

Free Thyself

by

Edward Bach

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A note from the editor

Dr Edward Bach left London in 1930 to look for healing plants in the countryside of Wales and England.¹ In the spring of 1932 he came back and spent some time seeing patients at consulting rooms in Wimpole Street. He found London as hard to bear as he remembered, and after a couple of months he left again to resume his search.

While in London he wrote *Free Thyself*, composing much of it in Regent's Park, where he went to escape the noise and bustle of the capital. The text was published as a pamphlet later the same year but was never reprinted during Dr Bach's lifetime. The remedy descriptions in particular were soon out of date, as more experience with patients and the finding of new remedies led him to refine his understanding of each plant's qualities.

Bach discouraged the republication of his out-of-date writings whenever there was a newer or more accurate book available, so *Free Thyself* was soon lost. This was a pity, because the real interest of *Free Thyself* is in the insight it gives us into Bach's underlying philosophy. Many of the quotes about healing that are most familiar

¹ The story of Bach's search for remedy plants is told in *The Medical Discoveries of Edward Bach, Physician* by Nora Weeks.

to students come from this text. The subtitle to one of the short chapters could even sum up everything Bach believed and wrote: *health depends on being in harmony with our souls.*

In 1990 the Bach Centre republished *Free Thyself* as part of a collection called *The Original Writings of Edward Bach*, omitting the remedy descriptions in line with Bach's wishes. But both before and after *Original Writings* unauthorised editions of the work were printed, without any mention of the fact that the remedy descriptions were no longer accurate. For this new edition of the book, then, we have gone back to the full version, as Dr Bach first wrote it, and have added footnotes to highlight those parts of the text that Bach memorably referred to as “scaffolding”: necessary steps in building the system, but a hindrance to its finished form. We hope in this way to produce a text that will be ideal for students of Bach's work, but which will not create the muddle that an unhistorical reading of old remedy descriptions can cause.

Stefan Ball
The Bach Centre, 2014

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Introduction

It is impossible to put truth into words. The author of this book has no desire to preach, indeed he very greatly dislikes that method of conveying knowledge. He has tried, in the following pages, to show as clearly and simply as possible the purpose of our lives, the uses of the difficulties that beset us, and the means by which we can regain our health; and, in fact, how each of us may become our own doctor.

Chapter I

It is as simple as this, the Story of Life.

A small child has decided to paint the picture of a house in time for her mother's birthday. In her little mind the house is already painted; she knows what it is to be like down to the very smallest detail, there remains only to put it on paper.

Out comes the paint-box, the brush and the paint-rag, and full of enthusiasm and happiness she sets to work. Her whole attention and interest is centred on what she is doing – nothing can distract her from the work in hand.

The picture is finished in time for the birthday. To the very best of her ability she has put her idea of a house into form. It is a work of art because it is all her very own, every stroke done out of love for her mother, every window, every door painted in with the conviction that it is meant to be there. Even if it looks like a haystack, it is the most perfect house that has ever been painted. It is a success because the little artist has put her whole heart and soul, her whole being into the doing of it.

This is health, this is success and happiness and true service. Serving through love in perfect freedom in our own way.

So we come down into this world, knowing what picture we have to paint, having already mapped out our path through life, and all that remains for us to do is to put it into material form. We pass along full of joy and interest, concentrating all our attention upon the perfecting of that picture, and to the very best of our ability translating our own thoughts and aims into the physical life of whatever environment we have chosen.

Then, if we follow from start to finish our very own ideals, our very own desires with all the strength we possess, there is no failure, our life has been a tremendous success, a healthy and a happy one.

The same little story of the child-painter will illustrate how, if we allow them, the difficulties of life may interfere with this success and happiness and health, and deter us from our purpose.

The child is busily and happily painting when someone comes along and says, "Why not put a window here, and a door there; and of course the garden path should go this way." The result in the child will be complete loss of interest in the work; she may go on, but is now only putting someone else's ideas on paper: she may become cross, irritated, unhappy, afraid to refuse these suggestions; begin to hate the picture and perhaps tear it up: in fact, according to the type of child so will be the reaction.

The final picture may be a recognisable house, but it is an imperfect one and a failure because it is the interpretation of another's thoughts, not the child's. It is of no use as a birthday

present because it may not be done in time, and the mother may have to wait another whole year for her gift.

This is disease, the reaction to interference. This is temporary failure and unhappiness: and this occurs when we allow others to interfere with our purpose in life, and implant in our minds doubt, or fear, or indifference.

Chapter II

Health depends on being in harmony with our souls.

It is of primary importance that the true meaning of health and of disease should be clearly understood.

Health is our heritage, our right. It is the complete and full union between soul, mind and body; and this is no difficult far-away ideal to attain, but one so easy and natural that many of us have overlooked it.

All earthly things are but the interpretation of things spiritual. The smallest most insignificant occurrence has a Divine purpose behind it.

We each have a Divine mission in this world, and our souls use our minds and bodies as instruments to do this work, so that when all three are working in unison the result is perfect health and perfect happiness.

