

On the sources and benefits of professional earnestness : being an address delivered before the Illinois Homoeopathic Medical Association.

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Ludlam (R.)

ON THE

SOURCES AND BENEFITS

OF

Professional Earnestness

BEING AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN JACKSONVILLE, NOV. 2D, 1859,

BEFORE THE

Illinois Homeopathic Medical Association,

BY

R. LUDLAM, M. D., OF CHICAGO.

HALSEY & KING:

CHICAGO HOMEOPATHIC PHARMACY.

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ADDRESS.

My Brethren and Friends: Custom has in a manner made it obligatory that the annual address before this Association shall be in some sort a popular review of the principles of Homeopathy. Since our organization, each year has yielded the fruits of worthy effort in this direction, and it is not, perhaps, meet that, in our turn, we should pause to plough the soil in so far prepared towards the harvest.

The child does not wax to maturity in a night; the bud may not blow ere its foliage is developed; and the fragrance of the rose is not discovered in the little sprig that shoots up in the spring-time of its existence. Nor do we need an argument to prove that time and culture will write the marks of manhood on that fair brow; to satisfy us the green leaf is the forerunner of the flower: or to whisper us that little sprig is the bearer of odors the most grateful and delicious. The germ of its future is hidden from view, but in each, time and opportunity will unfold its beauty and its utility.

So is it with Homeopathy. Fresh air and fair play will develop her resources; and it may not be well to spoil the child by too much of adulation just now.

I shall enter on no encomium upon Homeopathy; she does not require it at my hands. Her virtues are being unfolded every hour, her merits discussed and developed in many a household, and we may not fear the result of such silent and unheralded tests. In such a community, and before such an audience, we may declare us ready to appeal from the platform to the patient. There is not an

individual before me but, directly or indirectly, has been benefitted by Homeopathy. Her influences permeate the deposits of ages, and so modify the strata of medical science that her future history will not read as her past. This science is not mathematically *exact*, and never may be, but there is a growing approximation to it which it is beautiful to behold.

Content, therefore, that this substantial sub-soiling has been so thoroughly accomplished, and firmly persuaded that our greatest hope for the future lies in the fidelity with which she is represented in the court of public opinion; with the approval of our worthy President, we have decided to address you upon the subject of PROFESSIONAL EARN-ESTNESS, ITS SOURCES AND ITS BENEFITS.

Of the sources of this virtue we may claim that they originate among the higher and holier incentives and aspirations of the human heart. To go about doing good, in our poor measure; relieving suffering; subtracting from the sorrows which embitter the cup of our fellows; administering the antidote of malaria, of pain, and of pestilence; to keep Death at bay, that we may prolong life to the society of loved ones, and all the delightful perquisites of existence; to fulfil such a mission most successfully and acceptably, are not these incentives to the cultivation of our calling sufficient to stimulate the most apathetic among us to do or dare in its demands all that we may, and of right ought to perform?

Add to this the thought that such silent influences may shed their healing benefits about every hearth-stone; that, in civilized communities, there is not an individual, of high or low estate, but may reap the fruits of our labors; that we are philanthropic to the last degree; spend our days in the earnest investigation of the causes that inflict disease; of the means to off-set their baneful effects; and in pouring the oil of joy and gladness into wounds which tell of sin, and sorrow, and sighing. Well has it been written:

“A wise physician, skill'd our wounds to heal,
Is more than armies to the public weal.”

When Sir Humphrey Davy had constructed the safety-lamp which bears his name, and its use had become general among the miners, it was found to be a remedy against almost constantly occurring calamities, resulting in the loss of human life. *HYGIENE*, the object of which study is the *preservation* of health, is the safe-lamp of medical science. To be skilled in employing the "ounce of prevention," should rank as one of the proudest accomplishments of the humane physician. He may be as earnest as possible in acquiring a knowledge of the laws of Hygiene, but will find there is always something more to be learned. This fact stimulates exertion, keeps him at work, develops hidden resources, and brings the blessing. He is not only to prescribe for lost health, but, in anticipation, to protect from such a resulting calamity. And how noble a function is this; one which calls for the exercise of the holiest and most hearty endeavor. To avert the disaster of a sweeping pestilence; to remove, through study and observation, the thousand contingencies of diseased action everywhere about us; to protect, preserve, and supply, by a species of inferior providence, the blessing of health to one's fellows; what stronger incentive to diligence, what nobler and brighter spring to duty need we demand? My brethren, here is an argument in advocacy of professional earnestness which may not be controverted, and which, of itself, were sufficient theme for the brief hour allotted us.

