

## **A review of Homoeopathy, allopathy, and "young physic" / by L.M. Lawson.**

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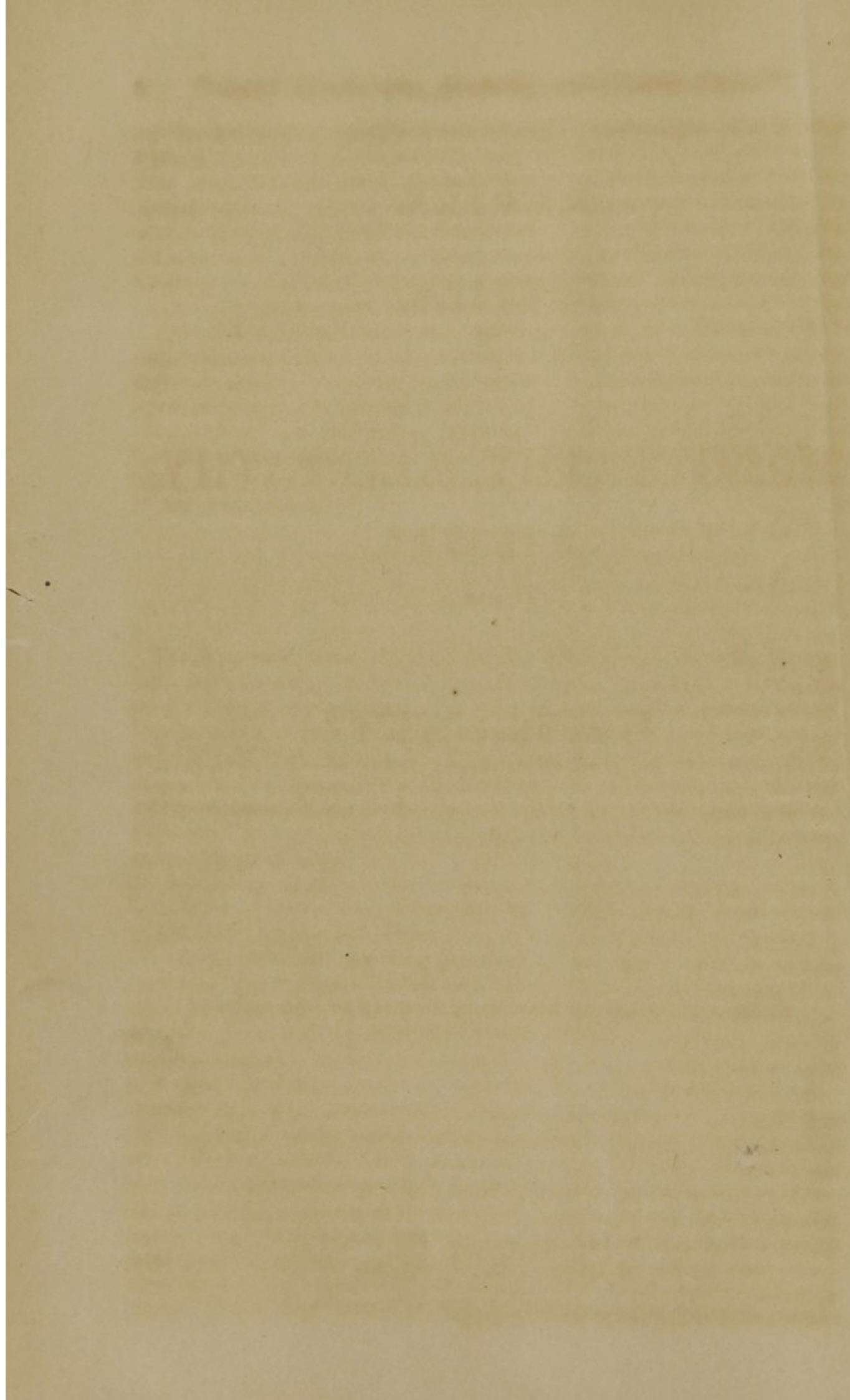


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LAWSON

HOMOEOPATHY, ALLOPATHY



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# REVIEW

OF

# HOMŒOPATHY, ALLOPATHY,

AND

## "YOUNG PHYSIC."

BY

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18245

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## PREFACE.

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The importance of the subject discussed in the following pages, has induced the writer to place this REVIEW in its present form. The work reviewed was itself a Journal Review, but was subsequently published in pamphlet form, both in this country and in England; and in consequence of these several forms of publication, it has been widely circulated, and its influence, it is believed, will be detrimental to medical science. The Medical Press of the United States, moreover, has not generally Reviewed Dr. FORBES' Essay with that care which its importance demands; and hence, an additional reason is found for recalling it to notice.

## REVIEW.

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*Homœopathy, Allopathy, and "Young Physic."* By JOHN FORBES, M. D., one of the Editors of the "Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine," Editor of the "British and Foreign Medical Review," etc. etc. Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blackiston. 1846. 12mo. pp. 121.\*

This work is a reprint from an article in the January No. of the *British and Foreign Medical Review*, written by the editor, Dr. Forbes, and re-published in pamphlet form in England. It evidently belongs to a class of books calculated to exert an influence, favorable or unfavorable, on the interests of Medical science, greatly beyond most of the productions of the day. Essays and books illustrating or extending the ordinary principles of the profession, are received and exert an influence proportional to their truth and accuracy; but those essays, of which the present is one, that strike at great and leading principles, and seek to subvert long cherished views and opinions, operate independently of truth or merit, create doubts and misgivings in the minds of many, pass silently through every avenue, and, if false, insidiously poison a whole profession. Add to this, the weight of character possessed by the justly celebrated author, and we have sufficient inducement to examine carefully the pages of the work before us.

We desire to state in the beginning, that the author has most unquestionably done injustice both to himself and the profession of which he is a member; and it does not, in the least, mitigate the injury inflicted, to know that the writers intentions were elevated and honorable; but, on the contrary, this very fact aggravates the offence, by placing one of the lights of the profession in deliberate and honest hostility to its doctrines and interests.

Dr. Forbes' essay seems to have had a triple object; the first was to review Homœopathy, and place it in a true position; in the second place, to review the present condition of Allopathy, and to expose its imperfections; and lastly, to indicate a substitute

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\* *Western Lancet*, Sept., 1846.

for the two former, which will be found in the person of "Young Physic."

It is no part of our purpose in following the author, to review *Homœopathy*, for we trust that our readers are too well endowed with common sense, to be misled by such a glaring imposition; but our whole design is to examine the *opinions expressed by Dr. Forbes*, both in relation to homœopathy and allopathy, and to make such suggestions as may occur during our progress. Extracts will be inserted sufficiently copious to convey a just conception of the author's opinions; and at the same time, care will be taken to avoid isolating opinions and expressions, which might misrepresent the author.

The term "allopathy," as applied to our system, is objectionable; but as our author has very freely employed the term, it will be used frequently in the same conventional sense, in the course of the succeeding pages.

The following extract will show the estimate which the author places on the character and attainments of Hahnemann:

"No careful observer of his actions or candid reader of his writings, can hesitate for a moment to admit, that he was a very extraordinary man,—one whose name will descend to posterity as the exclusive excogitator and founder of an original system of medicine, as ingenious as many that preceded it, and destined, probably, to be the remote, if not the immediate, cause of more important fundamental changes in the practice of the healing art, than have resulted from any promulgated since the days of Galen himself. Hahnemann was undoubtedly a man of genius and a scholar; a man of indefatigable industry, of undaunted energy. In the history of medicine his name will appear in the same list with those of the greatest systematists and theorists; unsurpassed by few in the originality and ingenuity of his views, superior to most in having substantiated and carried out his doctrines into actual and most extensive practice."—p. 6.

A portion of this extract we may readily admit; the remainder is more than hypothetical. That the system of Hahnemann is destined "to be the remote, if not the immediate, cause of more important fundamental changes in the practice of the healing art, than have resulted from any promulgated since the days of Galen himself," is an assumption at variance with every principle of truth and justice. This opinion, however, has reference to the *negative* influence of homœopathy; an influence, which the author is of opinion, will advance medical science by unfolding *the powers of nature*; but even with this explanation, which comes in at another part of the essay, facts contradict the assertion. As a substitute for the above extraordinary sentiment, we would say, that the system of Hahnemann, so far as it can exert an influence on practical medicine, is fraught with the most destructive consequences; and to sustain this assertion before an enlightened medical tribunal, it is only necessary to state, that the system is *wholly empirical*, depending on the *external* signs of disease, without any reference to the pathological changes inducing these external signs. This single position, independently of the absurd cabalis-

tic "*similia similibus curantur*," and the ghostly influence of infinitesimal doses, will stamp the system of homœopathy as one of the wildest vagaries that ever disturbed the mind of man, and its author little less than a lunatic. The advantages, therefore, arising to medical science from such a miserable deception, are no where to be seen; indeed, the system is obviously a lie in its conception, practice and assumptions, and truth will be impaired whenever it meets with such a moral pestilence.

The author's charity is quite equal to his sagacity; thus, he freely declares his opinion that, not only was Hahnemann "sincere in his belief of the truth of his doctrines," but that the system itself "professes to be based on a formidable array of facts and experiments, and that these are woven into a complete code of doctrines with singular dexterity and much apparent fairness." And it will be seen hereafter, that Dr. Forbes is ready to yield implicit faith in the reports of cures made by homœopathists.

It may have escaped the recollection of Dr. Forbes, or he may never have known it, that Hahnemann's true belief has recently been brought to light. Dr. Schubert, a German physician, has published a statement in *Casper's Wöchenschrift*, that from his personal intercourse with Hahnemann, he learned that this noted *theorist* placed no confidence in the infinitesimal doses of medicine, and that his system was merely a *ruse* to amuse the patient, while nature cured the disease. So much for the *honesty* of Hahnemann, which Dr. Forbes so freely endorses. In further evidence of the credit attached by the author to homœopathic testimony, we adduce the following extract:

"On these grounds, then, it appears to us reasonable, that the claims of Homœopathy, regarded as a system of medical doctrine, ought to be admitted so far as to entitle it to investigation, at least; and in undertaking such an investigation, we have no more right to reject the evidence supplied in its favor by its professors, than we have for rejecting any other evidence in favor of any other medical doctrine, theoretical or practical"—p. 9.

