

Medical science and common sense : a lecture introductory to the session 1858-59 of the St. Louis Medical College / by M.L. Linton.

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MEDICAL SCIENCE AND COMMON SENSE:

A LECTURE

INTRODUCTORY TO THE SESSION 1858-59

OF THE

ST. LOUIS MEDICAL COLLEGE,

BY

M. L. LINTON, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

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MEDICAL PRACTICE AND COMMON SENSE

A LECTURE

DELIVERED TO THE SENIORS

ST. LOUIS MEDICAL COLLEGE

BY W. M. BAXTON, M.D.

PHILADELPHIA: LEA'S

ST. LOUIS

1881

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

A lecture introductory to a scientific course of lectures is not an easy task. Its design is to be alike appropriate to a popular and a professional audience. It should treat in a general way, at least, of subjects having a professional bearing, and yet it should not be so technical as to be unintelligible and consequently uninteresting to the public. Indeed most introductions of this sort lean rather to the popular side. Medical introductions, for example, touch medical science but very remotely.

I propose in the present essay the reverse of this. I shall attempt to deliver a Medical lecture to a popular audience. I shall endeavor to make it such a lecture as might be delivered in the class room; but I hope at the same time to make my subject so plain that the people generally, with a little attention, will be able to understand me.

Medicine is not that cabalistic and obscure sort of thing which by many it seems to be regarded. There is no hocus pocus about it. Neither is it an affair of inspiration or innate tact. It is said that poets are born such—not so physicians. The seventh son is no more fit to be a doctor than the first son or the twentieth son. Medicine is an affair of science and common sense, like any other department of human research. People have to learn it as they do grammar or algebra, geography or logic. In medicine, as in every other branch of knowledge and art, common sense is the supreme arbiter. It is purely an affair of *common sense*.

The title of my lecture is *Medical Science and Common Sense*, and my intention during this hour is to arraign medical science, properly so called, and some of the medical heresies

and follies of the day, at the tribunal of common sense—to apply to them the test of common sense—to probe them with its Ithuriel spear, which only truth can stand, and which is so fatal to imposture and error.

It can hardly be necessary to tell my audience what common sense is—every individual present has this sort of sense. It is *very* common. Hence its name. It is that general intelligence which the farmer employs in planning and arranging, cultivating and securing, his crops; which the mechanic brings to bear in all his various contrivances; which the mathematician invokes in solving a problem; which the astronomer makes use of in calculating the conjunctions and eclipses of planets. It is appealed to by the advocate, the judge, and the jury. It guides the cook in the culinary department, and the prime minister in the department of state.

Common sense is but another name for the universal intelligence of mankind, or that degree of it which is common to all sane minds. Genius and transcendent talents are but higher grades of this same common sense; and imagination and soaring fancy, though not arranged in the same category, are yet dependent on it. Poetry without common sense would be rhyme without reason. I shall not attempt to treat of the genius that scans the heavens and weighs the revolving planets; that has harnessed the forces of nature, and bid them drag the ponderous train, or drive the monster ship; that has tamed the lightnings, and sent them whispering through air and ocean; and that has descended to the foundations of human knowledge and surveyed the resting places of human belief. Nor shall I have any thing to say of the imagination that is so sensitive to all the impressions of nature; painting, as the plate of the daguerreotypist, all the beauteous and sublime phases of matter and of mind—of flowers and of stars—of boundless oceans and soaring mountains—of burning Saharas and Etrurian shades—of Alpine storms and halcyon calms—of blasting harmattans and Favonian breezes—of hope and joy, despair and revenge, and love and such like. I shall have nothing to say of this poetic power which gives even to airy nothings “a local habitation and a name.” My task to-night, is an humbler but I

trust a more profitable one ; I shall deal only with everyday common sense.

Let us now turn our attention to Medical Science. As a brief definition, we may say that it is the knowledge of curing disease. The sole object of the physician is to cure disease ; and every branch of science which casts light on the causes, the nature, and the cure of disease, is necessary to him. What is disease ? It is any change in the organization of the body which disturbs its functions. The various functions or actions of the system depend on the healthy organization of the system. When the organization gets out of order, the offices performed by the part thus changed are badly executed, and there is disease. Thus, it is the function of the ear to hear. Let it become clogged with wax, and its function is changed ; there is deafness. It is the function of the eye to see. Let it become inflamed or injured in any way, and there is disturbance of vision, or even blindness. Injure the lungs in any way, and there is deranged breathing. Sprain a joint, and limping is the result. The proposition is universal. Whenever the functions of the system are badly performed, there is something the matter with the organization to account for the difficulty. Be it a broken bone, a dislocation, a sprain, a cut, a congestion, an inflammation, a poisoned condition of the blood, there must be something wrong in the organization ; and it is the business of the physician to find out what that something is. Be assured that when you find the functions of the system performed in an unhealthy manner, there is something wrong in the organization to account for it ; be it debility, or spasm, or palsy, or sleeplessness, or pain, or indigestion—a freezing chill, or a burning fever. I think that every one can understand this ; but I may add an illustration or two :—Your watch goes too fast, or too slow. It is diseased ; there is something the matter with its organization. The watch doctor corrects this, and the watch is cured—it goes right again. One wheel of your buggy stops turning, or it breaks down—it is diseased. You say instinctively, there is something the matter with the organization of the buggy, and you endeavor to have it repaired, knowing well that it can not perform its functions until its organization is

made right. The hydrant yields no water. You know that the pipe is stopped, or that the reservoir is exhausted, or that the superintendent of the water-works has shut down a valve, (perhaps because the tax has not been paid,) or some other change in the organization has taken place; and you know that the only way to make the hydrant perform its functions again is to correct the organization. So much for disease. Any thing which can disturb the organization may be a cause of disease—anything which can be made to counteract these disturbances may be used as a remedy.

Let us contemplate for a moment this wonderful machine, the human system. How is it kept in perpetual motion for threescore years and ten? Does it live on immaterial essences and homœopathic doses? Nay, verily, it consumes in food and drink and inspired air about a ton and a half annually. Three thousand pounds a year are necessary for each and every individual. It may not be very poetical to think about, but it is nevertheless true, that that nice young lady eats of pork and cabbage or something else, and drinks of water or beer, and uses up generally, about a wagon load. It is a decree of nature, and of course there is no harm in it. Is it reasonable to suppose that a machine that requires such ample means to keep it in motion can be corrected, when it happens to go wrong, by infinitesimal doses? As well hitch mice to our ponderous fire engines when the horses break down—as well attempt to drive a steamboat over a bar with the steam of a teakettle!