A great desideratum of medical treatment consists in curing our patients as speedily and safely as possible. The study and application demanded of him who would prosecute his enquiries in this direction far enough to be practically available to the needs of his species, is too unlimited and all-engrossing to allow many moments to other pursuits, or more than the narrowest margin to leisure. The Homeopathist, if he would be successful, must be a student; otherwise it is impossible that he attains the end and design contemplated in his responsible calling. We are all familiar with the maxim, "The Law is a jealous mistress." But how many in our ranks forget that medicine is equally so; that, in-

asmuch as the blunders of the incompetent physician involve the more vital interests of life and its responsibilities ; so, and in even a greater degree, is it requisite that we fill up the measure of our time with this "one science only." Nothing is more certain than that to attempt eminence in a plurality of pursuits, is to attain mediocrity in all. The great object of the physician's reflection and research is, that he may heal the sick at the least cost both to their present and subsequent welfare. We do not mean cheaply to the pocket alone, but to the physical and mental wear-and-tear of the patient. We do not recommend the physician of either sex, or any school, whose habit it is always to promise a speedy cure at a relative cost, for such are generally ignorant, both of the mechanism of the man, and of the true capacity of remedial measures. The more one promises, the less he performs, will apply as well to physicians as to politicians.

Our system is not comprised in the hap-hazard routine of the fathers ; and we may not content us with driving leisurely along in the old wheel-tracks they have worn for us. In striking out new paths, and while engineering a roadway to health across the morass of disease and disorder, we may not be annoyed by the theoretical mists about us ; nor should we pause to speculate upon this or that atmosphere as being freest of cloud, and clearest in the dim light we may borrow. No, no ; there is quite too much of this quarreling about the symbols to be engraven upon the stones we shall set up as marks of our progress. We lose our latitude if we linger too long over such small matters. Doctrine is attractive, and good doctrine, a something we all should cherish ; but doctor-ing is a different thing, and good doctor-ing a something of infinitely greater value. The one may spring of zeal, over-worked and over-tasked, alone ; the other comes of zeal with *knowledge*. The one is the smoke, the other the sun-light of science, with healing in its beams. The smoke may so stain the glass of our observation as to enable us to look more calmly and clearly into the face of the great orb of Truth ; but it may also, if improperly employed, render the media opaque and

worthless. And so is it with doctrines, medical and moral. The most rigid sectarian is he, who, endeavoring to look for the truth and through an *opaque* doctrine, sees only the dogma of some fellow mortal, and mistakes it for the mandate of Superior Wisdom.

Science is a word of one, and yet of many meanings—often taking its color from the reflex of the interests of those who use it. Homeopathy represents that department of medical science, which we believe to be most promising of beneficial results to the sick and the afflicted. If our estimate be a true one,—and he is a hypocrite who practices Homeopathy without indorsing its superior utility, then, in just such measure as its duties are fruitful of good results, and its method more safe and excellent than others, are its demands upon us for the most indefatigable labor and care to develop them to the best of our ability.

It may, in a certain and selfish sense, appear against our interests that we use such exertion,—for the bungler will have enough to do to patch up his broken vases, while by conscientious application and assiduity, employing his means to good and never to unfortunate consequences, the Homeopathist may actually run himself out of business; but the reward will be certain to follow. A professional friend assures us that he has healed the families of his diocese, embracing one of the most flourishing of Western villages, not an hundred miles from Chicago, so effectually as to be obliged to look him another location! And we have sometimes questioned whether, if people should cease journeying, and the “old system” were to suspend operations for a twelve-month, sealing up every avenue to her abominable wares, regular and irregular, a large proportion of her busiest sons, and some of us also, might not be spared to other and very different pursuits?