Against this special pleading in favor of homœopathic honesty and testimony,—a mode of argument calculated to forestall and mislead the readers judgment, we must emphatically protest. Reasonable and probable statements, those which do not contradict the great and leading truths of human evidence, may be safely admitted on the testimony of individual experience and observation: but when the alledged facts are opposed to the accumulated observations of ages, and announce the most hypothetical and improbable doctrines, it were worse than folly to admit the testimony of interested and blinded partizans, to the detriment of long established and well tested principles.

Passing rapidly through the principles of the homœopathic doctrines, Dr. Forbes arrives at the following conclusions:

"So far, it must be allowed, the doctrines of Hahnemann have either a show of reason in themselves, or, at least, claim to be founded on grounds even superior to reason—experience and experiment."—p. 24.

Not satisfied, however, with the preceding opinion, the author introduces the following summary, shortly after the last extract.

"We hold the great alledged fact to be no fact at all."—"We affirm that a large portion of the experiments performed by Hahnemann, and his friends, with the object of ascertaining the therapeutic properties of medicine, are altogether fallacious;" and it is also denied, that the evidence is sufficient to prove that homœopathic medicaments have any potency.

Here is manifested a strong opposition to homœopathy, which the reader will regard, when contrasted with other expressions, as very nearly approaching inconsistency; but it must be remembered that Dr. Forbes is laboring to prove a particular point, to establish which, requires these extraordinary concessions, and subsequent maledictions. The following reference to the mode of preparing homœopathic remedies, furnishes a still more decided denunciation.

"Altogether, it must be admitted, that the whole complexion of the thing bears a much closer resemblance to what we have heard or seen of magical ceremonies and the tricks of conjurors, demonstrations for effect and to produce an impression, than to any operation of a scientific or *BONA FIDE* character."—p. 42.

After these downright acknowledgements of the demerits of this ghostly homœopathy, the following half eulogistic extract comes in with bad grace; the author seems determined to argue both sides of the question:

"But homœopathy comes before us in a much more imposing aspect, and claims our attention on grounds which cannot be gainsaid. It presents itself as a new art of medicine, as a mode of practice utterly at variance with that long established in the world; and claims the notice of mankind on the irresistible grounds of its superior power of curing diseases and preserving human life. And it comes before us now, not in the garb of a suppliant, unknown and helpless, but as a conqueror, powerful, famous, and triumphant. The disciples of Hahnemann are spread over the whole civilized world. There is not a town of any considerable size in Germany, France, Italy, England, or America, that does not boast of possessing one or more homœopathic physicians, not a few of whom are men of high respectability and learning; many of them in large practice, and patronized especially by persons of high rank. New books on Homœopathy issue in abundance from the press; and journals exclusively devoted to its cause are printed and widely circulated in Europe and America. Numerous hospitals and dispensaries for the treatment of the poor on the new system have been established, many of which publish Reports blazoning its successes, not merely in warm phrases, but in the hard words and harder figures of statistical tables."—p. 43.

The meaning of all this will be more apparent in the sequel; for the present, we leave the author in the enjoyment of these opposing opinions.

Another extract brings us to a new position, gradually approaching a preconceived doctrine, which will finally be developed. Regarding homœopathy as an established form of practice, the author says:

"The subject here to be considered naturally divides itself into two parts:

1st. As to the ABSOLUTE POWER of homœopathy to cure diseases ; 2dly. As to its POWER RELATIVELY TO THAT OF ALLOPATHY."—p. 46.

The first proposition is thus summarily disposed of:

"In regard to the first head of the inquiry, we think we are justified in stating that no unquestionable evidence exists as to the absolute power of homœopathy to cure diseases."

In discussing the second division, as to the power of homœopathy relatively to allopathy, our author certainly is not *very* orthodox ; but we will not anticipate the interesting *denouement*, but permit the author's own words to introduce his clever heresy.

"On the second head of the inquiry, our evidence is very different both in character and amount. Here homœopathy can adduce evidence of precisely the same kind as allopathy."—p. 48.

The author is forced to admit, however, that the evidence is *not quite* sufficient to establish the equality of homœopathy ; but with that extraordinary amount of charity which was so conspicuous in a former part of the work, he adds:

"Nevertheless, it would be surely most unwise, and even unphilosophical, to come to the conclusion, that, because we are not yet in a position to decide the question absolutely and definitely, we should therefore refuse to entertain it at all."—p. 49.

Had the author remembered and acted on his own admission, viz: *that homœopathy was impotent*, this sage inquiry into its capability of curing diseases would have been unnecessary ; but not so,—a definite object is to be subserved—particular views must be established ; and hence, even at the risk of palpable inconsistency, the subject is gravely approached and learnedly discussed.

We next approach a very important part of Dr. Forbes' essay, to which we would invite particular attention. With the view of determining the exact results of homœopathic practice, that is, to what extent patients recover under this system, the author introduces an account of the Hospital of Charity in Vienna, under the care of one Dr. Fleischmann, a homœopathic practitioner. From 1835 to 1843, the total number of patients treated in this hospital, are reported at 6,551, with the following general results:

"Remaining from 1834	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27
Admitted	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6524
Cured	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5980
Dismissed uncured	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	112
Died	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	407
Remaining	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50."

But to make the conviction still stronger, Dr. Forbes introduces more specific testimony to prove the undoubted success of this system ; or, what is perhaps a more correct expression, that a large proportion of patients recover under its administration ; that testimony is found in the following table :

	Admit'd.	Cured.	Uncur.	Died	Recov.
Abscess of the brain - - -	3	-	-	3	
Apoplexy - - - - -	9	4	2	3	
Cancer of the stomach and uterus -	5	-	2	3	
Amenorrhœa and Chlorosis - - -	90	89	-	-	1
Ascites - - - - -	14	10	1	3	
Diarrhœa - - - - -	114	112	-	2	
Dysentery - - - - -	44	42	-	2	
Erysipelas of the face - - - -	181	177	1	2	1
Fever, excluding typhus - - - -	1036	1007	1	17	11
Typhus, abdominalis - - - - -	819	669	2	140	8
Influenza - - - - -	52	51	-	1	
Dyspeptic affections - - - - -	173	172	-	-	1
Gout, acute and chronic - - - -	102	97	1	4	
Headaches, various - - - - -	61	61	-	-	
Articular inflammations - - - -	211	203	-	2	6
Meningitis - - - - -	17	15	1	1	
Bronchitis - - - - -	15	15	-	-	
Ophthalmia - - - - -	51	50	1	-	
Endocarditis - - - - -	29	29	-	-	
Pericarditis - - - - -	2	2	-	-	
Enteritis - - - - -	6	1	-	5	
Pneumonia - - - - -	300	280	-	19	1
Peritonitis - - - - -	105	100	-	5	
Pleuritis - - - - -	224	221	-	3	
Measles - - - - -	25	23	-	2	
Phthisis - - - - -	98	-	27	71	
Rheumatism, acute and chronic -	188	188	-	-	
Scarlatina - - - - -	35	31	-	2	2
Small-pox - - - - -	136	120	-	11	5
Tonsillitis - - - - -	300	299	-	-	1

The comments made by Dr. Forbes on the above report, show most conclusively, that he admits it as true in every particular. Thus:

"We do not, however, mean to say that such lists as those of Dr. Fleischmann's are unworthy of notice and incapable of furnishing any information of consequence. This is not the case. Although yielding us no positive results or such data as science demands, they unquestionably furnish us with isolated facts of great value, and even supply materials which may be worked into such rude approximations to truth, as medicine has, alas, been too long content withal. These tables, for instance, substantiate this momentous fact, that all our ordinary curable diseases are cured, in a fair proportion, under the homœopathic method of treatment. Not merely do we see thus cured all the slighter diseases, whether acute or chronic, which most men of experience know to be readily susceptible of cure under every variety of treatment and under no treatment at all; but even all the severer and more dangerous diseases, which most physicians, of whatever school, have been accustomed to consider as not only needing the interposition of art to assist nature in bringing them to a favorable and speedy termination, but demanding the employment of prompt and strong measures to prevent a fatal issue in a considerable proportion of cases."—p. 52.

Again:

"Dr. Fleischmann is a regular, well-educated physician, as capable of forming a true diagnosis as other practitioners, and he is considered by those who know him as a man of honor and respectability, and incapable of attesting a

falsehood. We cannot, therefore, refuse to admit the accuracy of his statements as to matters of fact."—p. 53.

Another opinion is thus expressed :

"No candid physician, looking at the original report, or at the small part of it which we have extracted, will hesitate to acknowledge that the results there set forth would have been considered by him as satisfactory, if they had occurred in his own practice."—p. 54.

But to silence all cavil on the subject, and to show that the cases were not *slight*, the following testimony is adduced :

"It would be very unreasonable to believe that, out of 300 cases of pneumonia, 224 cases of pleurisy, and 105 cases of peritonitis, (in all 629 cases), spread over a period of eight years, ALL the cases, except the fatal ones, (27 in number), were slight, and such as would have seemed to us hardly requiring treatment of any kind. In fact, according to all experience, such could not be the case. But, independently of this a priori argument, we have sufficient evidence to prove that many of the cases of pneumonia, at least, were severe cases."—p. 55.

