

The treatment due from the medical profession, to physicians who become homoeopathic practitioners : being a report read before the Conn. Medical Society, May 13, 1852 / by Worthington Hooker.

Contributors

Hooker, Worthington, 1806-1867.
Connecticut Medical Society.
National Library of Medicine (U.S.)

Publication/Creation

Norwich, Conn. : Press of John G. Cooley, 1852.

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THE TREATMENT
DUE FROM THE
MEDICAL PROFESSION,
TO PHYSICIANS WHO BECOME
HOMŒOPATHIC PRACTITIONERS.

[Being a Report read before the Conn. Medical Society,
May 13, 1852.]

BY WORTHINGTON HOOKER, M. D.

NORWICH, CONN.
PRESS OF JOHN G. COOLEY, MAIN-STREET.

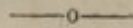
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1852.

Extract from the Proceedings of the Connecticut Medical Society.

Dr. W. HOOKER, Chairman of the Committee appointed on the Fairfield Resolution, read a Report which was accepted and ordered to be printed, and the recommendations contained in it were unanimously adopted.

On motion, One thousand extra copies were ordered to be printed for the use of the Members of the Society, and for distribution.

R E P O R T .



The Committee appointed under Dr. WILSON'S resolution, in relation to the Report made by the Fellows from the Fairfield County Society, would Report:

WE find the facts in the case to be these: Three individuals, JEREMIAH T. DENISON, DANIEL W. NORTHROP and CHAUNCEY AYRES, were reported to be "notoriously in the practice of Homœopathy;" and therefore, according to a By-law adopted at the last meeting of the State Medical Society, the County Society, on full proof of the alleged fact, was competent to expel them. Due notice was given to the offenders, so that they could, if they pleased, appear to defend themselves against the charge. They failed to appear. The Society then passed the following vote: Resolved, That the above-named persons be dismissed from the Fairfield County Medical Society.

On referring to the By-laws it will be seen that the subject of *dismissing* members is treated of by itself, in Article 3d of the section entitled *County Meetings*; and certain cases to which this act may be applied are very definitely stated. This act is not applied to any *offense*, in the strict sense of that term, unless to "refuse or neglect to pay taxes" be an offense. But this seems to be considered by

the Society simply as indicating that the individual does not prize the privilege of belonging to it sufficiently to make it proper that he continue to be a member.

Offenses and misdemeanors are treated of in the 4th Article of the same Section. The process to be gone through with in the treatment of offenders is fully detailed; and the result is, that "the offender, under conviction, may be punished by admonition, by suspension from the privileges of the Society for a period not exceeding two years, or by expulsion from the Society."

The cases reported by the Fairfield County delegation clearly come under this head; and the proper course for the County Society to pursue was, to inflict some one of the forms of punishment named in that Article, instead of simply *dismissing* the offenders, and to report their action, if expulsion were decided upon, to the State Society for its ratification.

The subject of the treatment due from our Society to Physicians who become Homœopathic practitioners is of very great importance, and merits from your Committee some consideration in view of the cases which have been referred to us.

The object contemplated by the Legislature in granting a Charter to the State Medical Society, was to secure to the people of Connecticut the services of a well-educated body of Physicians. It was presumed that all medical opinions, and statements, and alleged discoveries, would be thoroughly examined and canvassed by the profession. The idea was not indulged for a moment, that there would not be perfect freedom of opinion among the medical men embraced in the State Society. And therefore no provision or measure was contemplated which

should introduce to the public another body of Physicians, distinct from the medical profession authorized by law, and in opposition to it. It was presumed that every new doctrine or pretended discovery could have a fair chance of a full and candid investigation, and that there was no need of organizing and chartering a particular sect, pledged to its establishment, in order that its claims might be properly urged. And the history of medicine shows that the presumption thus entertained by the Legislature was well founded. No doctrine or system, any part of which time has shown to be valuable, has been wholly rejected by the medical profession; but, on the other hand, it has been examined and sifted, and the valuable portion, however small it might be, has been retained and stored among the permanent acquisitions of our science.