There is no mistaking the signs of the times. If Homeopathy has no other merit than the simple and single negative one of checking the tide of drugs which men have taken for centuries, to the detriment of their physical and mental selves, and of which they still seem so pertinaciously fond,

she is performing an Herculean task. This virtue alone, negative and unappreciated as it is, were sufficient to immortalize her founder.

It is related of the celebrated Dr. Graves, that, being thoroughly impressed with the importance of supplying the systems of his febrile patients with nourishment, he expressed a desire that the following words in metaphor should be placed as an epitaph on his tomb: "He fed fevers!" If Homeopathy were dead, and past the power of a resurrection to her more positive labors, it were neither an inappropriate nor an inglorious epitaph for her which should read—"She proscribed drugs!"

But, my friends, the science we advocate, the art we practice, yields not only the negative results of which we have spoken, but likewise those which are more positive and clearly demonstrable. As the effect must follow its cause, so certain is it that our remedies, if properly employed, will not prove themselves inert and worthless. They may work silently, but it is surely; may seem to be slow, but are more direct than any others; may appear childish, but are nevertheless curative; impart no taste to the tongue, but will tell on the tissues; may be pronounced imponderable, but will prove themselves remedial; may not kill,—for their mission is to cure.

It is given to us, my brethren, to develop these resources. Homeopathy and Nature may work together in the most perfect harmony. Neither will blindly venture the responsibility which *others* assume with the organism invaded by disease, to persecute its more vital interests, pervert its functions, and still further to derange, if not absolutely to destroy, its beautiful mechanism. Both stand opposed to doing evil that good may come; for both prefer to work by silent and unseen influences, catalytic or Providential—no matter what men style them—to the production of results the most gratifying and absolutely marvelous.

In developing these resources, a very important item will be to dismiss from our minds the idea that, individually or collectively, *we* shall ever attain to all possible knowledge upon the subject before us. Those who desire thus to limit

the value and applicability of Homeopathy to what HAHNE-MANN, or any hundred of his disciples have been able to accomplish thus far, and are ready to content themselves with his or their *ipse dixit* alone; to be bound down to the developments of Pathology and Therapeutics, as these latter were expounded and set forth half a century ago; are not the men for the age. Like Columbus' crew at the Sarghasso Sea—the supposed centre of the whirl, they imagine themselves at the limit of navigable waters, and fancy that beyond them lies only chaos and confusion. And this stereotype opinion suits them exactly;—it is so much easier to tack about and to sail again on the smooth sea toward Spain, than to breast the waves of trial and adventure, *even to the shores of a New World!*

One of the main springs of Professional Earnestness lies within the sphere of individual influence and accountability. Let us illustrate:

A most interesting feature of animal physiology, as applied to man, consists in what are styled “the compensating relations of his organism.” This arrangement familiar to the student whose researches lead him more especially to contemplate life, both in its aggregate and individual functions, provides that, when certain organs are overtasked, or when because of disease they are rendered incompetent to acquit them of accustomed and necessary labor, another and a different organ may assume the liability, and take upon itself the double duty of performing its own function, and likewise of aiding its neighbor out of present embarrassment.

Thus, it is remarked by physicians that between the skin and the kidneys there exists a most intimate relation. If the function of the former be impaired to any considerable degree, the latter will have a double duty to perform, and *vice versa*. The same may be said of the liver and the lungs, and also of other organs whose aggregate presence and capacity make up the machinery of life within us.

Again, we shall find that nature, ever wise and beneficent in her operations, has so provided against the contingency

of a diseased member losing its function by being permanently impaired, that, in case of the more delicate of these, she has furnished them in *pairs*, so that one may stand for another, or for both, without the sacrifice of any office whose uninterrupted performance is essentially vital. If one eye be diseased, the other may, while freed from suffering, prove itself competent to that duty which hitherto, has given employment to both. And so on, through the whole economy of the man physical, a prominent feature of which is its dualistic arrangement of organs for the performance of functions the most delicate and susceptible.