In further corroboration of the truth of Dr. Fleischmann's statistics, Dr. Forbes declares that the report has been confirmed by the testimony of a physician, (not a homœopath), who attended Dr. Fleischmann's wards for three months. This gentleman, it is said, traced the progress of several cases of pneumonia, by the physical signs, through the stages of congestion, hepatization, and resolution, up to a perfect cure. After all this, the following emphatic opinion expressed by our author, may be regarded as conclusive in relation to *his* opinions :

"In examining Dr. Fleischmann's report, the sagacious physician will not fail to be struck by the fact, that the relative proportion of cures, and the relative mortality of the different diseases, one to another, are precisely the same as he is accustomed to see in his own practice."—p. 56.

All this is very fine and very logical, and therefore very convincing. And let us now inquire, is the reader convinced that homœopathy, as a system of medical practice, is true? Is he prepared to admit that the decillionth attenuation of silicia, charcoal, oyster shell, &c.,—in figure thus: 1,000000,000000,000000,000000,000000,000000,000000,000000,000000,000000,000000,—or any other infinitesimal dose, is sufficiently potent to cure any form of disease? If he is prepared to admit such an absurdity, *he is not in company with Dr. Forbes!* Strange as it may seem, after all of his admissions, commendations and arguments on the subject of homœopathy, the author utterly repudiates that system. He distinctly avers the belief that infinitesimal doses of medicine are wholly inert, and that the results growing out of their administration, as explained by the advocates of this system, are fallacious.

With the preceding plain declarations, therefore, first attesting the *truth of homœopathic statements* as to the amount of cures under their system; and, in the second place, distinctly and unequivocally denying to infinitesimal doses the slightest possible

agency in the cure of disease; upon what principle does the author explain these discrepancies, and how does he account for the success of an inert system of practice? The explanation is easily given. He believes that *nature cures the disease* WHOLLY INDEPENDENT OF ANY MEDICAL AGENCY.

Here the author's principles are fully developed; his opinions have been brought to a focus, and we can now explain the ground of his extraordinary admissions in favor of homœopathy. It is important to remember, however, in immediate connection with the assumption that *nature* is the efficient agent in these homœopathic cures, that Dr. Forbes has fully admitted, and distinctly declared, that the results of this system are quite as favorable as those belonging to allopathic practice; hence the unavoidable inference, that he regards the practice of medicine in no sense superior to the operation of natural causes! In truth, the foregoing being admitted, medical science sinks infinitely beneath the natural system or homœopathy. This point, however, we cannot now pursue further, but leave it and follow the author in his somewhat tortuous course; and attempt by additional extracts to develope still more fully his views. After pursuing the subject for some time, and proving, as is supposed, the undoubted success of homœopathic practice, the author makes the following issue:

"What, then, it will naturally be asked, is the explanation of the momentous fact we have announced, that a considerable number of diseases have been, and perhaps continue to be, treated as successfully by homœopaths as by allopaths? IS IT, THAT THE ONE KIND OF TREATMENT IS AS GOOD AS THE OTHER? IS IT, THAT HOMŒOPATHY IS TRUE?"—p. 78.

To both of these interrogations, the author returns an "unequivocal and decided negative;" and yet, in the next breath, the following escapes him:

"We may, indeed, have proof sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mind, that the theory or doctrines, or principles of homœopathy are false; but as yet we have no demonstrative evidence that it is false in its practical bearings—false, that is, powerless, as a means of curing diseases. It will not be disputed by any one conversant with the history of medicine, that these two things are not only distinct, but independent of each other. We can, however, assert with the greatest positiveness, that, as far as the evidence supplied by the documents now before us, or the evidence we have been able to gather from other published writings of the new school, goes,—there exists not a tittle of actual PROOF that homœopathy is true in this aspect."—p. 79.

Which, then, let us ask, is the better system? We are told by Dr. Forbes that homœopathy cures as many cases as allopathy; that homœopathy cures none at all, and hence the corollary that allopathy is no better. And yet, in direct contradiction to his own admissions, and the common-sense of every physician, we are sagely informed that there is "no demonstrative evidence that it [homœopathy] is false in its practical bearings;" and yet, he adds, "there exists not a tittle of actual PROOF that homœopathy is true in this aspect." The emphasis on the

periments by physicians; 9. That *old* physicians abandon energetic measures.

The preceding catalogue presents a truly formidable array of arguments, and it shows that Dr. Forbes has entered into the subject with a very zealous spirit; nevertheless, a little scrutiny will probably lead to the conviction, that these illustrations are more specious than real.

1. The cure of diseases among uncivilized nations is urged by Dr. Forbes in favor of his theory. Almost every nation, however rude, has some system of curing disease; and whether this consists ostensibly in magic, incantations, charms, amulets, or similar means, it is nevertheless true, that some sort of actual medicinal agents are generally administered at the same time; and the remedies thus given, having been, like all therapeutical substances, derived from experience and observation, it may be rationally presumed that they can, and do, *empirically* cure diseases, to a limited extent. The savages, therefore, have a system of medical practice, based on their rude and imperfect experience, but which may, in truth, cure some or many of their maladies. But when we add to this very reasonable opinion the more important fact, that the diseases of uncivilized life are comparatively few and simple, and therefore require but little artificial aid, we can have no difficulty in understanding that the powers of nature may be, in many instances, fully adequate to resist the malady. The inference, therefore, which Dr. Forbes draws from these facts, must be regarded as wholly gratuitous.

The 2d and 3d propositions, that diseases were cured in the ruder and simpler times of physic, and that numerous instances are on record where diseases terminated favorably without medicinal treatment, proves nothing in the premises. In the first place, Dr. Forbes has adduced no evidence to show, nor is there any on record, that this primitive state of medical practice was as successful as it is at the present period, in an equal number of equally violent diseases; and in the second place, it is not contended that all diseases are *necessarily mortal*; on the contrary it is freely admitted, that many of the lighter attacks, and some of the severer ones, may be successfully *resisted* by the powers of nature. But even in these fortunate issues it is highly probable, that a judicious course of medication would abridge the duration of the disease, and in all similar cases render the issue much more safe and less painful.

4. The *expectant* system is appealed to in favor of the sanative powers of nature. What exact idea the author attaches to the phrase "*expectant system*," is not very apparent; it may signify the absence of all medicinal agents, and the substitution of a passive course; or it may be employed to mean remedies designed to aid nature in certain supposed critical evacuations, without active means at any other period. It is probable, however, that the

word *proof* is by the author. Now, if homœopathy is not only *not* proven to be false in its practical bearings, but, on the contrary, diseases are known to abate under its employment, the system must be admitted as true to a greater or lesser extent, competent to cure disease, and therefore superior to allopathy! To save Dr. Forbes from the imputation of lunacy, we must, in a spirit of charity, suppose he was dreaming when this book was concocted.

Finally, after innumerable turnings that would bewilder a fox, and not a few contradictory expressions and assumptions; now being the advocate of homœopathy, and again giving it deadly thrusts; in one breath pleading slightly (*very* slightly) for allopathy, and in the next sinking it below homœopathy, and after arguing in a complete circle, and exhibiting a fair specimen of logical gyromancy, the author suddenly ushers before us the following seeming *ultimatum*:

"But, such being our estimate of the character and powers of homœopathy, on what principle can we explain the fact above admitted, that diseases have been cured and continue to be cured, alike under its ministration as under that of ordinary practice? Is it, that ALLOPATHY is also false? Or is it, that, to obtain an explanation of the fact, we must pass by both, and fix on some THIRD POWER, coincident with both, yet belonging to neither."—p. 81.

Ah! this *third power*; that is the agent which secures the triumphs to both allopathy and homœopathy. But Dr. Forbes is not willing to say that the common practice of medicine is *wholly false*; he has too much regard for his standing as "Physician in ordinary to Her Majesty's Household, and Physician extraordinary to His Highness Prince Albert," to allow such an odious opinion to escape him; but let us look a little beyond the flimsy reservations which are thrown around his opinions, and learn how the matter stands. On page 82; we are told that allopathy is true in a *limited sense*, but that "it does *not* cure a great proportion of the diseases it is supposed to cure." Now, if we bear in mind a former declaration, viz: that homœopathy cures as many diseases as does allopathy; and that the former cures none at all, it requires no great skill to cypher out the *naught* which remains for the achievements of allopathy. It would make an arithmetical problem thus: If homœopathy cures 0, and allopathy has just the same success, how many cases will the latter cure? This limited success, therefore, of allopathy, admitted by Dr. Forbes, is so *very* "limited" that its quotient is naught.

We next reach that portion of the work where the author enters boldly upon the *proof* of his dogma, that nature is fully competent to the cure of diseases. The following points are adduced to sustain his position: 1. The cure of diseases among uncivilized nations; 2. The general treatment of diseases in the ruder times of physic; 3. Cases recorded in which no medical treatment was instituted; 4. The *expectant* system; 5. The success of hydropathy; 7. The cure of diseases by Mesmerism; 8. Ex-

term is used in the present instance to represent a *passive* or *negative* course of treatment, in which all active remedies are proscribed.

Now we would ask Dr. Forbes, in all candor, what evidence exists to prove that this much talked of "*expectant system*" is any system at all, or that it shows any comparatively favorable results? What series of accurate and extensive experiments can be adduced to sustain this opinion? Is it not true, that what has been denominated the expectant treatment has been, to a very considerable extent, accompanied by the administration of various remedies, more or less active, and which could exert at least *some* influence over disease? If this be true, surely Dr. Forbes cannot rely on what has heretofore occurred, to prove that nature, unaided, is competent to relieve, as a general rule, severe diseases; and if not competent as a *general rule*, the *vis medicatrix naturæ* cannot be relied upon to the exclusion of positive medicinal agents.

It is true, statements from time to time have been made, that formidable diseases have passed off without the interference of medicines, and it was claimed as a just inference that nature possesses a superiority over art; but let us inquire, where are the fruits of this system? Are there any physicians in enlightened society attempting to follow this system, and to cure diseases without remedies? Is it so in France? Is it so any where? To these interrogatories we must respond in the negative. Surely, then, the *expectant* system cannot be the most successful and rational, or the extensive trials of its powers which Dr. Forbes speaks of, would have gained it some adherents, and given it some notoriety. We are of opinion, therefore, that all candid readers will agree with us, that the *expectant system* proves nothing for Dr. Forbes.