We have noticed that any change in the organization is a disease. We will mention a few of them, and the modes of treating them. A bone is put out of joint—the remedy is to put it in again. A bone is broken—the remedy is to readjust the broken ends, and keep them in place until nature unites them. A patient has lost a great deal of blood, and is consequently very weak—the remedies are food and tonic medicines, by which the blood is restored. There is sometimes too much blood in the system, apoplexy is threatened—the remedies are bleeding and low diet, by which the amount of blood is reduced. There is sometimes too much blood in a particular organ, as, for example, the brain; it is engorged, congested—the reme-

dies are to bleed the temples, to draw the blood away from the brain ; to apply cold to the head, to *drive* the blood away ; and other equally rational means. Sometimes the blood becomes poisoned by breathing hurtful gases or impure air—the remedies are such as aid nature in casting off the injurious substances through the lungs, skin, and other emunctories. The main remedy in most diseases is *nature*. What do we mean when we say that nature cures disease ? Simply this, that diseases get well of themselves. Ninety out of every hundred cases of disease will pass away without a single dose of medicine. There is no doubt of this fact—everybody has observed it over and over again. We may express the same truth another way ; for example, we may say that the body is so wisely and beneficently organized, that it is enabled to cast off injurious substances and correct hurtful impressions ; that is to say, it cures its own diseases. Here are a few every-day examples of nature's cures :—A disagreeable and hurtful substance is swallowed ; the stomach contracts and throws it up. A thorn is deeply driven into the flesh ; inflammation and suppuration take place, and the thorn is expelled. Too much alcohol or any other poison is taken ; it is cast off by the breath and the secretions. The blood loses a great deal of its water by the copious perspirations of hot weather ; nature imperiously dictates the drinking of water, by which it may be resupplied to the blood. Thus, and in various other ways, the instincts of nature, without the aid of the physician, relieves the suffering body. But for this curative power of nature the interference of the physician would be unavailing. The surgeon readjusts the bones in fractures—nature heals them ; he makes the cut—she reunites it. The physician gives the medicine or orders the food—nature appropriates them. The physician is the minister of nature.

If it is evident that nature often cures of herself, it is equally evident that she cannot always do so without some foreign aid. She can not readjust the dislocated or broken limb ; she can not remove the irritating calculus. Often she can not react under the depressing poisons ; and enlightened art has to come to her aid. Is it not in accordance with common sense to reduce the

dislocation; to tie the gushing artery; to use the stomach pump, or the emetic, when poisons have been swallowed; to give a nourishing diet to a starved and emaciated patient; to prescribe low diet, and even bleeding, to the plethoric, whose vessels are ready to burst? Truly, the practice of medicine is but the following of the dictates of *common sense*, enlightened by science.

Let me repeat, that diseases are injuries inflicted on the organization—be they broken bones, cuts or bruises, sprains or burns; be they poisons, inhaled or swallowed, and corroding the organ, or mixing with the blood; be they congestions or tumors resulting therefrom, or any other possible change in the organs. Now these changes, or, as we call them, diseases, are caused by every thing in the material and moral world—as cold, heat, mechanical injuries. The food we eat, the air we breathe, may be causes of diseases; so also of clothing and exercises—so also of the exercise of the intellect, and the play of the passions.

The same may be said of the cures of disease. Every thing may be made to act as a remedy—as heat, cold, food, drink, exercise, clothing, and every other agent and agency, including the drugs of the apothecary. Every thing depends on the circumstances attending its administration. If the agent (whatever it may be) is wrongly applied, it is a cause of disease; if properly used, it is a remedy for disease. Cold is a cause or a cure according as it is wrongly or rightly applied; so of heat, so of exercise, so of food, so of calomel and jalap, so of every thing. No matter how good a remedy may be, if improperly applied it becomes a cause of disease; no difference how poisonous an agent may be, if skilfully used it may be made to cure disease. Cold water or buttermilk may kill, arsenic or prussic acid may cure. All this is plain enough; but as I wish to impress this important truth indelibly on the mind of every one present, I will further illustrate by an example drawn from surgery:—The surgeon has his very sharp knives and bistouries of various kinds—his exploring needles and sounds—his tourniquets, écraseurs, and the like. An ignorant might propose to operate on you; and argue that his

knife was of the very best kind, admitted to be so by the highest authority. This might be true; but would you therefore let *him* operate? You would say, it depends on *how* the instrument is used, whether it will do good or harm, save life or kill. So of medicines. The skillful surgeon can operate very well with the dirk of an assassin—the assassin could operate with the surgeon's bistoury; but the result in the two cases would be very different. Because a skillful surgeon relieved a patient the other day with a certain knife, are you willing to be stabbed with it by an ignoramus? Because a skillful physician relieved a patient with arsenic, are you therefore willing to take the same drug from an ignorant *pretender*? Medicines, like surgical instruments, do good or harm according to the circumstances under which they are employed. A physician who lived long ago said all this in one line, when he said, that he knew of no remedy for disease except that which was made a remedy by its timely and proper administration.

I suppose that every body will admit that he who has made a regular and thorough study of the human system, and of the manifold agencies that influence it, is better qualified to judge of the *circumstances* under which this or that medicine should or should not be administered than those who have made no such studies.

This truth, which I conceive I have rendered sufficiently evident, namely, that every thing may be a cause or a cure of disease according as it is wrongly or rightly applied, is an all-sufficient refutation of the pretensions of the quack. The quack's remedies are good, no doubt of it. So was the knife of the ignorant pretender to surgical skill.

Keeping in mind the foregoing very evident propositions, let us proceed to examine some of the medical isms and delusions of the day. The steam doctor, or the Botanical physician, as he styles himself, professes to cure all diseases by the steam bath and certain vegetable remedies. He regards disease as a sort of closure of the pores of the body, and a consequent accumulation of canker in the organs. This canker he likens to the soot which collects in chimneys, and which has to be swept out occasionally. Heat is life, and cold is death, according to the

creed of the steamer. With these crude notions, he steams his patient to open the pores ; and gives violent emetics to rid the stomach of canker, and cayenne pepper to keep up the heat.