A Divine mission means no sacrifice, no retiring from the world, no rejecting of the joys of beauty and nature; on the contrary, it means a fuller and greater enjoyment of all things: it means doing the work that we love to do with all our heart and soul, whether it be housekeeping, farming, painting, acting, or serving our fellow-

men in shops or houses. And this work, whatever it may be, if we love it above all else, is the definite command of our soul, the work we have to do in this world, and in which alone we can be our true selves, interpreting in an ordinary materialistic way the message of that true self.

We can judge, therefore, by our health and by our happiness, how well we are interpreting this message.

There are all the spiritual attributes in the perfect man; and we come into this world to manifest these one at a time, to perfect and strengthen them so that no experience, no difficulty can weaken or deflect us from the fulfilment of this purpose. We chose the earthly occupation, and the external circumstances that will give us the best opportunities of testing us to the full: we come with the full realisation of our particular work: we come with the unthinkable privilege of knowing that all our battles are won before they are fought, that victory is certain before ever the test arrives, because we know that we are the children of the Creator, and as such are Divine, unconquerable and invincible. With this knowledge life is a joy; hardships and experiences can be looked upon as adventures, for we have but to realise our power, to be true to our Divinity, when these melt away like mist in the sunshine. God did indeed give His children dominion over all things.

Our souls will guide us, if we will only listen, in every circumstance, every difficulty; and the mind and body so directed will pass through life radiating happiness and perfect health, as free from all cares and responsibilities as the small trusting child.

Chapter III

Our souls are Perfect, being children of the Creator, and everything they tell us to do is for our good.

Health is, therefore, the true realisation of what we are: we are perfect: we are children of God. There is no striving to gain what we have already attained. We are merely here to manifest in material form the perfection with which we have been endowed from the beginning of all time. Health is listening solely to the commands of our souls; in being trustful as little children; in rejecting intellect (that tree of the knowledge of good and evil) with its reasonings, its 'fors' and 'againsts', its anticipatory fears: ignoring convention, the trivial ideas and commands of other people, so that we can pass through life untouched, unharmed, free to serve our fellow-men.

We can judge our health by our happiness, and by our happiness we can know that we are obeying the dictates of our souls. It is not necessary to be a monk, a nun, or hide away from the world; the world is for us to enjoy and to serve, and it is only by serving out of love and happiness that we can truly be of use, and do our best work. A thing done from a sense of duty with, perhaps,

a feeling of irritation and impatience is of no account at all, it is merely precious time wasted when there might be a brother in real need of our help.

Truth has no need to be analysed, argued about, or wrapped up in many words. It is realised in a flash, it is part of you. It is only about the unessential complicated things of life that we need so much convincing, and that have led to the development of the intellect. The things that count are simple, they are the ones that make you say, "why, that is true, I seem to have known that always," and so is the realisation of the happiness that comes to us when we are in harmony with our spiritual self, and the closer the union the more intense the joy. Think of the radiance one sometimes sees in a bride on her wedding morn; the rapture of a mother with a new-born babe; the ecstasy of an artist completing a masterpiece. such are the moments where there is spiritual union.

Think how wonderful life would be if we lived it all in such joy: and so it is possible when we lose ourselves in our life's work.

Chapter IV

If we follow our own instincts, our own wishes, our own thoughts, our own desires, we should never know anything but joy and health.

Neither is it a difficult far-away attainment to hear the voice of our own soul; it has all been made so simple for us if we will but acknowledge it. Simplicity is the keynote of all Creation.

Our soul (the still small voice, God's own voice) speaks to us through our intuition, our instincts, through our desires, ideals, our ordinary likes and dislikes; in whichever way it is easiest for us individually to hear. How else can He speak to us? Our true instincts, desires, likes or dislikes are given us so that we can interpret the spiritual commands of our soul by means of our limited physical perceptions, for it is not possible for many of us yet to be in direct communion with our Higher Self. These commands are meant to be followed implicitly, because the soul alone knows what experiences are necessary for that particular personality. Whatever the command may be, trivial or important, the desire for another cup of tea, or a complete change of the whole of one's life's habits, it should be willingly obeyed. The soul knows that satisfaction is the one real cure for all that we, in this world,

consider as sin and wrong, for until the whole being revolts against a certain act, that fault is not eradicated but simply dormant, just as it is much better and quicker to go on sticking one's fingers into the jam-pot until one is so sick that jam has no further attraction.

Our true desires, the wishes of our true selves, are not to be confused with the wishes and desires of other people so often implanted in our minds, or of conscience, which is another word for the same thing. We must pay no heed to the world's interpretation of our actions. Our own soul alone is responsible for our good, our reputation is in His keeping; we can rest assured that there is only one sin, that of not obeying the dictates of our own Divinity. That is the sin against God and our neighbour. These wishes, intuitions, desires are never selfish; they concern ourselves alone and are always right for us, and bring us health in body and mind.

Disease is the result in the physical body of the resistance of the personality to the guidance of the soul. It is when we turn a deaf ear to the 'still small voice', and forget the Divinity within us; when we try to force our wishes upon others, or allow their suggestions, thoughts, and commands to influence us.

The more we become free from outside influences, from other personalities, the more our soul can use us to do His work.

It is only when we attempt to control and rule someone else that we are selfish. But the world tries to tell us that it is selfishness to follow our own desires. That is because the world wishes to enslave

us, for truly it is only when we can realise and be unhampered our real selves that we can be used for the good of mankind. It is the great truth of Shakespeare, "To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

The bee, by its very choice of a particular flower for its honey, is the means used to bring it the pollen necessary for the future life of its young plants.