5. Another plea brought forward to prove that nature is superior to art, is the extensive employment of quack medicines! This argument might justly cap the climax of absurdity, were there not others to follow equally preposterous. Dr. Forbes surely is aware, that a very large proportion of these quack remedies, as proved by actual analysis, possess *very active properties*. Now what is the result? It is a familiar fact that these remedies are given almost indiscriminately, and therefore are productive of much harm; but it cannot be denied that *occasionally* they receive a proper application, and, by chance, really cure some cases of disease. Strange that Dr. Forbes should have brought forward such an argument to sustain his position. Active medicines, given by chance, generally misapplied, constantly tending to impair the natural powers, are supposed to prove that nature is superior to art! If it prove any thing, is it not that *quack* remedies are superior to the regular system!

6. But not satisfied with one *quackish* illustration, hydropathy

next comes up before the author, and he presses into his service another convenient argument. Two facts will demolish this *watery* argument. The first is, there is no authentic testimony to prove that hydropathy does, as a common result, cure violent forms of disease. It is much more certain that its indiscriminate employment kills many patients. The second fact is, that the application of water is universally recognized, *by the whole profession*, as affording valuable curative means. Will Dr. Forbes assert that it is inert? Dare he say that it has *no effect*? Surely not. If, then, it operates as we suppose, arouses the nervous system and induces healthy reaction, or under other circumstances carries off superabundant heat, does it not become as directly an artificial agent—a *medicine*—as calomel, or opium, or any other remedy? But we must permit Dr. Forbes, on this point, to speak for himself, which he does in the following extract:

"An intelligent and well-educated hydropathical physician, on whose testimony we can entirely rely, informs us, that in a great many cases that have come under his care in a hydropathic establishment, he has observed the symptoms amend on the first commencement of hydropathic remedies, with a suddenness and speed which he could not conscientiously ascribe to the influence of the means used, but which rather appeared to result from the abandonment of injurious drugs which the patients had previously been in the habit of taking. In some cases, to test this point, the physician purposely abstained from treating the patient at all, and yet witnessed the same marked amendment.—Our informant points out to us another natural field of observation in this line, in the numerous patients discharged, cured, or relieved, from hydropathic establishments, almost all of whom carry with them such a horror of drugs that they never have recourse to them, if it can be helped, afterwards. Yet these people recover from their subsequent diseases—even without Hydropathy!"

Surely Dr. Forbes' company is not very select. It appears that he not only receives as a *friend* a "hydropathical physician," but he is so charitable as to admit this "hydropathical" testimony in condemnation of the regular profession; and this condemnation, by an *interested witness*, is introduced to sustain one of his most important doctrines. What a predicament! A physician of Royalty consulting with a *quack* to put down the medical profession! But there is another feature in the above extract still more odious. This "intelligent and well-educated (did he say *honest*?) hydropathical physician, "on whose testimony we can entirely rely," informs Dr. Forbes that the patients cured at hydropathic institutions, "*carry away with them such a horror of drugs,*" that they never take any afterwards; and yet, Dr. Forbes with great naivette adds, "these people recover from subsequent diseases." If this statement is strictly correct, then is hydropathy infinitely superior to allopathy, and the *sage* (?) of Graeffenberg is more to be revered than the sage of Cos. This is surely the meaning of the language quoted, if, indeed, it have any meaning.

The 7th and 8th propositions deserve no comment. Mesmerism and Experiments may leave a disease to nature, and the invalid may recover, but it proves nothing beyond the result in that individual case.

9. But the most conclusive testimony, the author believes, has been reserved for the last, viz: that *old* physicians "abandon much of the energetic and perturbing medication of their early practice;" and, we may add, they abandon most other energetic thoughts and actions. Can the author attribute this want of energy solely to an *improved judgment*, or will he, with all mankind, regard it as a natural loss of the powers of the mind? We leave *him* to decide. To make this statement available, the author should have some such tables as those of Dr. Fleischmann; statistics showing the relative mortality under the practice of physicians of different ages; what occurs at 25, 30, 40, &c. This should prove that the *Grand Climateric*—the multiple of 7 by 9—was in truth a period of entire renewal, at least of the brain, and that a new judgment usurped the place of the old. One practitioner is mentioned, an aged and learned physician of Edinburgh, who said in reference to the curative powers of infinitesimal doses, "this is no peculiar cause for boasting, as he himself had, for the last two years, been curing his patients with even less. viz: with nothing at all." Now with such sentiments, we would say to Dr. Forbes, *go thou and do likewise*.

Notwithstanding Dr. Forbes urges the preceding points to sustain his opinions, it is abundantly obvious, that he relies *mainly* on the statistical reports of Dr. Fleischmann, to prove that nature is fully competent to cure disease; it therefore becomes necessary, before dismissing this part of the subject, to call up these noted tables, and to determine, as far as possible, to what extent they are entitled to credit.

In estimating the value of these tables, it is important to remember, that they rest alone on the statements of Dr. Fleischmann. Are we bound by any principle of courtesy, philosophy or justice to admit the *ipse dixit* of this unknown homœopathist, when his statements stand directly opposed to the united experience and observation of almost the whole world, and which not only contradict well known facts and principles, but, in truth, outrage common sense! But more especially is it absurd to admit such testimony, as Dr. Forbes has done, when a revolution in science is to follow their reception, and a new system is to be based upon their assumptions.

Every principle of philosophy and prudence will dictate, that new doctrines or statements which contradict long received and acknowledged principles, cannot be admitted without strong evidences of their truth; and to entitle such statements to our confidence, they must be the result either of observation and experience, of demonstration, or of such clear and obviously true induction as to leave no question in relation to their authenticity.

We inquire, then, in the first place, to what extent these statistics are established by observation and experience. The first inquiry, that naturally suggests itself in this and similar instances,

relates to the *competency* and *integrity* of the witness. As a general rule, homœopathists are disqualified on both of these grounds. It is certainly a very rare event to meet with one who possesses a sufficient acquaintance with the profession, to make a diagnosis entitled to our confidence. How far this objection can be applied to Dr. Fleischmann, is not certain; but it may be regarded as a general rule, with but few exceptions, that those physicians who are so visionary as to embrace homœopathy, or similar delusions, have either an imperfect elementary medical education, or that their credulity so far outweighs the judgment, that but little reliance can be reposed in their statements. In view of these facts, it becomes the duty of a prudent inquirer, when propositions are made by persons of the above character, which contravert common experience and observation, to exercise a rational scepticism, until the points are established by the most indubitable proof. To apply these principles to Dr. Fleischmann, we would say, that his avowed belief in such a monstrous absurdity as that of homœopathy, and a declaration that infinitesimal doses have, in his hands, cured the most formidable acute diseases, will surely exert no small influence to invalidate his testimony. Dr. Forbes himself fully admits that Fleischmann was mistaken in supposing that infinitesimal doses cured *any* of his numerous cases; and if he was wholly deluded for a series of years in hospital practice, what evidence have we that he was not quite as much mistaken on other equally important points? His testimony on this score, we are decidedly of opinion, should go for naught.

In the next place, what can be said of the *integrity* of this witness? On this subject we have no desire to be exclusively personal, for we have really no knowledge of the author further than what can be derived from general circumstances, and we therefore speak of the characteristics of the *class*. This whole question being placed in a dubious aspect, we are warranted in demanding the most full and conclusive proof. In all instances where a fair and impartial trial of homœopathy has been made, and the result correctly reported, the system has entirely failed. Thus, in Paris, at the Hospital de la Pitié, Andral put it to a fair test, but the results were entirely unfavorable. In Berlin, the government authorized professed homœopathists to make trial of their system; and in every instance they failed to cure their patients. In Russia, where the homœopathists were permitted to make extensive trials in a military hospital, for the express purpose of testing its success as compared with the common practice, the result was unfavorable to the infinitesimal system. After an extended trial of two months, it was found that homœopathy was much less successful than allopathy, and the experiments were consequently ordered to be discontinued. At other places, homœopathy has been equally unsuccessful. Are we justified in the face of these facts, to admit Dr. Fleischmann's report on his

own unsupported assertions, while it is opposed by so many important considerations? Surely Dr. Forbes cannot be so lax in his mental discipline as to admit such flimsy testimony in such an important case. Had Dr. Forbes preserved his usual sagacity in this instance, such as was manifested in his detection of Mesmeric delusions, we believe his conclusions would have been very different from those here presented. It will not obviate the objection to say, that Dr. Forbes admits the cures reported by Dr. Fleischmann, upon the ground that they are the results of the powers of nature and not infinitesimal doses; if this were a just palliation, or an accurate conclusion, in other words, if Dr. Fleischmann's reports were true, *nature* should have been equally successful in France, in Russia, and other places. Analogy, therefore, would lead to a rejection of these reports.

But there is another reason of a very important character, why we should be permitted to discredit these extravagant homœopathic statements, which is, that homœopathic practitioners very commonly do *not* adhere to their system. Mr. Lee, an authentic English writer, states that during his visit to Germany in 1840, he found homœopathy essentially *dead* in its native land; at Leipsic, its head-quarters, the hospital contained but *eight* beds, and these were not all filled. The house surgeon became convinced of the absurdity of the system and gave up his position. And he also adds, that one of the principal practitioners at Leipsic candidly acknowledged that he gave allopathic remedies, and that he was in the habit of asking his patients which system they preferred, as they were both equally good! According to our own observation this course is not confined to Leipsic. We believe it can be established that the homœopathic practitioners of this country very frequently give medicine in allopathic doses; we have heard this opinion generally confirmed by those who had the best opportunities of learning the facts, and we fully credit the statement. And yet, all that recover under this practice are claimed for homœopathy, while Dr. Forbes claims them for *nature*. Now, who will undertake to say that Dr. Fleischmann was an exception to this course? We most assuredly cannot, and as it is more than probable that Dr. Forbes cannot, the question must be considered, *at least*, sub-judice.