But it has been contended within the last few years, that the medical profession has failed to accomplish its mission in this respect, and that progress demands that other appliances should be put in requisition, in order that all the resources of medical science be developed. Accordingly various sects have arisen, called into being by crude dreamers, each imagining that he has been charged, as Hahnemann supposed himself to be, with "the great gift of God to man." The systems which bind these sects together have their adherents in different classes of the community, each according to its peculiar character. And Homœopathy, Hydropathy, Thomsonism, Eclecticism, &c., are all but up-shoots of the same radicalism, suited in character to the circumstances under which they spring up. Thomsonism, for example, suits the coarser mind that demands bold and palpable results; while Homœopathy attracts minds which are refined by fashion or education,

and especially those which are tinged with transcendentalism.

These systems, however widely they differ in character, all agree in one thing—they are all at war with what they term the “regular” profession. And this war, which is one of extermination, they have prosecuted from the beginning. It is idle, therefore, for their advocates to claim that they have been cast out of the medical profession. They have exiled themselves by the position which they have voluntarily assumed. They have ignored the profession, and their appeal has ever been from the profession to the people; and if we take them at their word and say, ‘to the people let them go,’ they cannot accuse us of exclusiveness or persecution.

The remarks just made are applicable as fully to Homœopathy as to the other systems which we have named. This system, it is true, was broached by a regular Physician; but it was after he had cut himself loose from the profession, and proved himself not only an empiric, but a cheat, by selling common borax as a newly-discovered specific, at the enormous price of a *louis d’or* per ounce. And Homœopathy, thus born in empiricism, has ever retained the impress of its origin. It has not waited to be driven from the domains of science; but, banishing itself, it has ever worn the garb, and adopted the modes and tactics, of quackery. The claim, therefore, which its motley herd of votaries now so boldly set up for the privileges and honors which science gives, is not only baseless but impudent, and quite as much so as that which is set up just as boldly by their brethren in radicalism, the Thomsonians and Eclectics.

It is pertinent to remark here, that the assertion which the advocates of these various systems so often make—

that the medical profession has, like them, adopted an exclusive set of doctrines—is entirely false. The term Allopath, which the Homœopathists bestow upon us, is a misnomer. The great body of the profession are ready to receive any facts or doctrines, from whatever quarter they may come, demanding only that they shall be proved to be true.

The issue, then, between the regular profession and the various sects which have lately risen, is distinct and clear. The profession claims, that in the unsectarian organization which the Legislature has given it in its charter, it is accomplishing in the most efficient manner possible the object aimed at—the supplying the community with a body of well-educated Physicians. And it further claims, that it does this without trenching in the least upon liberty of opinion. The various sects, on the contrary, claim that the Legislature was mistaken in its views, and that the only way to secure liberty of opinion, and therefore progress, is to grant an organization to every sect that asks for it, and that too without exacting of it an adherence to rules recognizing the necessity of thorough education. The question before the community is not, as Homœopathists and others contend, whether an Allopathic sect, so called, is to have a monopoly, or is to share equal rights with other medical sects; but it is, whether an unsectarian and educated profession shall be sustained, or the community shall, in place of it, be filled with a variety of uneducated and irresponsible sects in medicine. And all that we ask of the Legislature is, that it shall not forsake the original design at which it distinctly aimed in granting the Charter of the State Medical Society, and not that it shall secure to us any monopoly. We do not ask that any medical sect shall be put down by the power of law,

but simply that no sect as such shall be authorized by law to assume the position, so long granted to a profession which allows of the utmost latitude of opinion, and recognizes character and education as the only basis of membership.

These preliminary remarks have been necessary, in order to come to a right decision of the question, as to what our duty is in relation to Physicians in our ranks who become Homœopathic practitioners.

Some forbearance has hitherto been exercised towards such offenders, but it is now fast becoming the general sentiment of the profession that they should at once be excluded from our Societies.