Chapter V

It is allowing the interference of other people that stops our listening to the dictates of our soul, and that brings disharmony and disease. The moment the thought of another person enters our minds, it deflects us from our true course.

God gave us each our birthright, an individuality: of our very own. He gave us each our own particular work to do, which only we can do. He gave us each our own particular path to follow with which nothing must interfere. Let us see to it that not only do we allow no interference, but, and even more important, that we in no way whatsoever interfere with any other single human being. In this lies true health, true service, and the fulfilment of our purpose on earth.

Interferences occur in every life, they are part of the Divine Plan, they are necessary so that we can learn to stand up to them: in fact, we can look upon them as really useful opponents, merely there to help us gain in strength, and realise our Divinity and our invincibility. And we can also know that it is only when we allow them to affect us that they gain in importance and tend to check our progress. It rests entirely with us how quickly we progress: whether we allow interference in our Divine mission; whether we

accept the manifestation of interference (called disease) and let it limit and injure our bodies; or whether we, as children of God, use these to establish us the more firmly in our purpose.

The more the apparent difficulties in our path the more we may be certain that our mission is worth while. Florence Nightingale reached her ideal in the face of a nation's opposition. Galileo believed the world was round in spite of the entire world's disbelief, and the ugly duckling became the swan although his whole family scorned him.

We have no right whatever to interfere with the life of any one of God's children. Each of us has our own job, in the doing of which only we have the power and knowledge to bring it to perfection. It is only when we forget this fact, and try and force our work on others, or let them interfere with ours that friction and disharmony occur in our being.

This disharmony, disease, makes itself manifest in the body for the body merely serves to reflect the workings of the soul; just as the face reflects happiness by smiles, or temper by frowns. And so in bigger things; the body will reflect the true causes of disease (which are such as fear, indecision, doubt, etc.) in the disarrangement of its systems and tissues.

Disease, therefore, is the result of interference: interfering with someone else or allowing ourselves to be interfered with.

Chapter VI

*All we have to do is to preserve our personality, to live our own life,
to be captain of our own ship, and all will be well.*

There are great qualities in which all men are gradually perfecting themselves, possibly concentrating upon one or two at a time. They are those which have been manifested in the earthly lives of all the Great Masters who have, from time to time, come into the world to teach us, and help us to see the easy and simple way of overcoming all our difficulties.

These are such as:

LOVE

SYMPATHY

PEACE

STEADFASTNESS

GENTLENESS

STRENGTH

UNDERSTANDING

TOLERANCE

WISDOM

FORGIVENESS

COURAGE

JOY

And it is by perfecting these qualities in ourselves that each one of us is raising the whole world a step nearer to its final unthinkably glorious goal. We realise then that we are seeking no

selfish gain of personal merit, but that every single human being, rich or poor, high or low, is of the same importance in the Divine Plan, and is given the same mighty privilege of being a saviour of the world simply by knowing that he is a perfect child of the Creator.

As there are these qualities, these steps to perfection, so there are hindrances, or interferences which serve to strengthen us in our determination to stand firm.

These are the real causes of disease, and are of such as:

RESTRAINT	DOUBT
FEAR	OVER-ENTHUSIASM
RESTLESSNESS	IGNORANCE
INDECISION	IMPATIENCE
INDIFFERENCE	TERROR
WEAKNESS	GRIEF

These, if we allow them, will reflect themselves in the body causing what we call disease. Not understanding the real causes we have attributed disharmony to external influences, germs, cold, heat, and have given names to the results, arthritis, cancer, asthma, etc.: thinking that disease begins in the physical body.

There are then definite groups of mankind, each group performing its own function, that is, manifesting in the material world the particular lesson he has learnt. Each individual in these groups has a definite personality of his own, a definite work to do, and a definite individual way of doing that work. These are also

causes of disharmony, which unless we hold to our definite personality and our work, may react upon the body in the form of disease.

Real health is happiness, and a happiness so easy of attainment because it is a happiness in small things; doing the things that we really do love to do, being with the people that we truly like. There is no strain, no effort, no striving for the unattainable, health is there for us to accept any time we like. It is to find out and do the work that we are really suited for. So many suppress their real desires and become square pegs in round holes: through the wishes of a parent a son may become a solicitor, a soldier, a business man, when his true desire is to become a carpenter: or through the ambitions of a mother to see her daughter well married, the world may lose another Florence Nightingale. This sense of duty is then a false sense of duty, and a disservice to the world; it results in unhappiness and, probably, the greater part of a lifetime wasted before the mistake can be rectified.

There was a Master once Who said, "Know ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" meaning that He must obey His Divinity and not His earthly parents.

Let us find the one thing in life that attracts us most and do it. Let that one thing be so part of us that it is as natural as breathing; as natural as it is for the bee to collect honey, and the tree to shed its old leaves in the autumn and bring forth new ones in the spring. If we study nature we find that every creature, bird, tree and flower has its definite part to play, its own definite and peculiar work

through which it aids and enriches the entire Universe. The very worm, going about its daily job, helps to drain and purify the earth: the earth provides for the nutriment of all green things; and, in turn, vegetation sustains mankind and every living creature, returning in due course to enrich the soil. Their life is one of beauty and usefulness, their work is so natural to them that it is their life.