Steam doctors have demonstrated the fact, that the human system can stand very rough treatment. The patient often becomes perfectly prostrate, and almost pulseless, under the operation of hot air and lobelia ;—such symptoms would alarm a regular physician. But the steam doctor is not at all frightened. He calls them the “alarming symptoms,” and regards them as a sure sign that the medicine is having a most salutary effect. Nevertheless, these alarming symptoms occasionally end in death.

The steam doctor uses only vegetable remedies. He regards minerals as poisonous—with him, *vegetable* and *innocent* are convertible terms. Now every moderately educated person knows that minerals enter into the composition of our daily food. Common salt is of mineral origin. Minerals even constitute, in part, the animal frame—there is iron in the blood, and lime, which is an oxyd of a mineral, in the bones. The flesh of animals used for food contains mineral substances ; and, moreover, vegetables furnish the most virulent of poisons, as, for example, prussic acid and nicotine. But the doctrines and pretensions of the steamers (or Thompsonians, as they are sometimes called after their founder) need not detain us. Their remedies are good enough when properly used, but the steamer has not the knowledge which should direct them. The steamer is always an ignorant man, and is generally found in the backwoods, though he occasionally rises to the dignity of “shabby genteel,” and ventures into the suburbs of the city. The steamer might cure a strong man whom his remedies happened to suit, but a weakly one might not get over the “alarming symptoms.”

Similar remarks might be made regarding the hydropaths. Cold water and warm water may be and are causes of disease, or cures thereof, according as they are applied ; but when we take into consideration that all the agencies of nature, moral as well as physical, are capable of being used as remedies, we must see how poor indeed are the resources of the hydropath, who confines himself to water. Common sense demands a

wider field and an ampler magazine. Moreover, along with this restriction to our remedy, we have an equally narrow degree of qualification on the part of its administrator. Some one may ask, why might not the hydropath acquire the knowledge to which the regular faculty lays claim? He might, but then he would be a hydropath no longer. It is not often that the regular physician stoops to quackery.

Another one-ideaed system is that of the electropath. With him disease is a deficiency of electricity, and the remedy is the shocking machine. It can hardly be necessary to criticise the electropath. He and his brother quacks have paled their ineffectual fires beneath the rising star of their more fashionable rival, the homœopath; and because homœopathy is the dominant medical delusion of the day, I notice it on the present occasion—not on account of its merits. It is a tissue of absurdity and contradiction from beginning to end. I wish to add also, that, in reviewing it, I comply with a duty imposed on me by the St. Louis Medical Society, which appointed me chairman of a committee to report on the merits of homœopathy. What I here say will constitute that report.

I beg the attention of my audience whilst I pass in review some of the so-called axioms and principles of this new system; and, first, of the law that like cures like, or, as it is learnedly expressed, “*similia similibus curantur.*”

The idea is, that what will produce a disease will cure it. Thus, quinine, says Hahnemann, causes intermittent fever when given to a healthy person, and this is the reason why it cures the same disease. He lays it down as a principle, that we must administer in disease a drug which is known to produce symptoms like those of the disease itself. The regular physician, following the dictates of *common sense*, acts on the contrary maxim, namely, that the remedy should be opposed to the disease; thus, if a part be inflamed and irritated, the regular physician endeavors to soothe it, not to add to the irritation. If an organ, as the brain, be engorged with blood, he applies cold water to the head and cupping-glasses to the temples to drive and draw away the congestion from that organ. If the patient be exhausted by long disease, or a sudden hemorrhage, he gives food and tonics

destined to produce an opposite state. If a limb be dislocated, he brings it back to its joint; he does not push it further out. If a bone be broken, he adjusts it; he never thinks of pitching the patient from the top of a house so as to cure it by breaking it worse. If a patient be parched with thirst, he gives him cold water to quench, not salt to increase, it. Opposed to the regular practice and to common sense and nature stands homœopathy.

According to the Hahnemannian maxim, the true homœopath must ascertain the symptoms of his patient, and then give a medicine or employ an agency that will produce similar symptoms. Very well. Let us look at this procedure. A patient is diseased from deficiency of food; he is weak, hardly able to walk: what will cause similar symptoms? Evidently, a little further starvation or a bleeding. The patient has swelling about the throat that renders breathing very difficult; he gasps for breath, his lips are blue. Just tighten his collar or tie a cord around his neck, and you will cure him if homœopathy be true. The patient has inflammation of the eyes—they are red and irritated; apply something that will cause sore eyes—say cayenne pepper, and a cure will be effected if homœopathy be not a humbug! The patient is deaf; stuff his ears with wax—an accumulation of ear-wax will cause deafness: common sense and the regular physician take it out—the homœopath, to be consistent, puts more in. The patient has his head broken by a stone—“hit him again” with a brickbat, “*similia similibus.*”

It is clear that this cardinal principle of the homœopath is false, not only in part but *in toto*. It is never to be followed in the cure of disease. It is true that the patient may recover after its adoption. That is, he may recover in spite of the fact that his disease has been aggravated by the ignorant administration of remedies. Evidently, the object of the physician is to induce a state of the system not similar to, but opposed to the disease.

As an example of homœopathic cure, we are told that snow is used as an application to a frozen limb. But keep the snow to a frozen limb and it will remain frozen for-

ever. It is the rubbing with snow, which gradually re-introduces the heat, that cures—the limb must not be too *suddenly* heated. Hence it is best to commence the cure with but a slight degree of heat.

Another example, insisted on, is the cure of delirium tremens by the use of alcohol; but the explanation is the same as that of the cure of the frozen limb. The system has become accustomed to the stimulus—the sudden cessation of its use causes the disease—and it is given in gradually diminished quantities to cure it.

It is also said that the vaccine virus produces in the system a disease similar to small-pox, and thus homœopathically prevents small-pox. But this is preventing, not curing, disease. Take a patient with small-pox and vaccinate him. It will do no good. It would cure if homœopathy were not utterly false. If a person can have a disease but once, then of course one attack will prevent another attack. You might as well call death homœopathic, because a man can not die a second time. In the annals of human delusion there is nothing that surpasses in absurdity the idea that the cure of disease is to be effected by causing a similar disease; and if I did not suppose that I have said enough to demonstrate its absurdity to every reflecting mind, I might go on for an hour with the mere mention of its follies. The idea of curing disease by giving medicines to aggravate it, as Hahnemann says his remedies do, is equalled only by that of the quack, who always endeavored to throw his patient into fits, for the reason that he was—skillful in the treatment of fits.