They can be excluded for misdemeanors. It is a well-known fact, however much it may be disputed in certain quarters, that the great majority of Homœopathic practitioners are not only poorly educated and destitute of any proper credentials, but they are guilty of practicing the grossest arts of quackery. Any act of association with the common herd of Homœopathic practitioners should therefore be treated as a misdemeanor; and simply because it contravenes the great object of our organization—the securing to the community a body of well-educated medical men.

But it is not necessary, we contend, to wait for the commission of any such definite and individual act. Homœopathy has been before the profession for half a century, and has been thoroughly examined; and if there be a modicum of truth in it, that would not be lost to science, although as a system it should at once, as it is destined to do in a short period of time, pass into utter oblivion. And in the position which Homœopathy has been assuming more and more distinctly ever since its rise, it is not, be it

observed, a system of doctrines merely ; but a system of doctrines, or rather a group of dogmas, *united with all the arts and appliances of quackery, and relying on them for its support* ; and after fifty years' experience with it, the profession are justified in treating it as bearing this character.

Very different would be the position of the profession towards Homœopathy, if it had aimed, like other doctrines advanced by Physicians, to gain a foothold among medical men alone or chiefly, instead of making its appeal to the popular favor and against the profession. In that case, absurd as Homœopathy is, we should, as advocates of freedom of opinion in medicine, dismiss at once the idea of subjecting any of its votaries that might be found in our ranks to discipline, and should be content to combat it with argument, confident of the power of truth to dispel the delusion. But a system of quackery, based upon a jumble of dogmas, put forth by one who was at once a dreamer and an empiric, surely merits no such consideration from medical men. And as its adherents do not aim simply at the establishment of a system of doctrines, but wage a war of radicalism against the profession, and seek to throw down the barriers that guard it from the intrusion of ignorance and quackery, if any of them be found in our ranks, our duty clearly is to expel them. Such a course is not only dictated by self-respect, but the regard which is due from Physicians to the welfare of the community demands it of us. If we do not expel them, we consent to the base and destructive alliance between science and empiricism, which they are attempting to effect by retaining their place in our Societies. To occupy the position at once of Physician and of quack, is an inconsistency to which no reasonable man would ask the profession to give its sanction.

In view of these facts and principles, therefore, your Committee recommend that in accordance with our By-laws, every Physician who becomes a Homœopathic practitioner, should at once, on proof of the fact, be *expelled* from the Society.

Perhaps it will be said that, although most of those regular Physicians who become Homœopathists do so for pecuniary reasons alone, there are some few who are honest in their convictions, and that these should not be dealt with in this peremptory manner. In reply to this it may be said, that it is ordinarily impossible to distinguish between those who are honest and those who are not so; and even if we could make the distinction, an honest conviction in favor of so gross a delusion may be justly considered as proving a mental obliquity so great, as to disqualify for the proper performance of the duties of a Physician.

It is proper to remark here, that if a Physician should think that the alleged principle, *similia similibus curantur*, which was definitely advanced by Stahl a century before Hahnemann made it the basis of his system, applies as an explanation of some of the phenomena developed in the treatment of disease, or if he should think that Homœopathists have brought to our notice some remedies which are of value, such opinions do by no means make him a Homœopathist, or subject him to discipline. We put no restriction upon mere opinions in our organizations. It is the adoption of Homœopathy as a system of doctrine and practice, and of its practitioners as brethren—it is the going over to Homœopathists as a sect—which alone can make the term Homœopathist applicable to any Physician, and render him a fit subject for the act of expulsion. At the same time it should be remarked, that those who, in or-

der to cater to the popular prejudice, inform a portion of their employers, that they are ready to practice Homœopathically as well as in the old way, (as it is termed), are guilty of an obedience to the behests of quackery, indicating a loss of the self-respect belonging to every high-minded Physician.

In accordance with the views presented in this Report, your Committee recommend, that the action of the Fairfield County Medical Society be not ratified, and that the subject be referred back to that Society, that they may act upon it in compliance with the By-laws, in order that their action may in proper form come before the State Society at its next annual meeting.

WORTHINGTON HOOKER, *Chairman.*