And our own work, when we find it, so belongs to us, so fits us, that it is effortless, it is easy, it is a joy: we never tire of it, it is our hobby. It brings out in us our true personality, all the talents and capabilities waiting within each one of us to be manifested: in it we are happy and at home; and it is only when we are happy (which is obeying the commands of our soul) that we can do our best work.

We may have already found our right work, then what fun life is! Some from childhood have the knowledge of what they are meant to do, and keep to it throughout their lives: and some know in childhood, but are deterred by contra-suggestions and circumstances, and the discouragement of others. Yet we can all get back to our ideals, and even though we cannot realise them immediately we can go on seeking to do so, then the very seeking will bring us comfort, for our souls are very patient with us. The right desire, the right motive, no matter what the result, is the thing that counts, the real success.

So if you would rather be a farmer than a lawyer; if you would rather be a barber than a bus-driver, or a cook than a greengrocer, change your occupation, be what you want to be: and then you will be happy and well, then you will work with zest, and then you will

be doing finer work as a farmer, a barber, a cook, than you could ever achieve in the occupation that never belonged to you.

And then you will be obeying the dictates of your Spiritual self.

Chapter VII

Once we realise our own Divinity the rest is easy.

In the beginning God gave man dominion over all things. Man, the child of the Creator, has a deeper reason for his disharmony than the draught from an open window. "Our fault lies not in our stars, but in ourselves," and how full of gratitude and hope can we be when we realise that the cure also lies within ourselves! Remove the disharmony, the fear, the terror, or the indecision, and we regain harmony between soul and mind, and the body is once more perfect in all its parts.

Whatever the disease, the result of this disharmony, we may be quite sure that the cure is well within our powers of accomplishment, for our souls never ask of us more than we can very easily do.

Everyone of us is a healer, because everyone of us at heart has a love for something, for our fellow-men, for animals, for nature, for beauty in some form, and we every one of us wish to protect and help it to increase. Everyone of us also has sympathy with those in distress, and naturally so, because we have all been in distress ourselves at some time in our lives. So that not only can we heal

ourselves, but we have the great privilege of being able to help others to heal themselves, and the only qualifications necessary are love and sympathy.

We, as children of the Creator, have within us all perfection, and we come into this world merely that we may realise our Divinity; so that all tests and all experiences will leave us untouched, for through that Divine Power all things are possible to us.

Chapter VIII

The healing herbs are those which have been given the power to help us preserve our personality.

Just as God in His mercy has given us food to eat, so has He placed amongst the herbs of the fields beautiful plants to heal us when we are sick. These are there to extend a helping hand to man in those dark hours of forgetfulness when he loses sight of his Divinity, and allows the cloud of fear or pain to obscure his vision.

Such herbs are:

CHICORY

Chicorium intybus

MIMULUS

*Mimulus luteus*²

2 The Latin name given to a plant is governed by the International Code for Botanical Nomenclature. The rules used change from time to time, and some of the names Bach used are now out of date. The modern name of the plant used to make the Mimulus remedy, for example, is *Mimulus guttatus*.

AGRIMONY	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>
SCLERANTHUS	<i>Scleranthus annuus</i>
CLEMATIS	<i>Clematis vitalba</i>
CENTAURY	<i>Erythroea centaurium</i> ³
GENTIAN	<i>Gentiana amarella</i>
VERVAIN	<i>Verbena officinalis</i>
CERATO	<i>Ceratostigma willmottiana</i> ⁴
IMPATIENS	<i>Impatiens royalei</i> ⁵
ROCK ROSE	<i>Helianthemum vulgare</i> ⁶
WATER VIOLET	<i>Hottonia palustris</i>

Each herb corresponds with one of the qualities, and its purpose is to strengthen that quality so that the personality may rise above the fault that is the particular stumbling block.

The following table⁷ will indicate the quality, the fault, and the remedy which aids the personality to dispel that fault.

3 The modern name is *Centaurium umbellatum*.

4 The Greek word-ending *-ma* is not in fact feminine, and the correct Latin name for this plant is *Ceratostigma willmottianum*. We have retained *willmottiana* here as it is so widely used in books on the remedies.

5 Modern name *Impatiens glandulifera*.

6 Modern name *Helianthemum nummularium*.

7 In 1932, when this table was drawn up, Bach had discovered twelve remedies. Between 1933 and 1935 he found a further 26 and revised the structure of the system and the remedy indications several times. It is useful to compare this table – and the outdated indications for Water Violet in particular – with the system and remedy descriptions as Bach presented them in the final *Twelve Healers and Other Remedies*. See www.bachcentre.com/healers and in particular the Editors' Introduction.

<i>Failing</i>	<i>Herb</i>	<i>Virtue</i>
Restraint	Chicory	Love
Fear	Mimulus	Sympathy
Restlessness	Agrimony	Peace
Indecision	Scleranthus	Steadfastness
Indifference	Clematis	Gentleness
Weakness	Centaury	Strength
Doubt	Gentian	Understanding
Over-enthusiasm	Vervain	Tolerance
Ignorance	Cerato	Wisdom
Impatience	Impatiens	Forgiveness
Terror	Rock Rose	Courage
Grief	Water Violet	Joy

The remedies are endowed with a definite healing power quite apart from faith, neither does their action depend upon the one who administers them, just as a sedative sends a patient to sleep whether given by the nurse or the doctor.