Another maxim of the sect is, that but one medicine is to be given at a time—that combinations of medicines are not to be used. Now what reason is there for this? The human system is used, in health and disease, to being operated on by many agencies simultaneously, and but for these combinations it could not be sustained. The air we breathe is a compound—so of water; our food is obliged to be a compound to support life. Moreover, what is meant by *one* medicine? Most medicines are compounds in the state of nature. The precept to give but one medicine is vague, valueless, and unreasonable.

Besides, Hahnemann violates his own precept by advising that medicines be used with alcohol. Alcohol itself is a compound.

Hahnemann's attempt at defining disease shows at once his want of medical knowledge and philosophical acumen. He defines it as a change in the vital principle. Then, as if not satisfied with this definition, he says that it is a change in the state of the organs. In this definition he stumbled on the truth. But, again, he says that the disease consists of the totality of the symptoms, and then again he defines *sensations* to be *states* of the system.

It is clear, at least to the medical portion of my audience, that these definitions apply to very different things; they confound the categories, as logicians would say. The symptoms of disease and disease itself are as different as an entity and an action.

The definition, however, to which Hahnemann attaches the most importance, and on which he builds his system, is that which regards disease as a change in the vital principle. With him disease is a change in the immaterial, not the material—a change rather in the spirit than in the flesh; and hence he contends that only immaterial or spiritual agencies can produce it, and only immaterial agencies can correct it; and, hence, again he endeavors to reduce the dose of medicine so low—so to attenuate it—so to manipulate it, that it shall be as near nothing as possible, hoping thereby to make it spiritual, and thus adapt it to the cure of his spiritual diseases. With him the disease is nothing material—and he wishes to render the medicine a nonentity so as to cure it on the principle, *similia similibus*. He could not avoid seeing that material substances cause disease. He saw that over-eating and drinking, and the ingestion of poisons, and chemical and mechanical injuries, caused disease; but to make these facts harmonize with his favorite theory, he said that these things caused disease by their spiritual influences or properties!!

According to this view, it is the spiritual influence of the sabre that pierces the body, not its material form. It is the spiritual influence of the club that breaks the skull. It is the

spiritual influence of fried onions that causes an attack of cholera morbus. Now is it asserting too much to say that this is *nonsense*?

Physicians and everybody else recognize material and immaterial agencies in the cause and the cure of disease. The material are our food, the air we breathe, various poisonous substances, &c. The immaterial are the passions—as fear, hope, love, despair, disappointment, and the like. The distinction is clear to every one; but Hahnemann confounds these things. He confounds the moral with the physical—the material with the immaterial. With him, food is as immaterial as fear; hot air is as immaterial as hope; gunpowder as immaterial as good news; cabbage and care act in the same way. Need I say that *common sense* repudiates all such stuff as this?

Herring, the commentator of Hahnemann, says that material substances can not cause disease, because they create such a terrible disturbance in the system. He also says that this terrible agitation of the system casts off the offending matter. Then, again, he says that these material agents kill the patient; therefore they can not cause disease. Oh, no! They occasion only derangement and death, but never cause disease. This is more than contradictory—it is absurd—it is an outrage on the common usage of language. Hering is a worthy disciple of Hahnemann, whose “Organon” of Medicine, as he presumptuously calls it, is a tissue of unfounded assertions, contradictions and absurdities, from the first to the last page. According to this “Organon,” nature can not cure disease except by inducing another disease, *similia similibus*—which is exactly equivalent to saying that no one ever gets well without medicine; and as, according to the same “organon,” the regular faculty never cures a disease except by accidentally inducing a similar disease, there are no cures except those of the homœopath. Now everybody knows this to be false. Every body knows that diseases get well without medicine; every body knows that they get well under the treatment of the regular faculty. It would not be a more reckless assertion to say that no one dies without medicine, than to say that no one gets well without it.

But Hahnemann professes to cure disease by inducing a similar disease. How does the disease which he induces get well? Here is a gordian knot; but he cuts it, by saying that nature can cure the medicinal disease without inducing a similar disease. This is the idea—nature can not cure any disease except those which the homœopath induces. So he substitutes his medicinal disease for the natural one. Nature will cure his disease but not her own. Now we know that diseases induced by medicines are as difficult to cure as any others—as the palsy, induced by lead; the mercurial cachexia, &c. Medicine may kill as well as cure.

Let us vary our review with a few of Hahnemann's flat contradictions. He says that all chronic diseases are caused by three miasms, as he calls them; and contradicts the assertion by saying that the worst of chronic diseases are caused by the allopaths. He asserts that a disease is the totality of its symptoms; and then contradicts the assertion by saying, that disease is a state of the system; and then contradicts it again by saying, that it is nothing material but only a change in the vital principle. He asserts, that to extinguish the symptoms is to cure the disease; and then contradicts the assertion by saying, that allopaths, and even nature, extinguish the symptoms without curing the disease. He asserts, that homœopaths cure disease by inducing a stronger and more powerful disease; and then contradicts the assertion by saying, that the remedies employed are so weak, and the impressions they make so slight, that nature cures them directly and without any trouble.

We see that nature cures disease, allopathically, even according to the testimony of homœopaths. It is well it is so, otherwise there would be no cures; for nature can not cure a natural disease except by inducing another disease, but she can cure the medical disease *directly*; so says Hahnemann. This is a happy circumstance, otherwise no disease could ever be gotten rid of.

Here is the whole secret in a nut-shell. Neither art nor nature can cure one single disease except by inducing another; but when art has cured one by inducing another, then nature can cure the disease induced by art without inducing another.

So two curative agencies are necessary in every case—that of the homœopath, to obliterate the natural disease by substituting one of his own make; and that of nature, that plays allopath, and cures the medicinal disease *directly*.

