a horse and his skull was broken, and the doctor would not trust him in anyone's hands but my husband's and myself, for he said that there was only one chance out of a hundred for his life. The crisis had now come, and we could not leave him.

I said, "Brother Wilson, I had a dream last night. I was taking care of a sick child. Its head was swollen enormously, and the child was unconscious. Some were saying, "Put cold water on its head." One came in and stood by the bed, and said: "This is a critical case. Cold water is not the right prescription. Take two flannel sheets, wet them as hot as you can handle them, and wrap him up in the pack, and put a flannel wet in warm water round his head. Keep this in operation until he manifests sensibility to heat. Work quickly and thoroughly, for you will have no time to lose."

"Now," said I to Brother Wilson, "call at your sister's, get the blankets, and follow directions precisely." He did this, and when he put on the third application, he began to shrink, for he was revealing sensibility. Oh, what rejoicing was in that house. The battle was fought and the victory gained before Dr. Lay arrived.

The second or third night I dreamed of having the care of a child that was weak and seemed unable to rally. I thought the same physician stood by the cradle and said, "Have you any wine in the house? Beat up a raw egg, and give it to the child with grape wine, three times each day. He will rally." Dr. Lay came the next morning, and said he must return to the sanitarium the next morning, that the erysipelas was conquered but that he was extremely weak. "I am perplexed to know what to do." I told him my dream, and he went immediately and gave him the strengthening potion. He gained strength rapidly. This occurred when Willie was about twelve years old.

I might present case after case of a similar character. When I have taken treatment at the sanitarium, Dr. Kellogg has always told the head nurses to allow Sister White to prescribe her own treatment. They used to give me cold (ice) applications to my head, but it was always an injury to me, and I changed them to warm applications to the spine and head, and to the eyes hot salt water fomentations, but seldom ever cold. I have had inflammation to the eyes, but hot applications were used, and with good success.

I send you at this time pulverized charcoal. Let him drink the water after it has stood a while to extract the virtue. This should be cold when used. When used for fomentations over the bowels, the [char]coal should be put into a bag, sewed up, and dipped in hot water. It will serve several times. Have two bags; use one and then the other.

I send this to you by Sara. Let her stand by your side and help you share the responsibility in the most critical period. Herbert Lacey is a man of value, a man the Lord loves. The enemy must not come in and take him away. We are praying for you and for him, that you may be guided aright and that you may have the help of the great Physician. Sara is not much pleased to go. Make it as pleasant for her as you can. We shall miss her here, but for a few days I consent for her to go to you. Counsel together, and Sara will help you. She has tried to vindicate cold and ice water treatment, but I differ with her. There is not strength in that frail body now to bear any such heroic treatment. Oh, how my heart yearns over Herbert Lacey. He is precious in the sight of the Lord, and we must not fail to do everything in our power for him.

I have given you the light God has given me, and I consider that it is light. I sent the telegram because I did not then expect that Sara would go to Sydney. May the Lord bless you as a family, is my prayer.

We will make Herbert's case a special subject of prayer. Tell Brother Baker to pray for him. You and your wife pray that the Lord will raise him up to health. In love to you all.--
Letter 112a, 1897.

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