Chapter IX

The real nature of disease.

In true healing the nature and the name of the physical disease is of no consequence whatever. Disease of the body itself is nothing but the result of the disharmony between soul and mind. It is only a symptom of the cause, and as the same cause will manifest itself differently in nearly every individual, seek to remove this cause, and the after results, whatever they may be, will disappear automatically.

We can understand this more clearly by taking as an example the suicide. All suicides do not drown themselves. Some throw themselves from a height, some take poison, but behind it all is despair: help them to overcome their despair and find someone or something to live for, and they are cured permanently: simply

taking away the poison will only save them for the time being, they may later make another attempt. Fear also reacts upon people in quite different ways: some will turn pale, some will flush, some become hysterical and some speechless. Explain the fear to them, show them that they are big enough to overcome and face anything, then nothing can frighten them again. The child will not mind the shadows on the wall if he is given the candle and shown how to make them dance up and down.

We have so long blamed the germ, the weather, the food we eat as the causes of disease; but many of us are immune in an influenza epidemic; many love the exhilaration of a cold wind, and many can eat cheese and drink black coffee late at night with no ill effects. Nothing in nature can hurt us when we are happy and in harmony, on the contrary all nature is there for our use and our enjoyment. It is only when we allow doubt and depression, indecision or fear to creep in that we are sensitive to outside influences.

It is, therefore, the real cause behind the disease, which is of the utmost importance; the mental state of the patient himself, not the condition of his body.

Any disease, however serious, however long-standing, will be cured by restoring to the patient happiness, and desire to carry on with his work in life. Very often it is only some slight alteration in his mode of life, some little fixed idea that is making him intolerant of others, some mistaken sense of responsibility that keeps him in slavery when he might be doing such good work.

There are seven beautiful stages in the healing of disease, these are:

PEACE

HOPE

JOY

FAITH

CERTAINTY

WISDOM

LOVE

Chapter X

To gain freedom, give freedom.

The ultimate goal of all mankind is perfection, and to gain this state man must learn to pass through all experiences unaffected; he must encounter all interferences and temptations without being deflected from his course: then he is free of all life's difficulties, hardships and sufferings: he has stored up in his soul the perfect love, wisdom, courage, tolerance and understanding that is the result of knowing and seeing everything, for the perfect master is he who has been through every branch of his trade.

We can make this journey a short joyful adventure if we realise that freedom from bondage is only gained by giving freedom; we are set free if we set others free, for it is only by example we can teach. When we have given freedom to every human being with whom we are in contact; when we have given freedom to every creature, everything around us, then we are free ourselves: when we see that we do not, even in the minutest detail, attempt to dominate, control, or influence the life of another, we shall find that

interference has passed out of our own lives, because it is those we bind who bind us. There was a certain young man who was so bound to his possessions that he could not accept a Divine gift.

And we can free ourselves from the domination of others so easily, firstly by giving them absolute freedom, and secondly, by very gently, very lovingly, refusing to be dominated by them. Lord Nelson was very wise in placing his blind eye to the telescope on one occasion. No force, no resentment, no hatred, and no unkindness. Our opponents are our friends, they make the game worth while, and we shall all shake hands at the end of the match.

We must not expect others to do what we want, their ideas are the right ideas for them, and though their pathway may lead in a different direction from ours, the goal at the end of the journey is the same for us all. We do find that it is when we want others to 'fall in with our wishes' that we fall out with them.

We are like cargo-ships bound for the different countries of the world, some for Africa, some for Canada, some for Australia, then returning to the same home port. Why follow another ship to Canada when our destination is Australia? It means such a delay.

Again, we perhaps do not realise what small things may bind us, the very things that we wish to hold are the things that are holding us: it may be a house, a garden, a piece of furniture; even they have their right to freedom. Worldly possessions, after all are transient, they give rise to anxiety and worry because inwardly we know of their inevitable and ultimate loss. They are there to be enjoyed and

admired and used to their full capacity, but not to gain so much importance that they become chains to bind us.

If we set everybody and everything around us at liberty, we find that in return we are richer in love and possessions than ever we were before, for the love that gives freedom is the great love that binds the closer.

Chapter XI

Healing.

From time immemorial humanity has recognised that our Creator in His love for us has placed herbs in the field for our healing, just as He has provided the corn and the fruit for our sustenance.

Astrologers, those who have studied the stars, and herbalists, those who have studied the plants, have ever been seeking those remedies which will help us to keep our health and joy.

To find the herb that will help us we must find the object of our life, what we are striving to do, and also understand the difficulties in our path. The difficulties we call faults or failings, but let us not mind these faults and failings, because they are the very proof to us that we are attaining bigger things: our faults should be our encouragements, because they mean that we are aiming high. Let us find for ourselves which of the battles we are particularly fighting, which adversary we are especially trying to overcome, and then take with gratitude and thankfulness that plant which has been sent

to help us to victory. We should accept these beautiful herbs of the fields as a sacrament, as our Creator's Divine gift to aid us in our troubles.