To hide the palpable error of his system Hahnemann drew a broad distinction between medical and surgical diseases. His theory applied only to medical diseases. He did not pretend to cure any other. It is a remarkable fact that quacks rarely meddle with surgery. The results of bad practice are too plainly seen in surgery. They prefer the dark corners of medicine, where what they do is hidden from the view of the public; and where they can claim, as the effects of their nostrums, the healing operations of nature. Oh, no! Homœopathy applies not to surgical diseases. So says its author. Very well. If this be true, then it can not apply to medicine; for, in a vast number of instances, medical and surgical cases differ not in kind but only in degree. Thus, an inflammation or a congestion, which is a medical disease, gives rise to a tumor or an ulceration, which is a surgical disease. The medical disease of to-day is the surgical disease of to-morrow; and the surgeon uses in the treatment of surgical diseases the same remedies employed by the physician, and for the same reasons and on the same principles. Indeed, that which is a medical disease in the interior is a surgical disease on the surface. Inflammation of the knee-joint is a surgical disease—an inflammation of the lungs is a medical disease. But homœopathy does not cure an outside inflammation. It cures only an inside one. The reason why homœopaths do not pretend to cure surgical disease is, that these diseases will not, as a general rule, get well of themselves. They can do better with those which nature can cure.

Most writers who have turned their attention to this medical delusion have dwelt at length on the absurdity of its small doses. I shall be brief with them. How much water do you suppose would be required to make a grain of medicine, mixed directly with it, as weak as it is in the 30th dilution? Do you suppose that a hogshead would dilute it sufficiently? Not at all. All the water in the new reservoir? that would not be a

beginning. All that is in the Mississippi? the northern lakes? the Atlantic ocean? the Pacific? All the water in the world? Why all this would be but a beginning. An eminent mathematician has calculated the amount for me. Here is what he says:—A grain of opium, or any thing else, dissolved in a body of water eleven trillions and five hundred and seventy billions of miles cube, would just be in the thirtieth dilution. At this rate, one grain of medicine would supply all men for all time. A body of water a million of miles deep and wide ought to make one grain weak enough. But it takes a thousand of millions to make a billion, and a thousand of billions to make a trillion, and we have seen that over eleven trillions cube are necessary for the thirtieth dilution; and this is not the highest dilution. What has common sense to say to this? What a mountain labor for this ridiculous mouse! How it outheroes and surpasses every other “much ado about nothing,” and casts into the shade even old ocean

“ ————— into tempest toss'd,
To waft a feather or to drown a fly.”

A body of water eleven trillions of miles cube to a grain of medicine! Here is an ocean across which no electric cable could ever be stretched. A hundred generations of ships, each generation lasting a hundred years and sailing five hundred miles a day, would all decay and rot and go down before they reached the middle of this ocean. The rapid comet itself, flying 150,000 miles an hour and doubling heaven's mighty cape in its wide sweep, would require more than 40,000 years to circumnavigate such a gulf as this! Were the earth itself drawn to wire, it would not reach across this wide, wide sea! Only the wild lightnings of heaven and the swift-winged arrows of light might essay to traverse the mighty cube!

A homœopath will pretend to contradict this by asserting that the thirtieth dilution can be made with a pint of alcohol or water. But this is not the question. The question is, how much water would be required to weaken a medicine at *one* dilution as much as the homœopath weakens it by thirty dilutions? Of course, by throwing nearly all the medicine away,

the thirtieth dilution can be reached with a pint of water. Thus, the grain of medicine is first dissolved in a hundred drops of water; only one drop of the solution is then added to another hundred drops, and so on—the ninety-nine drops, in every case, being thrown aside.

Perhaps a better idea of the weakness of the thirtieth dilution may be afforded by the following statement:—Put a grain of medicine into a hogshead of water; of this, take one drop only—throw the rest away—and mix it with the waters of Lake George; then take one drop of the lake and mix it with Lake Erie; then take one drop of Lake Erie and mix it with the waters of Lake Superior—mix well—then take one drop of the lake and put it into a hogshead of water. I do not know that this would come up to the thirtieth dilution; but it would be weak enough for all practical purposes. One would suppose that the patient would be required to drink pretty largely of this attenuated dilution. Not at all. He is not allowed a glassful—no, not even a teaspoonful. What! is it to be taken in drops? No, not even a drop is allowed. One drop moistens three hundred globules, and one of these is the dose. Are they not taken very often? No! one in from ten to fifty days—though Hahnemann thinks it is often best not to swallow it at all—but only smell it—not with both nostrils but only with one, and then only for an instant, and repeat in about nine days.

But leaving the absurdity of the higher dilutions, let us come to the stronger doses—such as a grain of chalk, dissolved in the Atlantic ocean; or a grain of aconite, dissolved in the Mediterranean sea; or even a still stronger dose, such as a grain of sulphur, dissolved in Lake Michigan; and this would be strong enough to startle a true son of Hahnemann. But we will make it even stronger yet: say, a grain of iron, dissolved in the Reservoir here. Here is the strongest kind of a homœopathic dose. But I venture to say that even this could have no effect at all on the human system—it would amount to nothing in the treatment of disease; *and this* I can prove to the satisfaction of everybody. It is well known, that a glass of water moderately impregnated with lime contains more lime

than all the homœopaths in the world would give in a lifetime, even at the tenth dilution. What! do you pretend to believe that you are being cured by lime, administered homœopathically, when you are swallowing a thousand times as much of the same article in every drink of water you take? You may try to believe this, but you will not succeed—common sense will prevent you.

Every egg you eat has a thousand times as much sulphur in it as the homœopathist would give; and can you believe that his dose of sulphur is curing you, when you take a thousand times as much every morning, and when you have a million times as much in your system? Every morsel of meat you take contains more iron than the homœopathic dose: is it his iron alone that produces any effect? Suppose that some one were to propose to quench your thirst with a drop of cold water, but took care to give it to you mixed with a pint of the same fluid: would you attribute the effect to the one drop, or to the pint taken along with it? Very evidently the system is not affected in any way by the homœopathic dose, and the man who can believe otherwise, after the facts I have stated, would be capable of believing that he was nourished by the incantations of a conjurer, instead of the food which he swallowed with the sorcery.