The preceding considerations render it sufficiently obvious, that individual testimony cannot be relied upon to sustain homœopathy. This being admitted, it is equally true, and of necessity follows, that the system cannot be proven by *demonstration*. And finally, *induction* cannot prove it, for there is *nothing* to reason from. The system is conceived in a lie, and all the *induction* that follows is worse than the system.

The preceding arguments have been brought forward to prove that Fleischmann's statements are not sufficiently authentic to be received as true; and while we disarm the homœopathist of

this vaunted success, Dr. Forbes is equally prevented from bringing it forward to prove that nature is so universally successful. What unbiassed mind can admit, that recoveries took place under homœopathic medicines in 42 out of 44 cases of *dysentery*; in 15 out of 17 cases of *meningitis*; all of 31 cases of *endo and peri-carditis*; in 280 out of 300 cases of *pneumonitis*; in 100 out of 105 cases of *peritonitis*; 221 out of 224 cases of *pleuritis*; all of 188 cases of *acute rheumatism*; 31 out of 35 cases of *scarlatina*, &c. Pliant indeed must be that faith, and broad that charity, which could admit such marvelous statements. Dr. Forbes, however, is willing to endorse these reports to the fullest extent! He believes, however, that *nature*, and not the *little globules*, cured the diseases. If this were true, Dr. Forbes need go no farther; his labors in translating Laennec might have been spared him; the ink, paper and time consumed in sustaining the *British and Foreign Medical Review* have all been useless; his office as physician to Her Majesty's Household, &c., should immediately be abandoned, for neither he, nor any other physician can obtain a higher rate of cures than those reported by Fleischmann; and as these are presumed to be the work of nature, Dr. Forbes should at once resign his Royal patients to the more kindly hand of natural causes. And it is upon these *very* uncertain statements of Fleischmann, that Dr. Forbes builds his equally uncertain hypothesis. Strange infatuation! The same sort of evidence that proves the truth of Fleischmann's reports, would establish the efficacy of every quack system and remedy in Christendom.

The following paragraph closes that part of the essay which relates to homœopathy :

"But while we are thus exalting the powers of nature at the expense of homœopathy, are we not, at the same time, laying bare the nakedness of our own cherished allopathy? If it is nature that cures in homœopathy, and if homœopathy (as we have admitted) does thus cure, in certain cases, as well as allopathy, do we not, by this admission, inevitably expose ourselves defenceless to the shock of the tremendous inference,—that the treatment of many diseases on the ordinary plan must, at the very best, be useless; while it inflicts on our patients some serious evils that homœopathy is free from, such as the swallowing of disagreeable and expensive drugs, and the frequently painful and almost always unpleasant effects produced by them during their operation? This inference, and the dilemma it involves, are always held up by the homœopaths in *TERROR* to any allopathist who should think of using the argument of nature's *AUTOCRATEIA* against their system: and they think the threat too terrible to be encountered with disregard, much less with defiance, by any man in the actual practice of allopathy."—p. 93.

There can no longer be any rational doubt in relation to the author's opinions. It is true, that on page 95, he says, that notwithstanding he admits the general proposition referred to, *he still adheres to allopathy*, and regards it as being capable of indefinite improvement. What *improvement*, let us enquire, does he expect? Does he anticipate a state of medicine that will secure greater triumphs than those of Dr. Fleischmann? Nothing short

of *universal* success, which he cannot hope for, can eclipse the triumphs of Fleischmann. It is evident, however, that Dr. Forbes places homœopathy and allopathy on precisely the same ground as to their curative agencies, viz: that *nature*, in either case, effects the cure. But instead of leaving them on this apparent equality, he elevates homœopathy infinitely above its rival, because, he says, by adopting that system we escape "the swallowing of disagreeable and expensive drugs, and the *frequently painful* and *almost always unpleasant effects* produced by them during their operation." Absurdity and heresy can go no farther.

In concluding our observations on that part of the essay which relates to homœopathy, it is but just to remark, that Dr. Forbes is wholly opposed to the system of Hahnemann; and it is deeply to be regretted that the author has been tempted to use expressions and commendations *apparently* in its favor; for however much they may be explained and modified by subsequent declarations, they will be quoted as allopathic testimony going to sustain homœopathic practice. The author's entire object has been, not to favor homœopathy,—for that he utterly repudiates,—but, on the other hand, to degrade allopathy; and this is done to establish individual views of his own. For the purpose of sustaining his doctrine that *nature* cures disease, he very graciously admits the accuracy of homœopathic reports of cures; this proved, in his opinion, the triumph of nature; and then, by admitting homœopathy equally successful with allopathy, it seemed to be a fair inference that nature here was equally successful, and that the common practice of medicine is, to say the least, *useless*. This is the extremity to which Dr. Forbes is driven in an attempt to sustain his doctrines. Every lover of medical science will sincerely regret the false position in which the author has placed himself; false as it respects himself, and equally false in reference to that profession of which he is a member, and which has thus far sustained him.

The second part of the essay consists of what the author terms "a few momentous words on ALLOPATHY." A few extracts from this part of the work will be sufficient to place the reader in possession of the author's particular views in reference to the efficacy and soundness of medical science. The following propositions embody very fully his opinions on this subject:

"1. That in a large portion of the cases treated by allopathic physicians, the disease is cured by nature, and not by them.

"2. That in a lesser, but still not a small proportion, the disease is cured by nature in spite of them; in other words, their interference opposing, instead of assisting the cure.

"3. That, consequently, in a considerable proportion of diseases, it would fare as well, or better, with patients, in the actual condition of the medical art, as more generally practised, if all remedies, at least all active remedies, especially drugs, were abandoned." p.—98.

On another page the following is found :

"What, indeed, is the history of medicine but a history of perpetual changes in the opinions and practice of its professors, respecting the very same subjects—the nature and treatment of diseases? And, amid all these changes, often extreme and directly opposed to one another, do we not find these very diseases, the subject of them remaining (with some exceptions) still the same in their progress and general event? Sometimes, no doubt, we observe changes in the character and event, obviously depending on the change in the treatment,—and, alas, as often for the worse as for the better; but it holds good as a general rule, that, amid all the changes of the treatment, the proportion of cures and of deaths has remained nearly the same, or, at least, if it has varied, the variation has borne no fixed relation to the difference of treatment."—p. 99.

The following sentence is equally strong :

"Who among us, in fact, of any considerable experience, and who has thought somewhat as well as prescribed, but is ready to admit that,—in a large proportion of the cases he treats, whether his practice, in individual instances, be directed by precept and example, by theory, by observation, by experience, by habit, by accident, or by whatsoever principle of action,—he has no positive proof, or rather no proof whatever, often indeed very little probability, that the remedies administered by him exert any beneficial influence over the disease?"—p. 103.

The preceding extracts very conclusively show, that Dr. Forbes entirely condemns the practice of medicine as it now exists; he controverts its success and efficacy in the most decided and positive language belonging to his mother tongue, and degrades it to an equality, or even below the senseless empiricism of homœopathy. It is true, that an intimation occasionally escapes him that he does not denounce *all* medical practice, and we are left to infer that a certain class of perfectionists exist, those *old practitioners* who administer little or nothing, it may be, who may do some service; but with all these feeble explanations and seeming reservations, we are still left in possession of the strong and undisguised language above quoted, which can admit of but one construction, and leaves no doubt as to the author's uncompromising hostility to the present practice of medicine.

Two points are brought prominently into view in this essay, to which we invite particular attention; the first is, *that medicine as now practiced is no more effective than it was at the earliest period of its existence*; secondly, *that nature is fully competent to secure all that is supposed to be accomplished by practical medicine*. The fairest mode of elucidating this subject, will be by a brief reference to some points in the history of medicine.

The practice of medicine was introduced into Greece by Æsculapius, who had received some instructions from the centaur Chiron, a Thessalian who lived about the 13th century, B. C. That Æsculapius made some proficiency in the practice of his profession, is fully attested by the divine honors which were paid him by his countrymen; but it is very apparent that, even in the time of his sons Machaon and Podalirius, to whom the pro-

fession of the father was transmitted, remedial efforts were chiefly directed to surgical affections. Indeed, internal diseases being ascribed to a direct infliction by the Deity, remedial measures were regarded as nugatory, if not positively interdicted, and were therefore not applied.

This was the beginning of medical science; it was restricted almost exclusively to the treatment of external injuries; and as the remoteness of the period precludes the possibility of obtaining *statistics*, we are compelled to draw comparative conclusions in relation to medical practice then and now, from the state of knowledge as it existed at the two periods. Every intelligent reader will at once conclude, that little could have been accomplished during this infancy of science; indeed, so self-evident is this supposition, that it would be derogatory to common sense to enter into an argument to prove it. And yet, Dr. Forbes thinks medical practice has not improved!

For several centuries succeeding the period to which we have alluded, no evidence is on record that any substantial improvements were made; indeed, the Asclepiades, who united the offices of priest and physician, for a very considerable period, did little to improve the art which had been transmitted to them by *Æsculapius*. The sects of the dogmatists and empirics, that were founded about this period, were measurably occupied in visionary speculations or delusive observations.

During the 5th century, the investigation of medical science became more philosophical; the researches of Pythagoras, though not a physician, and others, aided the progress of science by adopting a more rational mode of reasoning; but with all these advantages, no important or permanent improvements are recorded even up to the time of Hippocrates. Dr. Forbes, however, would induce us to believe that, during all this period, medical practice was as successful as it is at the present time!