In true healing there is no thought whatever of the disease: it is the mental state, the mental difficulty alone, to be considered: it is where we are going wrong in the Divine Plan that matters. This disharmony with our Spiritual Self may produce a hundred different failings in our bodies (for our bodies after all merely reproduce the condition of our minds), but what matters that? If we put our mind right the body will soon be healed. It is as Christ said to us, "Is it easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee or take up thy bed and walk?"

So again let us clearly understand that our physical illness is of no consequence whatsoever: it is the state of our minds, and that, and that alone, which is of importance. Therefore, ignoring entirely the illness from which we are suffering, we need consider only to which of the following types we belong.⁸

Should any difficulty be found in selecting your own remedy, it will help to ask yourself which of the virtues you most admire in other people; or which of the failings is, in others, your pet aversion, for any fault of which we may still have left a trace and are especially attempting to eradicate, that is the one we most hate to

8 At this early stage of his work Bach believed that the first twelve remedies represented twelve basic types of human personality. By the time he completed his work this understanding had been revised. See www.bachcentre.com/centre/type_remedies.php for the development of the concept of "type" in Bach's work.

see in other people. It is the way we are encouraged to wipe it out in ourselves.

We are all healers, and with love and sympathy in our natures we are also able to help anyone who really desires health. Seek for the outstanding mental conflict in the patient, give him the remedy that will assist him to overcome that particular fault, and all the encouragement and hope you can, then the healing virtue within him will of itself do all the rest.

Chapter XII⁹

The Remedies.

CHICORY¹⁰

Restraint – Love

Are you one of those who long to serve the world: who long to open out both arms and bless all around you; who wish to help and comfort and sympathise, and yet for some reason circumstances or people stop

9 See page 4. This whole chapter was omitted when *Free Thyself* was published in the collection *The Original Writings of Edward Bach*.

10 Bach's description of Chicory is very close to the indications for Centaury (see page 42 below). By the time all 38 remedies had been researched, in 1936, Bach described Chicory as a stronger person, more controlling than controlled: "Those who are very mindful of the needs of others; they tend to be over-full of care for children, relatives, friends, always finding something that should be put right. They are continually correcting what they consider wrong, and enjoy doing so. They desire that those for whom they care should be near them." (This and other remedy descriptions given in footnotes in this chapter are from the definitive 1941 edition of *The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies*; see www.bachcentre.com/healers.)

you? Do you find that instead of serving many you are held in the grip of but a few, so that your opportunity of giving as fully as you wish is limited: are you getting to that stage when you wish to realise that it is, “when all men count with you, but none too much?”¹¹

Then that beautiful blue Chicory of the cornfields will help you to your freedom, the freedom so necessary to us all before we can serve the world.

MIMULUS¹²

Fear – Sympathy¹³

Are you one of those who are afraid; afraid of people or of circumstances: who go bravely on and yet your life is robbed of joy through fear; fear of those things that never happen; fear of people who really have no power over you; fear of tomorrow and what it may bring; fear of being ill or of losing friends; fear of convention; fear of a hundred things?

Do you wish to make a stand for your freedom, and yet have not the courage to break away from your bonds; if so Mimulus, found growing

11 A line from Rudyard Kipling's poem *If*, one of Bach's favourites.

12 The final indications for Mimulus did not change very much from this early draft: “Fear of worldly things, illness, pain, accidents, poverty, of dark, of being alone, of misfortune. The fears of everyday life. These people quietly and secretly bear their dread, they do not freely speak of it to others.”

13 Bach later associated the positive quality of sympathy more with other remedies. For example, Beech, he wrote, would help us “be more tolerant, lenient and understanding of the different way each individual and all things are working to their own final perfection”.

on the sides of the crystal streams, will set you free to love your life, and teach you to have the tenderest sympathy for others.

AGRIMONY¹⁴

Restlessness – Peace

Are you one of those who suffer torments; whose soul is restless: who can find no peace, and yet bravely face the world and hide your torture from your fellow-men: who laugh and smile and jest, and help those around you to keep a cheery heart whilst you are suffering. Do you seek to soothe your sorrows by taking wine and drugs to help you face your trials: do you feel that you must have some stimulant in life to keep you going?

If so, that beautiful plant Agrimony, growing along the sides of our lanes and in our meadows, with its church-like spire, and its seeds like bells, will bring you peace, the peace that “passeth understanding”.¹⁵ The lesson of this plant is to enable you to hold peace in the presence of all trials and difficulties until no one has the power to cause you irritation.

14 Compare Bach's final indications for this remedy: “The jovial, cheerful, humorous people who love peace and are distressed by argument or quarrel, to avoid which they will agree to give up much. Though generally they have troubles and are tormented and restless and worried in mind or in body, they hide their cares behind their humour and jesting and are considered very good friends to know. They often take alcohol or drugs in excess, to stimulate themselves and help themselves bear their trials with cheerfulness.”

15 A biblical reference: see Philippians 4:7.

SCLERANTHUS¹⁶

Indecision – Steadfastness¹⁷

Are you one of those who find it difficult to make decisions; to form opinions when conflicting thoughts enter your mind so that it is hard to decide on the right course: when indecision dogs your path and delays your progress: does first one thing seem right and then another?

If so you are learning prompt action under trying circumstances; to form correct opinions and be steadfast in following them; and the little green Scleranthus of the cornfields will help you to this end.

