

# HALE COLUMBIA

*Columbia, Pa. Medical Record, 1893-1905*

*Joseph W. Lahr M. D.*



# The Cures

(or)

## *Blisters and Clysters and Purges, Oh My!*

Many of the outdated treatments described in the foregoing sections were based largely on the theories practiced by Aelius Galenus, "Galen," a Greek physician of the second century C.E. According to prevailing thought, health was based on balancing the four humors of the body – black bile, yellow bile, blood and phlegm. Accordingly, treatments were designed to rid the body of the humor or humors in excess. For example:

*Bloodletting* was thought to reduce the heat produced by blood.

*Blistering* was an attempt to draw out certain bad humors, usually by applying caustic substances like a mustard plaster to the skin. The blister was then drained, supposedly removing the offending toxins.

*Clyster* was a generic term for an enema. *Calomel* and *castor oil* were medicinal means of inducing diarrhea.

*Purge* was a term for those procedures and medicines that produced either vomiting or diarrhea.