The fact is, that matters and things in general are mixed up with each other in this world in stronger than homœopathic doses. When you step into an apothecary's shop, you inhale more ipecac than a homœopath would administer. You breathe more lime from the dust of the streets than all the homœopaths would give in a thousand years. The odor from a drop of laudanum is more than a Hahnemannian dose, and were you so sensitive as to

“Die of a rose, in aromatic pain,”

you would still be too obtuse to be affected by even the stronger dilutions. But Hahnemann attempts to explain the efficacy of these small doses, by saying that their power is increased by shaking them; and Hahnemann guards his disciples against the danger of rendering the doses too strong by shaking the

phial too often. He thinks that if the doctor were to jump out of his buggy with unbecoming agility, the shake given to the medicine in his pocket might endanger the welfare of his patient. If it be true that medicinal substances, and all substances are medicinal, can be thus potentialized by shaking, it is the greatest discovery ever made. The mariners' compass, the art of printing, the power of steam, the electric telegraph, are nothing to it. If this be true, cargoes of medicines need not be imported; one grain of each kind will do for a nation during its whole history, be that history ever so long, just shake it enough. Brandy and wine are medicines—let the grape fail—just shake what is on hand and increase its potency ten thousand fold. Broth is medicinal—shake a thimbleful, and it would nourish an army during a long march, if Hahnemann be not a humbug! Cease, restless mortal, your efforts to accumulate the goods of this world; set down and shake what you already have; perhaps your dimes may become dollars or even doubloons. If the alchymist could have succeeded in transmuting the baser metals into gold, the discovery of Hahnemann would still stand unrivalled.

It happens, however, that this assertion of the homœopaths is capable of a direct and overwhelming refutation. Were it asserted that the moon was made of green cheese, we could not refute the assertion. Of course no one would feel particularly bound to believe it, but he could not get at the moon, and thus prove a negative. But we can prove the negative of this monstrous proposition about shaking; every man, woman and child can test it for him, her and itself. Take a drop of alcohol and see if by shaking it all day it can be made to intoxicate. It will do so if there be truth and virtue in homœopathic medication. Take a drop of paregoric and see if by shaking and diluting and shaking again you can put a patient to sleep with it. Potentialize the tenth of a grain of arsenic and poison a dog if you can. Every body can satisfy himself of the utter falsity of this cardinal principle of homœopathy, by direct experiment.

Independently, however, of this direct test, I should not be disposed to have much faith in shaking. I have known some persons to shake their heads very gravely, but I never thought

they were the wiser for it. The shaking of an ague evidently weakens the patient. When houses are shaken by earthquakes they sometimes fall down. A reed, shaken by the wind, is an emblem of frailty. The shaking quakers are not a very strong sect. When one's faith is shaken it is certainly not strengthened, but rather weakened. But if any one is disposed to believe in shaking, let him shake for himself; and if he will not *shake*, why, let him *slide*.

Time will not permit me, on this occasion, to notice in detail all the unfounded assertions, absurdities and contradictions of Hahnemann. His "organon," which is the bible of homœopathy, is a mass of transcendental balderdash, at war with common sense. That common sense will be the victor there can be little doubt. No science, no philosophy, no religious creed, can stand which is opposed to the common sense of mankind.

I know that it will be still argued that, at any rate, contradictory and opposed to common sense as homœopathy may be, it still cures. This is the argument of its advocates, and they say, moreover, that the children take the medicine without wry faces. But it must be remembered that a vast majority of diseases get well of themselves. What are called homœopathic cures, are evidently cures of nature; for we *know* that nature cures, and that homœopathic remedies are null and void.

Some years ago I tested the skill of a somewhat distinguished homœopath. I told him that his remedies would effect nothing in cases that would not terminate favorably without medicine. I assigned him, at his request, several cases in the hospital, which I knew would not terminate of themselves in health. His remedies had not the slightest effect. Andral had tested the system on a larger scale, with the same effects, long before. I have also tested these medicines on myself. I am almost ashamed to acknowledge it, but I did, some years ago, when I had time for trifles, try these medicines on myself. The doctrine is that they will produce the diseases which they cure. I never could get sick with the little things. Perhaps I took too many of them!

Homœopathy will necessarily be a short-lived delusion, its pretensions being capable of invalidation by direct experiment. People will ask the question—Is it true that medicines produce

in the healthy state of the system the diseases which they cure? They will, as I have done, test the matter by direct experiment, and thus arrive at a demonstration of the utter falsity of the assertion. They will also test the influence of *shaking* and *trituration* in increasing the strength of medicines, and find that it is as "baseless" as the "fabric of a vision;" that the drop of laudanum is no stronger after than before shaking; that the grain of salt is no stronger after than before trituration. It is unfortunate for homœopathy that its pretensions are so susceptible of annihilation by direct experiment, and that anybody and everybody is qualified to apply the test. Really, they who have been gulled by so transparent an error—so stupid a falsehood—so refutable a system as homœopathy, ought to be ashamed of themselves. Where is their common sense? Were they so unreasonable in regard to other things, they would have to be sent to the lunatic asylum, or, at any rate, carry with them evidences that their "mothers knew they were out."

Man is a rather gullible animal, I admit; but homœopathy is a little too bungling a humbug to gull him long. Even during its ephemeral and transient existence, this ridiculous system can never prevail to any great extent. It is a city pest—the country air is fatal to it. Who ever heard of a country homœopathic practitioner? There are not enough crotchety people in ten miles square in the country to support a homœopath? He can no more live in the country than a conjuror, a spiritual medium, or a fortune teller. Only one or two in a hundred can be found "green" enough to patronize such adventurers, and, of course, large cities alone will be infested by them.

It is really amusing to hear homœopaths and their dupes talk about their system and its founder. They compare Hahnemann with Jenner and Harvey; so the Mormons compare Jo Smith with the Saviour of mankind! It is easy to do this; it only violates truth and decency! They talk of the stationary character of the old school, and of their own advancement! The ignorant steam doctor does the same; with him old Sam Thomson is the beau ideal of a gentleman and a scholar; he, too, is rather ahead of Jenner and Harvey.

Homœopathy in advance of the regular faculty! Why, a regular physician of moderate attainments can be a first-rate

homœopath any day that he may choose to sacrifice common sense or conscience. Most of the text books of homœopathy have been written by apostate regular physicians. Any itinerant Macawber, looking out for "something to turn up," can become a homœopath on the shortest notice, so soon as he is convinced that it will pay. Homœopathy the vanguard of science!—a tissue of absurdities, capable of being refuted by the first chucklehead you meet.