CLEMATIS¹⁸

Indifference – Gentleness

Are you one of those who find that life has not much interest: who wake almost wishing there were not another day to face: that life is so difficult, so hard, and has so little joy: that nothing really seems worth

16 Bach's final description is very similar: "Those who suffer much from being unable to decide between two things, first one seeming right then the other. They are usually quiet people, and bear their difficulty alone, as they are not inclined to discuss it with others."

17 Bach would eventually associate the positive quality of steadfastness in keeping to one's ideas with other remedies, including Walnut and Cerato.

18 Bach's final description: "Those who are dreamy, drowsy, not fully awake, no great interest in life. Quiet people, not really happy in their present circumstances, living more in the future than in the present; living in hopes of happier times, when their ideals may come true. In illness some make little or no effort to get well, and in certain cases may even look forward to death, in the hope of better times; or maybe, meeting again some beloved one whom they have lost."

while, and how good it would be just to go to sleep: that it is scarcely worth the effort to try and get well?¹⁹ Have your eyes that far-away look as though you live in dreams and find the dreams so much more beautiful than life itself: or are your thoughts, perhaps, more often with someone who has passed out of this life? If you feel this way you are learning “to hold on when there is nothing in you except the will which says to you – hold on!”²⁰ and it is a very great victory to win through.

That beautiful plant which adorns our hedges where there is chalk, the Clematis, better known as Traveller's Joy, and whose feathery seeds are, always longing to be blown away and start again, will help you so much to come back and face life and find your work, and bring you joy.

CENTAURY²¹

Weakness – Strength

Are you one of those people whom everybody uses, because in the kindness of your heart you do not like to refuse them anything; do you

19 Bach would later identify other remedies that applied to some of the states described in this first sentence: compare for example the descriptions for Hornbeam, Olive, Wild Rose and Willow in the 1936 descriptions in www.bachcentre.com/healers.

20 Another line from Kipling's *If*.

21 Bach's final description: “Kind, quiet, gentle people who are over-anxious to serve others. They overtax their strength in their endeavours. Their wish so grows upon them that they become more servants than willing helpers. Their good nature leads them to do more than their own share of work, and in so doing they may neglect their own particular mission in life.”

just give in for the sake of peace rather than do what you know is right, because you do not wish to struggle: whose motive is good, but who are being passively used instead of actively choosing your own work. Those of you who are door-mats are a very long way along the road to being of great service once you can realise that you must be a little more positive in your life.

Centaury, that grows in our pastures, will help you to find your real self, so that you may become an active, positive worker instead of a passive agent.

GENTIAN²²

Doubt – Understanding

Are you one of those with high ideals, with hopes of doing good; who find yourself discouraged when your ambitions are not quickly realised?²³ When success is in your path are you elated, but when difficulties occur easily depressed?

If so, the little Gentian of our hilly pastures will help you to keep your firmness of purpose, and a happier and more hopeful outlook even when the sky is over-cast. It will bring you encouragement at all

22 Bach's final description: "Those who are easily discouraged. They may be progressing well in illness or in the affairs of their daily life, but any small delay or hindrance to progress causes doubt and soon disheartens them."

23 Personality characteristics to do with high ideals, ambitions and hopes of doing good are not present in the final description – cf. the previous footnote. In the finished system they are associated more with remedies like Vervain, Walnut, Elm etc.

times, and the understanding that there is no failure when you are doing your utmost, whatever the apparent result.

VERVAIN²⁴

Over-enthusiasm – Tolerance²⁵

Are you one of those burning with enthusiasm, longing to do big things, and wishing all done in a moment of time? Do you find it difficult patiently to work out your scheme because you want the result as soon as you start? Do you find your very enthusiasm making you strict with others; wishing them to see things as you see them; trying to force them to your own opinions, and being impatient when they do not follow?²⁶

If so, you have within you the power of being a leader and a teacher of men. Vervain, the little mauve flower of the hedge-banks, will help you to the qualities you need, kindness for your brothers, and tolerance for the opinions of others: it will help you to realise that the

24 Bach's final description: "Those with fixed principles and ideas, which they are confident are right, and which they very rarely change. They have a great wish to convert all around them to their own views of life. They are strong of will and have much courage when they are convinced of those things that they wish to teach. In illness they struggle on long after many would have given up their duties."

25 This is an example of how positive indications are often slippery, because the same positive quality can be the flip-side of many different negative states. Tolerance is a positive that is also associated in the finished system with the remedy Beech.

26 This early description includes some indications that in the finished system are more associated with other remedies, in particular Vine and Impatiens.

big things of life are done gently and quietly without strain or stress.

CERATO²⁷

Ignorance – Wisdom

Are you one of those who feel that you have wisdom; that you could be a philosopher and a guide to your fellow-men? Do you feel the power within you to advise them in their difficulties, to soothe their sorrows, and at all times to be a help to them in their troubles; and yet, through lack of confidence in yourself, you are unable to accomplish this, possibly because you are listening too much to the voice of others and paying too great attention to the conventions of the world?

Do you realise that it is only this lack of confidence in yourself, this ignorance of your own wisdom and knowledge, that tempts you to listen too intently to the advice of others?

Then Cerato will help you to find your individuality, your personality, and, freed from outside influences, enable you to use the great gift of wisdom that you possess for the good of mankind.