Now, if we apply this principle of "compensating relations" in a wider sense; if we classify man as a single organ, endowed with capacities to act and to operate, and bearing the responsibility of an individual function which he must perform to the best of his ability; if we deem the most perfect acquittal of duties imposed upon him, without neglect, delay or disorder, to signify health; if the opposite be disease, and if because of it he cannot labor; if, per consequence, the "compensating relations" of society are taxed to carry on what himself should accomplish; the plainest reason would argue that the disorder should be removed or remedied as speedily as possible, that he may maintain his own individual integrity, and that his delinquencies may not cripple the usefulness of some brother who has been kind enough to shoulder his short-comings.

Perhaps there is no one thing pertaining to the profession, of which we so frequently lose sight as of the fact that every one of us, like the different members of the bodily organism, is put in trust of some important function, whose proper play and performance must tell upon the order which reigns in the body we aggregate.

It is the forgetfulness of this which occasions so much of indifference concerning the performance of individual labor by the individual himself created to effect it; it is this neglect which overloads the backs of those most willing to bear their own burthens; it is this childish disregard of consequences which clogs the "compensating relations"

of our medical republic to the detriment of its whole organism; and it is this listlessness which dozes away the day, while others labor, even beyond their capacity, to hasten the dawn of a more enlightened and cultivated state of our beloved science.

It is astonishing to contemplate how numerous the host, who, with all the assurance of a morbid indifference regarding the consequences, fall back upon these "compensating relations" of society, to perform such duties by proxy as are essentially individual, both in application and accountability.

And, as in the physical man, so in the professional organism; if too onerous a duty be imposed upon one member, in order to make up for the deficiencies of another, there is a very considerable hazard that both may suffer the consequences, and diseased action result as the secondary effect of what may have been a very trivial cause at the first. So that, by one's neglect of duty, we shall find the burthen of another augmented; and also, that in addition to the accountability of the former, will be that of jeopardizing a brother's usefulness with his own. Thus are our relations mutual, and, to a certain extent, our responsibilities also.

To shirk them is to stamp the impress of disorder upon what was designed to be harmonious and complete in every function, as in every organ.

If one lung be incapacitated because of disease, and unable, therefore, to labor for the general health, in carrying on the respiration in a normal, physiological manner, its partner and co-worker, the other lung, must see to it that this labor is performed; that the system does not suffer from defective aeration of the blood; must take its place for the time being, or until health be restored again, and these twin-workers shall be ready each to acquit itself of duties too vital to be adjourned, and too delicate to be entrusted more than temporarily to a delegated member, though it be of the same order of organs.

Exactly so is it here. The "compensating relations" of society are of great benefit to us all, if we may properly

appreciate and adjust them; but, if disorder insinuate itself as the fruit of too great a reliance upon them, as a means of good in themselves considered, we need not marvel at the result if they shall prove an injury rather than a blessing to us.

The ways and means to direct one's thoughts into the proper channels of effort are not wanting. To add to the renown of the noblest of arts, the first, and last, and only object of which is the alleviation of human suffering, we may embrace any or all the numerous facilities afforded. Through the Medical organization, the Journal, the study of the masters, and the mastery of the study of disease and its treatment, we may acquaint us with our privileges, make available the knowledge already possessed, and, contributing each his own mite, enhance and exhibit the quality of being useful. Each of these means is open to all. The respectable graduate of good standing may connect himself with our Societies, contribute his own, and draw some grains of information from the experience of his brethren. A few moments daily, with habits of close thought and application in the constantly varying lessons of the sick chamber, recording impressions, and sifting the seed of knowledge from the chaff of theory and hypothesis, will enable every physician to contribute at least one good practical paper yearly to some Medical periodical.