Some persons seem to think that homœopathy is true because the world in general laughs at it, and because the regular profession holds it in contempt; for, say they, was not Galileo persecuted? was not Socrates persecuted? True; but error has been combatted more than truth; the wicked have been more persecuted than the righteous; the penitentiary is full of persecuted persons. Alas for the world were it doomed to be on the side of error and crime instead of truth and justice! I believe better things of it. But, to return—

It may be argued that if nature cures so vast a majority of diseases, why have any physician? I answer that it is not necessary in all, nor even in a majority of cases; but as the patient may not be a judge of what case needs a physician, nor the contrary, he very rationally and properly calls on a man of science, in whom he has confidence, to decide the question for him. Moreover, in many cases in which the patient would get well without medicine, the physician can hasten the cure, and in some cases but for his aid the patient would die. This is more clearly seen in surgery than in medicine. No one will deny that in many cases the surgeon saves life; as in hernias, severed arteries, and the like.

But do homœopaths really stick to their own system? Not one of them, I suppose. I have known them to employ remedial agents just as the regular practitioner; applying powerful revulsions to the head in inflammation of the brain, giving large doses of quinine in intermittents, and, in short, using medicines as well as *they* knew how to use them. Those who doubt this can refer to the St. Louis apothecaries. Some of them even profess to give medicine in allopathic doses. An idea seems prevalent that this new system is favored by the governments of Europe; that in Germany especially it is very popu-

lar. It would be very strange indeed, if Europe, with its advanced civilization, endorsed such a system. It would weaken one's faith in the common sense of mankind. But the fact is otherwise. Dr. Ellsworth Smith, of this city, has taken the pains to correspond with European authorities on this subject. Through our ambassadors at the courts of France, Austria and Prussia, he has learned that homœopathy is merely tolerated in those countries. All the public hospitals are committed to the regular faculty; none of course are left for homœopaths. I may mention here, as well as anywhere else, that Hahnemann was engaged, in early life, in compounding and vending NOSTRUMS. One of his infallible powders was found on examination to be nothing but simple borax. I mention this fact to show that he was not a mere crazy philosopher—he was a true quack.

Reasonable men ought to be satisfied, even without investigation, that all new-fangled systems must be wrong. Would the great body of the profession be apt to ignore any truth which might be discovered by anybody? The motto of the profession is to seize the truth wherever found, and this it would do without caring whether the discovery were made by Samuel Hahnemann, Samuel Thompson, or Sambo the African. The regular profession is the depository of the learning and investigations of all time. It has ransacked all the kingdoms of nature for remedies. It extends all over the globe. It comes down to us in regular succession from the earliest ages. Its philosophers have adorned every century since the dawn of science; it has given to the world some of its most venerable names; its calender of worthies is an honor to our race; its followers command the colleges and hospitals of the world; its history is the history of civilization and humanity; its stars of science decked the midnight skies that shrouded the empires of the past. And who are they who set themselves up as the rivals of this profession? A few insignificant sects of yesterday, contradicting each other, and agreeing only in their opposition to the great universal body of the regular profession: the hydropathist with his wet sheets and water tubs, looking like the superintendent of a washing establishment; the steam doctor with his cayenne pepper, and lobelia, and witch hazel,

reminding one of a retail vender of spices; the electropath with his shocking machine, hardly distinguishable from the organ grinder; and the homœopath with his cases of globules, suggesting the idea of a new Yankee invention in the way of food for Canary birds. Common sense can not be long gulled by such things. I repeat that nothing can permanently command the faith of mankind that is not in accordance with *common sense*.

Common sense is man's rule of faith; and in virtue of his very constitution he is obliged to reject whatever is opposed to it, or which can not stand its searching test. Men believe falsehoods only because they have not taken the pains to investigate the grounds of their belief. Error can not steadily look common sense in the face. It cowers, it apologizes, it retires; only truth can meet its gaze without blenching—only truth can stand and withstand, and still forever stand, amid the strifes and parties and the wreck of systems.

Let no one suppose that, in eulogizing common sense, I am sapping the foundations of religion, for religious truth as well as medicine and every other branch of human investigation must harmonize with common sense. Religion may be above the grasp, but it can not be opposed to the instincts, of common sense.