When we approach the period of Hippocrates himself, who is usually styled the Father of Medicine, but little will be met with, that can, with any degree of justness, be compared with *modern* medicine. It appears that Hippocrates had the good fortune to perceive, that medical practice must rest on the *observation of facts*; and there can be no reasonable doubt, that many important truths were discovered by him and applied to practice; but when it is remembered that almost nothing, at that early period, was known of anatomy, physiology, and pathology, we need not argue how imperfect must have been the principles of even the sagacious "Father of Medicine." To illustrate the imperfection of his elementary knowledge, we may mention, that he adhered to the school of Pythagoras, who believed that fire was the origin and essence of all matter; and from the mobility of this material, the "*four elements*" were produced. This is the origin of the *pathology* adopted by Hippocrates. It

is true, he had some idea of certain physiological laws,—some notion of a general principle pervading and influencing all parts of the body, denominated "nature," and inferior agents, called "powers," which preside over the functions of the individual organs; and moreover, he may have understood some of the more general phenomena of the laws of life; but in general his knowledge was confined to the more obvious conditions of the body, and but rarely extended to that minuteness of detail which the modern physiologist regards as essential to the science. Possessing little or no knowledge of pathological anatomy, we find Hippocrates a *Humoral* pathologist, and ascribing all diseased action to the fluids; and this doctrine was not merely a speculative theory, but, in truth, the foundation of his therapeutics.

One important principle entertained by Hippocrates was his doctrine of *crises*; and for the purpose of promoting these critical discharges it was deemed only necessary to assist "nature;" hence his principle object was to watch *nature*, and to aid or suppress her operations, as circumstances might indicate. Here is the *system of nature*, which Dr. Forbes so inconsiderately advocates; a system substituted for the want of anatomical, physiological and pathological knowledge, and which was not overthrown until these substantial departments were more accurately cultivated. This is what some call the "Expectant" practice.

This somewhat inert course of practice was, no doubt, well adapted to the knowledge possessed by Hippocrates, and was more safe than a *heroic* course; but who will predicate upon this instance of necessity a general doctrine which shall extend through all time; and who will attempt to stay the hand of the more energetic practitioner, when elementary knowledge has emerged from almost total darkness, and is now comparatively perfect? Hence it is obvious, that a temporizing course with Hippocrates was highly commendable, but in the nineteenth century the same would deserve unmitigated condemnation. It must be remembered, however, that even Hippocrates was not always inert; his evacuants to assist the morbid discharges were, indeed, occasionally somewhat active, but were not governed in their application by any enlightened knowledge of pathology.

What now can be said of the comparative state of ancient and modern medicine? Dr. Forbes says that amid all the changes in medicine that diseases remain "still the same in their progress and general event; and that when changes do occur, they are "as often for the worse as the better;" and that "amid all the changes of treatment, the proportions of cures and of deaths has remained nearly the same." We are of opinion, however, that the impartial reader who will look into the past and present condition of medicine, will neither yield the palm to the ancients, nor to the modern *Hahne-mania*. If

there is truth on earth, medicine is now as much superior to its ancient state, as are any of the other departments of science and art. In truth, Hippocrates pursued the same *general* course, and with the same *general* objects that physicians now have in view; the great difference consisted in his want of that knowledge which has been accumulating for twenty centuries; and if we can be convinced that no progress has been made during this long period, then may it be said that Dr. Forbes' declarations are true, and medicine remains in its primitive state. But if this be not so, and the attestation of universal experience proclaims its falsehood, then have we a right to claim for modern medicine, a rapid and undoubted approach towards perfection.

It would be quite superfluous to enter into a prolix account of the progress of medical science down to the dark ages, and to the re-establishment of the Hippocratean school in the sixteenth century. Many important facts were no doubt discovered and applied, but as *a whole*, medicine remained in its infancy. And what are the facts in reference to the practice of this period? Hippocrates was, no doubt, quite as enlightened in practice, as his successors; let us see how he compares with the present period. In an article on vital statistics, by Mr. Palmer, published in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, 1837, it is stated that in the London Fever Hospital the mortality was one in seven, and in Dublin up to 1812, one in twelve, but that Hippocrates lost *one half* of his fever cases. This is precisely the result we would expect the preceding historical facts to develope. Hippocrates was, as a matter of necessity, comparatively ignorant of the elements of medicine, and he surely achieved as much as could be anticipated when he cured one half of his patients; and when we reflect that modern physicians cure even a much higher percentage than is named by Mr. Palmer, it is just what we would expect from the improvements in modern medicine. Yet, Dr. Forbes wishes us to believe that practical medicine has made no improvement!

Viewed in all its aspects, medical science must be admitted to be progressive; and the progression rests on no narrow limits, doubtful evidence, or obscure data; it is not the visionary improvement of the theorist, or the illusions of the systematic partizan, but it rests on broad grounds, and is proclaimed by indubitable testimony. As we trace it through the seventeenth, eighteenth, and up to the present period of the nineteenth century, it will be observed that in proportion to the advances of anatomy, physiology, pathology, therapeutics and the collateral departments, so does the whole science become *enlightened, efficient, and certain*. From the time of the "English Hippocrates," Sydenham, to the present moment, the science, as a whole, has gradually but steadily advanced; and notwithstanding sects and errors have been numerous at every period, and false doctrines

gained extensive credence, yet important facts and principles have been regularly accumulating, until now the enlightened physician can rely with great certainty on the truth of his pathology, and the power of his remedies. Restless critics may fret and denounce the regular system, and excuse or half commend empiricism; but the true philosopher and discriminating practitioner, regardless of these narrow views, relies on the evidences of his own senses, and the united observations of mankind; and this evidence shows him that, however much *parts* may be criticised and condemned, as a *whole* the science has rapidly advanced.

If the attentive observer will contrast the state of medicine in the nineteenth century, with its condition in any period anterior to near the termination of the eighteenth century, he will not fail to perceive the broad and palpable distinctions that exist between ancient and modern practice. The first period, embraces much that is true, and towards its close made very rapid improvements; but such an amount of error was intermingled with truth that its utility was greatly impaired; but during the second period, although not perfect in its results, science has so far triumphed over error, and such a state of precision and accuracy has been attained, that its pre-eminence is too obvious to require proof. Within the latter period, Physiology, Pathology, Histology and Organic Chemistry have, as it were, sprung into existence; new lights have blazed forth into every path, and important facts and principles of which our predecessors were ignorant, have been discovered and placed firmly upon the common basis; and not only isolated facts and principles have been brought to light, but these have been connected and arranged, and now whole sciences suddenly burst upon the world.

The modern cultivation of pathological anatomy and general pathology, has resulted in an extended and minute knowledge of disease never previously attained; and these improvements alone would stamp upon the present age a glorious superiority. But add to this, as preparatory to the study of physiology and pathology, the altogether unprecedented achievements in the department of histology, and we are presented with a group of improvements substantial as they are brilliant, and useful as they are substantial. Who can contemplate the modern improvements of histology, without an involuntary exclamation of astonishment at the important results.

Did the ancients possess any of these gems of knowledge? Did Hippocrates, or Galen, or even those of a more modern date, entertain any conception of these stupendous truths? If not, with what assurance can Dr. Forbes assert that medicine has not improved; that it is no more perfect in its therapeutics now than in its earliest days!

Has Dr. Forbes forgotten the grand *modern* discovery of *physical diagnosis*? Does his memory not extend back to his own translation of Laennec? We have not the slightest hesitation in affirming, that this single discovery has lessened, to a very considerable extent, mortality; and this has been the result of more accurate diagnosis, and consequently improved therapeutics. It must be remembered, that the results of medical practice do not depend alone on therapeutics; but the physician must first learn what the disease is, before he can rationally apply remedies. These facts show very clearly that diagnosis is of the first importance; indeed, examples will generally prove, that medical practitioners are more frequently mistaken in their diagnosis than deceived in therapeutics. With these admissions, and they are too palpable to be denied, it ceases to be a question that modern therapeutics has a wider range, more accurate applications, and of necessity, more favorable results, than attended the earlier periods of practice; or, indeed, of any period anterior to the nineteenth century. The light shed upon diagnosis by improved histology, physiology, pathology, but more especially by physical signs of disease, constitutes a broad line of distinction between ancient and modern physicians; and just as certainly as man has improved in his knowledge of science in general, or as surely as have barbarians emerged into civilized life, so certainly has our knowledge of disease become more accurate, which has secured a proportional certainty in therapeutics.

But in the face of this full blaze of light, Dr. Forbes utters the opinion that modern therapeutics is no better than that of the ancients, and not superior to homœopathy! Can it be that no truth has followed the labors of modern philosophers. What of the researches of Bichat, Bell, Flourens, Magendie, Rolando, Muller, Gerber, Wagner, Hall, Barry, Andral, Cruveilhier, Carswell, Hope, Johnson, FORBES, and a host of names, belonging to every department of the science, and the sons of every nation. Will Dr. Forbes rise up in the face of these ten thousands, and in contravention of his own labors, and still protest that modern medicine is not superior to ancient delusions, and no more capable of curing disease than that crazy German transcendentalism, homœopathy!

Equally obvious and important have been the improvements in therapeutics. No candid observer can for a moment doubt, that the discovery and application of *quinine* to the cure of disease, has greatly lessened mortality. The advantages which this single remedy affords the modern physician, would, we doubt not, exhibit a decrease of mortality in fevers, could accurate statistics, ancient and modern, be obtained. And the advantages of modern therapeutics are scarcely less remarkable in the extended knowledge of the various preparations of opium, mercury, iodine, of tartar emetic, arsenic, blood-letting, and

many others, the properties of which have been accurately tested and fully appreciated.

Thus armed with therapeutical agents of tried virtues, and guided by a greatly advanced knowledge of pathology, especially of acute diseases, modern medicine possesses a confidence, and secures results, superior to any preceding age. The modern improvements in pathology, diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the heart and lungs, is of more palpable benefit to mankind, than any single event that has preceded it. But Dr. Forbes is so blinded and mystified with his own abstractions, that nothing good can he discover in modern medicine.