The best artists are in the habit of referring to the old masters as types, if not indeed perfect specimens of the excellence to which themselves would attain. And so may we not gainsay the labors of the fathers. Nor should we, on the other hand, be quite content with their conclusions, settling us firmly in the conviction that the soil which they have rejected or overlooked is indeed barren, and will admit of no new productions. Mirabeau has justly remarked "that to suppose everything in any science to be discovered, is like taking the horizon for the limits of our earth."

The sturdy oak is slow in attaining its majority among the trees of the forest or the plain, but its chief prop and support, its reliance and hope for the future, lie in the simple

workings of organic chemistry, the appropriations of which to its coming shadow and strength, like the days of its youth and maturity, are silently given the great work of its growth.

And very much will depend upon the right employment of these means. To be violent in opposition of what we may judge to be wrong in principle or practice, is not always to be victorious over it. The most uproarious are not the most useful men we have. Agitation is no criterion of ability. We are not to agitate merely, but to operate—to demonstrate, in face of the world and of all opposition, that the responsibilities which devolve upon us *will be met*. To succeed, and not to slander and villify; to win, and not to wrangle, should be the end and aim of our exertion. And when our banners betoken success, we shall hear no more of heresy and treason against the best interests of the science, and of society at large. Treason?

“Treason is ne’er successful—what’s the reason?
’Cause when successful, *none dare call it treason.*”

The dead-level of empiricism will permit of easy locomotion; but to aspire, to let one’s superiority be known, an expenditure of effort must be had, or we shall never gain the ascent. Intuition, the boast of the charlatan, develops but ignorance and vanity. Diligence and discipline are the requisites of success; to “drink deep, or taste not,” the motto of the man who is in earnest. A physician of our times writes to his pupils: “I would liefer live after I am dead than die daily all my life long.”

It is not in the “physiology of probabilities” that one shall prosper in securing and retaining an enviable position among his fellows, unless he deserves it. Of what value is success if it betray the small amount of capital in trade possessed by a medical pretender we wot of, and whose title to merit reads as follows: “I have the finest horse in town, and no doctor drives so grand an establishment as I, *ergo, I know more than they all!*” Such an one, in our ranks, will do more harm than ten good and capable men can repair. His only yield is found in a crop of false principles, and

practices, which are as noxious as they are inveterate. These are the ill weeds which grow apace, and one should withhold the seed of which he would not gather the fruit. Only a diamond will cut your autograph upon glass, and great care is requisite to record it well upon such a ground ; but, when engraven there, the least vicissitude of atmosphere or temperature, or the slightest jar, may shiver it to atoms. So is it with one's moral and professional reputation. In these regards we may not stop short of all possible acquirement, for the legitimate growth of such sentiments is the cultivation of a higher type of Professional Earnestness.

There are more than *two hundred* physicians, Homeopaths, resident and practicing in this State of Illinois alone. Let us suppose that each of these were practically and thoroughly to exhibit the virtue of which we have been speaking. Think for a moment, what products of mind and experience, what blessings incalculable, would redound to the race and to the fraternity to which we belong ! Or, if but one-half of this number were to become productive, to become Members of this Organization, and to report yearly to the journal of its Proceedings the amount of but five pages of printed matter each, how would these annual volumes enrich our libraries, and augment our individual acquirements ! Gentlemen, it is for you to say if this result may be realized. It is but for the profession to pronounce it possible, and practically to adopt the opinion, and henceforth each yearly cycle shall afford us a volume replete with the gleanings of an hundred harvests.

The public are interested in the blessing of a well-qualified ministry of medical men. Witness their presence in these halls to-night. They will second your endeavors ; will learn to admire the zeal you shall display, and the efforts you may put forth to elevate, to dignify, and to ennoble our beneficent art. They will joy to share the fruits of your labors ; and they will sustain you in every good word and work.

Let this, therefore, with the considerations already presented, be sufficiently stimulus to cheer us on ! Let us

labor to perpetuate to our successors and survivors the blessings and benefits which grow to the hand of the diligent. Let us see to it that both they who live among us, and they who come after us, may attain the greater proficiency through our having well-done whatever we may have been able to accomplish.