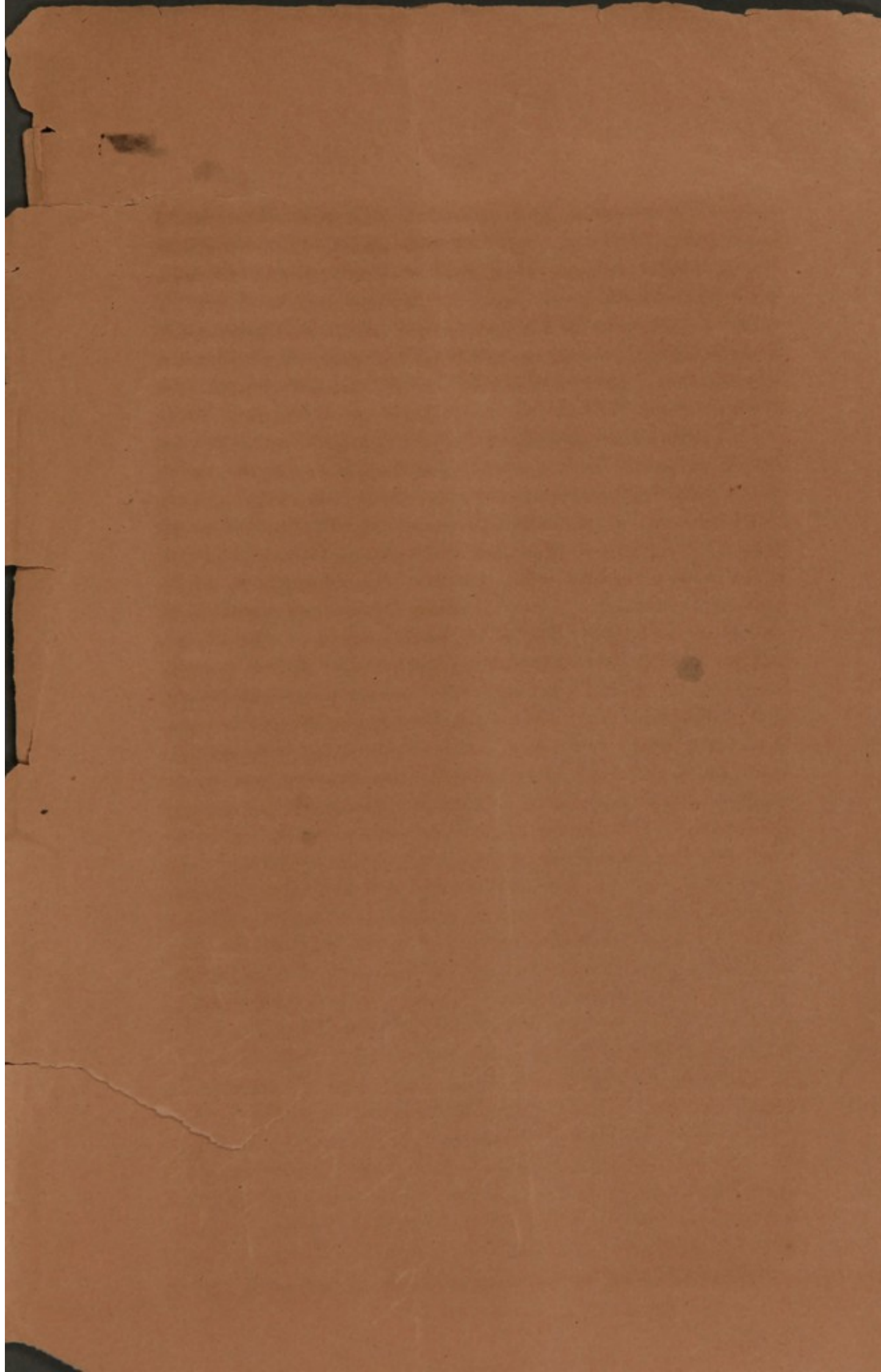
Common sense recognizes its own limits. It can not fathom the deep mystery of creation. It is aware that man did not create himself, and that the objects by which he is surrounded must have had an adequate cause. It sees, at any rate, that it is as reasonable to admit a Creator as to believe in the eternity of matter and its laws; and, consequently, it is prepared to listen to a Supernatural voice. If these words, "*There is a God,*" were written on the sky, common sense would recognize the reasonableness of the proposition. It is ready to listen to a Deity, or to the prophet of the Highest; and if, in confirmation of the revealed truth, the graves open, the dead arise, the rocks are rent, and the black veil of night is cast on the face of the sun, common sense bows its head in humble faith and acquiescence. It only inquires—is the *evidence* of these things sufficient? and it recognizes the testimony of the senses,

which is the same thing as recognizing the testimony of mankind. The common sense of mankind recognizes also the doctrine that every thing was made for a purpose ; for example, that the heart was made to circulate the blood—the lungs to bring the air in contact with it—the nerves to move the muscles—the muscles to move the bones ; that the waters which gush from a thousand springs, and the air which envelops the globe, were made for vegetable and animal life ; that the plants were created for the animals, and the inferior animals were created for man ; that all things were ordered for the being and well-being of this lord of the world. But man's physical frame was also created for a purpose ;—it was created for his higher and nobler powers, his intellectual and moral nature. The object of creation, then, seems to have been the attainment of intellectual and moral worth. Virtue seems to have been “the bright consummate flower” for which creative power has labored through all the grades and ranks of existence, from crude matter up to man. The final cause of creation is this being of intelligence and virtue. But for what was this glorious being brought into existence ? To exist a few years, and then be no more—to die, to be annihilated ? This is not reasonable. Common sense as well as hope points to immortality. *Science indicates a retribution day.* The doctrine that reduces man to nothing beyond the grave, is the *reductio ad absurdum* of common sense and science. Was this all for which earth rose from chaos, and man from earth ; for which such vast preparations have been made ; for which the human system was so exquisitely organized, to minister and subserve the god-like attributes of reason and goodness ? Was annihilation the final cause and purpose of creation ? Such is not the faith of *common sense*. At any rate, truth has nothing to fear at the bar of common sense ; and error can not escape exposure at its tribunal. Common sense will take its time, I suppose ; but in the end it will vanquish all false systems of whatever kind. It is the *vis medicatrix* of the intellectual world—a boon left to man amid the ruins of his fall—a heritage for his sons which Adam brought with him out of Paradise. Woe to the thousand contradictory isms of the day when common sense arraigns them ! Alas for the sandy foundations of error when its re-

sistless tide sweeps in their direction ! The vials of the Apocalypse created not more consternation on earth, in ocean, and in air, than will its corroding tests poured out upon the delusions of the world.

The fact is that common sense has been until now mainly employed at other work. It has not had time to philosophize and criticise. It has been engaged with the grosser material things. What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? have been the questions that have mainly attracted its attention. Now and then a philosopher, as Socrates or Plato, has braved poverty and set at naught the material goods of the world, to devote himself to intellectual and moral pursuits. Here and there an anchorite has left the green oasis of earthly enjoyment for the desert and heavenly contemplation. But nature confines the mass of mankind to the affairs of earth. The lower wants have first to be attended to. The doom of man is to toil for bread. He can not philosophize to much effect under the pinchings of hunger and cold and want. Before he can rise to higher things, he must conquer a peace with what is beneath him. Hitherto his thoughts have been bent on the material elements ; and his triumphs have been glorious ! Steam and the various mechanical contrivances now do the work of countless hands. Men do not now have to cordwain and drag the heavy barge. Women do not have to spin, and weave, and stitch, the livelong night. A better time has come, and a better time is still coming. The world is getting to be pretty well off ; and the common sense of mankind is beginning to be turned to logic, and to moral and religious science. These vast fields it is destined to explore. It will write "*tekel*" on the brow of Error, and bow in submission only to the majesty of Truth. Recognizing its own finitude, it will not waste its energies in the fruitless attempt to grasp the Infinite. It will not, as the olden giants, by heaping Ossa upon Olympus, and Pelion upon Ossa, strive to climb the dwelling-place of the Thunderer. It will not essay with its bounded powers to fathom the mysteries of the Omniscient and Eternal. Arrived at the goal of its utmost achievements, it will pause awe-struck and humbled in the presence of *Time*, and *Space*, and *GOD* ; and close its survey of created things by a hymn to the Great Creator.





Mr. Hooker
25 March
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