27 Bach's final description emphasises that Cerato people actively ask for advice: "Those who have not sufficient confidence in themselves to make their own decisions. They constantly seek advice from others, and are often misguided." In the complete system, being swayed by other people's ideas and opinions is an indication for one of the later remedies, Walnut.

IMPATIENS²⁸

Impatience – Forgiveness

Are you one of those who know that deep down in your nature there is still a trace of cruelty; when buffeted and harassed you find it difficult not to have a little malice?²⁹ Have you still left within you the desire to use force to bring another to your way of thinking:³⁰ are you impatient and does that impatience sometimes make you cruel: have you left in your nature any trace of the inquisitor?³¹

If so, you are striving for exquisite gentleness and forgiveness, and that beautiful mauve flower, *Impatiens*, which grows along the sides of some of the Welsh streams,³² will, with its blessing, help you along the road.

28 Bach's final understanding of this remedy shows a tighter focus on speed and patience: "Those who are quick in thought and action and who wish all things to be done without hesitation or delay. When ill they are anxious for a hasty recovery. They find it very difficult to be patient with people who are slow, as they consider it wrong and a waste of time, and they will endeavour to make such people quicker in all ways. They often prefer to work and think alone, so that they can do everything at their own speed."

29 In the final system of 38 remedies malice and cruelty are associated more with the Holly remedy.

30 Using force to change people's minds is more a Vine characteristic in the finished system.

31 The attitude of an inquisitor would suggest Holly or Beech in the final system.

32 Bach first found *Impatiens glandulifera* growing by a stream in the Abergavenny area of Wales, in 1928.

ROCK ROSE³³

Terror – Courage

Are you one of those in absolute despair,³⁴ in terror: who feel that you can bear nothing more; terrified as to what will happen: of death; of suicide; of insanity;³⁵ of some awful disease: or fearful of facing the hopelessness of material circumstances?

If so, you are learning to be brave against great odds, and fighting for your freedom, and the beautiful little yellow Rock Rose, which grows so abundantly on our hilly pastures, will give you the courage to win through.

33 Bach's final description: "The rescue remedy. The remedy of emergency for cases where there even appears no hope. In accident or sudden illness, or when the patient is very frightened or terrified, or if the condition is serious enough to cause great fear to those around."

34 Bach later found that Sweet Chesnut was the more exact remedy for complete anguish and despair.

35 This is another good example of how remedy indications became more focused as the system grew. In 1935 Bach suffered an acute sinusitis and feared he was going out of his mind with the pain and mental anguish. This led to the discovery of the Cherry Plum remedy, which in the finished system is indicated for "fear of the mind being over-strained, of reason giving way, of doing fearful and dreaded things".

WATER VIOLET³⁶

Grief³⁷ – Joy

Are you one of those great souls who bravely and without complaint, still endeavouring to serve your brother-men, bear suffering calmly and with resignation, not allowing your grief to interfere with your daily work? Have you had real losses, sad times, and yet go quietly on?³⁸

If so, the beautiful Water Violet, which floats so freely on the surface of our clearest streams, will help you to understand that you are being purified through your grief, uplifted to a great ideal, so that you may learn to serve your fellow-men even in the hour of your affliction: that you are learning to stand absolutely alone in the world, gaining the intense joy of complete freedom, and therefore of perfect service to mankind. And when this is realised it is no longer sacrifice but the exquisite joy of helpfulness even under all conditions. Moreover that little plant will help you to the understanding that so much you think of in life as being cruel and sad, is truly for the good of those you pity.

36 The indications for this remedy changed greatly by the time Bach had completed his research. In 1936 he described it thus: “For those who in health or illness like to be alone. Very quiet people, who move about without noise, speak little, and then gently. Very independent, capable and self-reliant. Almost free of the opinions of others. They are aloof, leave people alone and go their own way. Often clever and talented. Their peace and calmness is a blessing to those around them.”

37 In the finished system grief is more usually associated with Star of Bethlehem.

38 To a user of the complete system this last sentence could also suggest Mimulus or Oak, among others.

We can all take courage and keep a stout heart, for He Who placed us in this world, did so for a great purpose.

He wants us to know that we are His children, to know our own Divinity; to be perfect; to have health and to have happiness. He wants us to know that, through His Love, we can accomplish all things, remembering that it is only when we forget this that we suffer and are unhappy. He wants the life of each one of us to be one of joy and health, and loving service, for as Christ told us:

“My yoke is easy, My burden is light.”

Stocks of these remedies can be obtained from the leading London Homoeopathic chemists, though they can be prepared as follows by anyone who cares to make their own.

Take a thin glass bowl, fill with clear water from a stream or spring for preference, and float enough of the blooms of the plant to cover the surface. Allow this to stand in bright sunshine until the flowers begin to wilt. Very gently pick out the blooms, pour the water into bottles and add an equal quantity of brandy as a preservative.

One drop alone of this is sufficient to make potent an eight ounce bottle of water, from which doses may be taken by the teaspoonful as required.

The doses should be taken as the patient feels necessary: hourly

in acute cases; three or four times a day in chronic cases until relief occurs when they can be dispensed with.

And may we ever give thanks to God Who, in His Love for us, placed the herbs in the fields for our healing.