But if these general facts be not sufficiently definite, we can avail ourselves of statistics. It has been abundantly proven by statistics, that mortality has greatly decreased in the British Empire. According to the researches of Mr. McCulloch, the mortality has decreased in almost every disease, during the present century, while the aggregate is equally favorable to modern results. Thus, the mean annual deaths from small-pox from 1660 to 1780, ranges from 417 to 502; while the same disease from 1831-35, shows a mortality of only 83 in 100,000, which was the basis of the estimate. It may be urged, however, that the common resort to vaccination is quite sufficient to explain the disparity between the two periods. This, we admit, may have some influence, but that this supposition is not conclusive, will be sufficiently manifest from the following statements made by Mr. Palmer in 1837.

"From 1794 to 1798, the mortality at the Small-pox Hospital of London, was 32 in 100, or nearly 1 in 3; but had diminished in 1834, to 13 in 100, or nearly 1 in 8, *a diminution that must principally be ascribed to the improved medical treatment to which the patients are subjected.*"

Other diseases in the same table exhibit an equally favorable state of modern results, and which must be chiefly ascribed to improved modes of treatment.

We know of no evidence to prove that the actual amount of disease is less now than it was at former periods; indeed, the crowded conditions of large cities, together with want and other causes that impair health and produce sickness, have, no doubt, caused a larger amount of disease in modern times. Under this supposition, we can ascribe the diminished mortality to no other cause than improved medical treatment.

On the authority of Dr. Hawkins it is stated, that the total number of deaths in London, during 1697 were about 21,000, but in 1797, they amounted to only 17,000, notwithstanding the rapid increase of population. In the middle of the last century, the mortality was 1 in 20, but at that period (1829), it was only 1 in 40—reduced one-half. The same researches show an equally remarkable decrease of mortality in France; thus, in

the 13th century the mortality in Paris is estimated at 1 in 16 or 17; in the middle of the last century, 1 in 25. In the whole population of France, the mortality in 1781 was 1 in 29; in 1823, 1 in 40. Other statistical accounts show that in Great Britain from 1787 to 1789, the mortality was 1 in 43; within the 19th century 1 in 58.

These are important facts which the "momentous words" of Dr. Forbes cannot invalidate. Here we are taught that small-pox has not one half of its former mortality, and other similar instances exist. There can be no reasonable doubt that the mortality in fever generally, and in puerperal inflammation in particular, has been equally reduced. But notwithstanding all these "momentous words," Dr. Forbes believes practical medicine has not improved in modern times, and that it would fare as well or better with patients if left to themselves.

It is unnecessary, however, to pursue this subject further, our object being to establish the main fact, that mortality has greatly decreased within the present century; and this decrease we feel warranted in ascribing, measurably, to improved methods of medical treatment.

In concluding this subject, we add a few thoughts on the comparative power of nature on the one hand, and the present system of medicine on the other, to cure disease. Dr. Forbes has maintained that the present system of medical practice accomplishes no more cures than nature alone, and is, therefore, of necessity, productive of more evil than good; for its effects, if any, are *all* evil. But facts and Dr. Forbes are at issue on this point.

Gravely to argue the question—just propounded, would seem to be not only superfluous, but absolutely derogatory to the common sense of the profession, were it not for the fact that a high authority, no less name than that of Dr. Forbes, gives the weight of his talents and influence against the medical profession. If the simple question were propounded to the whole profession, a united voice would proclaim an undivided sentiment on this subject. But this great unanimity of opinion on the one part, does not prevent the necessity of repelling the positive denunciation from a single individual on the other, for the name and influence of the assailant, and the specious grounds assumed, constitute a sufficient apology for attempting to prove what is, in truth, self evident.

We apprehend that a mischievous error lies concealed under the fascinating phrase of the *powers of nature*. Hippocrates recognized the powers of nature in warding off disease, and Cullen brought forward more prominently the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, as a process of relieving disease. It is an important enquiry, however, whether the idea conveyed by the expression that nature *cures* disease is strictly correct? It seems more philosophical to express it that nature *resists* disease. The term

*cure*, always suggests to the mind of a physician, some medicinal interference, the substitution of a *new* action or process, and the removal of a diseased state by some extraneous aid. It cannot be said, however, that *nature* accomplishes any thing of this sort; on the contrary, her ordinary operations continue except when perverted by disease or violence; and if that disease or violence does not *overcome* the powers of nature, the disease may be finally worn out, and the natural powers of the system resume their ordinary course. But in all this there is nothing accomplished on the part of nature, except a successful *resistance* to the diseased action.

The preceding proposition being admitted, the next inquiry is, whether with our present knowledge of the nature of disease and the effects of remedies, nature can be *sustained* in her resistance to disease, or in another sense, whether the diseased action can be subdued by artificial means, so that oppressed and perverted nature may be liberated and restored to ordinary healthy action. Dr. Forbes, we have seen, advances the opinion, that so imperfect is the present state of medical science, and so uncertain its results, that art is incapable of aiding or sustaining nature, or in other words, of *curing* disease.

It is not possible at this time, nor has it ever been, and in all human probability never will be, to appeal to accurate statistical facts with the view of settling the question; no experiments have been performed on a sufficiently extended scale to authorize the conclusion that nature is competent to cure disease equally with art; and such is the nature of the subject that we need hope for no such evidence. Human life is too sacred to be bartered for such hypothetical opinions. In the absence, therefore, of direct proof, we are forced to rely on evidences drawn from every day occurrences, and to deduce conclusions from facts and observations of a general character. To be more systematic, however, we may draw arguments and conclusions from the following sources: 1. From high authority; 2. From common observation and the concurrent testimony of the profession; 3. From the nature and fitness of things.

In the first place, it is fully attested by the highest authority in the profession, that medicinal agents exert a direct and controlling influence over diseased action. And in accordance with this opinion, particular rules are laid down by systematic writers for the guidance of practitioners in the treatment of diseases; and these rules are usually derived from *observations* made at the bedside. These results grow out of a just and accurate comparison between different modes of treatment, and are, indeed, nothing more than a preference for the one which has proved most successful. In arriving at these conclusions, the successful mode of treatment has frequently been contrasted with others nearly or quite inert, and which act so feebly that the result may

be regarded as a contrast between *art* and *nature*. Take for illustration the treatment of puerperal fever. How common it is for this formidable disease to escape the attention of friends, the patient having no treatment except it may be inert ptisans; and how constant the result in such instances, that the case proves fatal. Or, to state the question more directly, the same disease has been treated at former periods, with remedies, if not wholly inert, at least those that exercised so little influence that they scarcely disturbed nature, and certainly did not cure the disease. Now contrast these two conditions, that is, either inert or inappropriate treatment, with the results of a timely, bold and energetic antiphlogistic course, and then let Dr. Forbes, or any other advocate of the do-nothing-system, decide, if he dare, in favor of a temporizing course.

In 1750 at the British Lying-in Hospital, 1 woman out of 42 died, and 1 child out of 15; in the same institution in 1800, 1 woman out of 288 died, and 1 child out of 77. It is stated in Dr. Gordon's treatise, that in 1750, at Paris, none who were seized with epidemic puerperal fever recovered. In one hospital in London, 32 patients were seized within the space of two months, and all but *one* died. In another hospital 13 out of 19 died. In Edinburgh, all who were attacked during the epidemic season died. This led a professor of Edinburgh to declare that the disease was incurable. In another part of his essay, Dr. Gordon remarks: "There is, perhaps, no disease in which less is done by nature and more by art. For, though I have mentioned a few wonderful cures by nature, yet, *in general*, her efforts were ineffectual; whereas, when early recourse was had to the skillful assistance of art, the disease, in most instances, was very speedily and effectually cured." Again: "All the patients who were *early* and *largely* bled, and *plentifully* purged, recovered."

What can Dr. Forbes oppose to these strong declarations? Does he suppose that the decillionth of a grain of aconite, or nature, would have controlled this giant disease? We suppose the do-nothing disciples would stand by, passive witnesses of the fatal progress of this destructive malady. Has modern therapeutics not advanced!

Here the instructions of high authority are conclusive and not to be disregarded; and this is but one of numerous equally striking instances.

Important conclusions, showing the comparative efficacy of nature and of art, can be drawn from epidemics. In almost all epidemics that have from time to time appeared, various and often conflicting modes of treatment have been devised, at their onset; some of these prove inert, others positively wrong; but during their progress, the eagle-eyed observer dilligently watches the result of the different modes of medication: these are carefully summed up, the inert, pernicious and the successful, and

the recorded results establish a true system. Here is a broad contrast, not only between modes of active medication, but not unfrequently also between those and *inert* remedies, or the *powers of nature*. And this high authority, and these numerous, impartial, and competent observers testify, that *art* is competent to assist nature, that medical practice is a science, and that its exercise has greatly diminished the mortality of diseases.

Such is *high authority*; and we might thus argue on through the entire range of practical medicine; but these illustrations are sufficient for the present purposes; the proof is abundant and conclusive. Can it be that amid this light, Dr. Forbes proclaims the inefficiency of medical practice!

In the second place, the same facts are abundantly established by the *concurrent testimony of the profession*. The humblest member of the profession is fully competent to prove, by daily observation and experience, that remedies, in many instances, exert a positive control over disease. All practitioners testify to the same fact; all agree that certain therapeutical means relieve particular diseases; and amid this universality of attestation great certainty is attained. Another point which the concurrent testimony of the profession establishes is, that in epidemics, and acute diseases generally, the efficacy of remedies is proportioned to their *early application*. In all acute diseases there is a stage in which remedies may be effective, but after that stage has passed, neither nature alone nor aided by the most judicious medication, can prevent a fatal issue. Indeed, as a general observation, it is assuredly true, that acute diseases are curable in proportion to the timely application of remedies; and it is equally certain, as established by the great body of the profession, that in these acute diseases *nature* is incompetent to repel the violence of the attack, and if unaided, sinks; while it is equally well established, that *art* can, and often does, prevent this fatal result. This is true of nearly all the phlegmasiæ. Look at the results of puerperal fever, as portrayed by Gordon, Hey, Armstrong, and others; and witness thousands of other instances recorded on every page of medical works. Who can estimate the mortality of endo and peri-carditis, when, anterior to the discovery of physical diagnosis, they were not detected and consequently left to nature, or inappropriately treated. Is it still contended that nature is equal to art, and that medicine has not advanced?

Another fact may here be introduced, and indeed is of itself conclusive, viz. the treatment of diseases in southern latitudes. Here, violent forms of fever prevail in which the cold stage proves speedily fatal, if not arrested by the timely intervention of medical aid. This is known to every practitioner; and it is equally well known that remedies can, and in a vast proportion of cases do relieve this condition, and thereby preserve the pa-

tient's life. Here is a fair contrast between nature and art; numerous cases prove that the former is incapable of resisting the overwhelming disease, but that art, coming to her aid, preserves the vital powers and the patient is saved. These are facts indubitable as the rising sun, clear as the meridian light, and attested by the concurrent testimony of the whole profession. And these results attend the administration of remedies on strictly scientific principles, now well known and acknowledged to be true; and such results the same science secures in its general application. Here are noble results; we are not listlessly waiting for new light; or, like Dr. Forbes, agonizing under the affliction of "hope deferred;" nor are we longing for some Utopian system, that, like the universal elixir, shall not only cure but render youth perpetual. The true philosopher, on the contrary, will diligently and carefully apply the light already given; add new facts as they are developed, and in future, as with the past, favorable results may confidently be looked for and as certainly obtained.

In the last place, we argue that, according to the nature and fitness of things, art can be advantageously applied for the relief of nature. Since the world began, man has sought to relieve the pains of his fellow man. Rude and simple in the beginning, the mere instincts of our nature have been gradually expanded, until they are developed into unequalled intellectual achievements; fact upon fact, and principle after principle have been discovered and recorded, until finally a *science*, lasting as time itself, occupies the former place of a rude and uncertain empiricism. But to accomplish all this, *man* in health, disease, and death must be studied; his structures, living actions, diseases, and morbid appearances after death, must become the subjects of extended and accurate investigation. All this has been done; every age of the world since the epoch of *Æsculapius*, has given birth to those who have consecrated their lives to the investigation of this vast subject; and the results exhibit a degree of success equal to the hopes of the most sanguine. Under the guidance of such philosophers, we find anatomy now almost perfect; *histology*, *physiology* and *pathology* occupy places, if not among the exact sciences, at least as certain as any other department of natural science; disease has been faithfully observed during life, and carefully investigated after death; and the result of the whole is, an accuracy of knowledge in the elements of science of the most brilliant and substantial character.

In connection with these indubitable evidences of the advances of the *elements* of medical science, what can be said of *therapeutics*? Has this important department remained stationary during the lapse of centuries? Have the cultivators of medical science for so many ages, worn out their lives in the pursuit of elementary branches as a mere matter of idle curiosity? Are they no more

familiar now with the properties and applications of medicinal agents than were the primitive physicians? And finally, are the combined and progressive observations for ages, duly recorded in books, deserving of no more consideration, and do they possess no more accuracy, than the tablets of record erected in the *Æsculapian* temples? Such assumptions are wholly gratuitous. The truth is, the primitive observations, and those which were no doubt suggestive of medicine as a science, were made in the department of *therapeutics*; and this branch has at all times, in all ages, and under all circumstances, advanced, *pari passu*, with each and every other department; and the diminished mortality of the nineteenth century proclaims its triumphs.

It is high time that the finger of derision should cease to be pointed at the profession, especially by its *guides*; it were enough, in all conscience, to endure the jeers of unprincipled quacks and deluded people. The blaze of light that gleams from every department, should be sufficient to protect us from the charge of damnable ignorance. It will require more logic than man can command to convince the practitioner that he does not know, as the result of *principles* and *observations*, the effects of blood-letting, of opium, of tartar emetic, of mercury, and numerous other agents and means belonging to the *materia medica*. These agents are well known to produce particular effects, under given circumstances; and these results are sufficiently certain to constitute a *science*. In addition to the results of internal medication, we are furnished with *demonstrative* proofs of the curative effects of remedies in cutaneous affections; and that, too, after *nature* had failed for years.

But enough. It were bootless to argue these points further, or to plead for positions attested by a world of witnesses. We prove from all high authority, *except Dr. Forbes*, that medicinal agents do overcome diseases wherein nature fails; we prove by the concurrent testimony of the whole profession, *except Dr. Forbes*, that art has a direct and positive control in many diseases in which nature does not and cannot cure; and finally, we prove by the nature and fitness of things, by the observation and common sense of every man, *except Dr. Forbes*, that medicine, as now practiced, is certain in its results, and sure and safe in its administration.

A remark in relation to "heroic" and "expectant" *practitioners* and *systems*, will be in place here. No physician can be an exclusive *heroic* or *expectant* and be a philosopher. Medical practice should always be relative; it must be proportioned to the violence of disease and the powers of resistance on the part of the constitution. This is true eclectic practice; all else is empiricism.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to add, that we do not regard medical science as perfect; it is progressive, and every hour becoming

more perfect. But we do regard it as sufficiently certain to be of vast utility; certainly far above unaided nature, or deceptive homœopathy.

In conclusion, we desire to add, that we entertain the highest respect for the candor, honesty, and intelligence of Dr. Forbes; his objects were elevated, and his sincerity beyond all doubt; and hence his errors are the more deplorable. In the present instance, he has been peculiarly unfortunate; and should he feel called upon to continue the same course, he will contribute more to the depression of medical science, than any one man can do to elevate it. We beg him to remember, that such opinions as he has expressed set men to doubting, and unstable judgments wander entirely out of the sphere of truth. We ask him to remember the defection of the Professor of Pathology at Edinburgh, Dr. Henderson, who has united his influence with the homœopaths; and that of Mr. Mayo, who, it is understood, has yielded his faith to hydropathy. How far these secessions may have been the result of such opinions as those expressed by Dr. Forbes, we leave him to determine.

Dr. Forbes surely could not have perceived the full force and bearing of his opinions, nor the exact import of the denunciations of the regular practice; otherwise, we are constrained to believe, his language and sentiments would have been more guarded, and less calculated to give offence to the profession and support to empiricism. We speak decidedly on this subject, for we feel much; and whatever antithetical opinions we may express, must be ascribed to a strong sense of injustice, rendered peculiarly forcible by surrounding circumstances.

The United States, however much we may admire its institutions and economy, must be regarded as the very elysium of quackery; here, unrestrained, they assume an equality, and in point of law possess it, with the most enlightened and scientific; and by fraud and deception, too frequently triumph and grow rich, where wiser and better men scarcely escape starvation.

It is no uncommon event to witness an outlandish homœopath rivalling whole communities of the most enlightened and worthy practitioners; and this does not result from any defect of the common system, but depends more immediately on the gullibility of the world in general, and of our communities in particular. These practitioners, cunning and ever on the alert, have already seized on Dr. Forbes' concessions in favor of their success, and with triumphant jeers throw them into the very teeth of the regular school.

The *steam doctor*, and other grades of *botanical* practitioners, (a class unknown in England,) come in for a large share of glory; and these men, too, lug in Dr. Forbes' opinions to sustain their limber-jack, rickety concern. The following language, extracted from an article just put forth, under the auspices of the botanical association, may serve to show the state of things:

"It has been clearly proved, and admitted by the Editor of the British and Foreign Medical Quarterly [Medical Review] that homœopathy [homœopathy] has been quite as successful in the treatment of all variety of diseases as the orthodox system, and although he does not admit its superior success, there are many practitioners who have tried both systems and who confidently assert its superiority. If the old system, with all its resources, cannot confessedly accomplish more than a system which is considered entirely negative and void of effect, it is surely time that our colleges were looking out for reform. As a pioneer in this cause, we hail the new Cincinnati School."

This "new Cincinnati School," we wish Dr. Forbes to understand, advocates a system of botanical practice, excluding all minerals, general and local bleeding; and as a substitute, offers a false system of pathology, and a system of therapeutics more monstrous than that of Brown. This is the reform we are promised.

Thus we see *homœopathists* and *steam doctors*, and doubtless we shall soon hear of faith doctors and Mesmerizers, hydropathists and chrono-thermalists each claiming support from this unfortunate essay.

It may be said, however, that Dr. Forbes is not answerable for these results; that he not only has the right, but it is his imperative duty to speak the truth, regardless of the sect on which it may fall most heavily. This may be; but he has told not only *the truth*, but *much more* than the truth; and it is this superabundance of expression, and these ultra and unguarded opinions, that will work such unfavorable results for the profession. This ultra course will wholly fail to improve the profession, while it will do more to build up and sustain downright quackery, than half a century of labor by those friendly to these false systems. An opponent's favorable testimony is always laid hold of, and exerts unbounded influence.

In view of these lamentable results, we are grieved that Dr. Forbes was not more just and philosophical in his views, less censorious of the true system and less lenient to quackery; and however much his opinions may be bolstered up by a few members of the profession, we warn him now, that in this country, and we doubt not throughout the enlightened world, the *great mass* of the profession will utterly condemn his doctrines and expressions.

Finally; the worthy author has our best wishes for a speedy delivery from his present delusions; and we sincerely hope that he may not again contribute, even by indirection, to depress true medical science, and thereby to the elevation of empiricism. We will only add, that it has been our desire in this review to avoid misconceptions of the author's opinions; and upon reviewing his expressions and our own comments, we think his language is too plain, and too often repeated, to admit of erroneous construction.

Gaylord

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