

Medical and surgical science in the United States, specialties, empiricism, &C; : enlarged from an article published in the New Orleans Picayune of Feb. 14, 1860 / by F.A. von Moschzisker.

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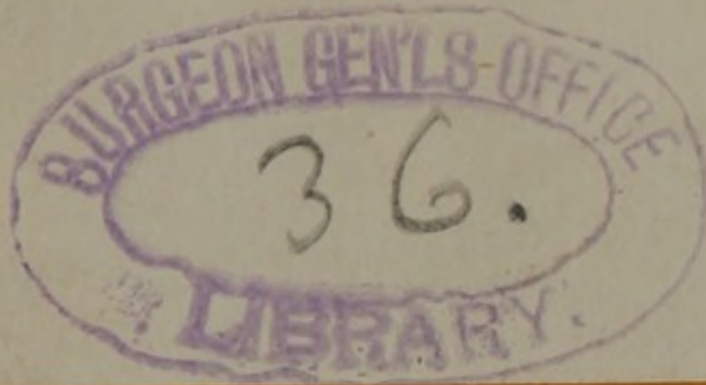
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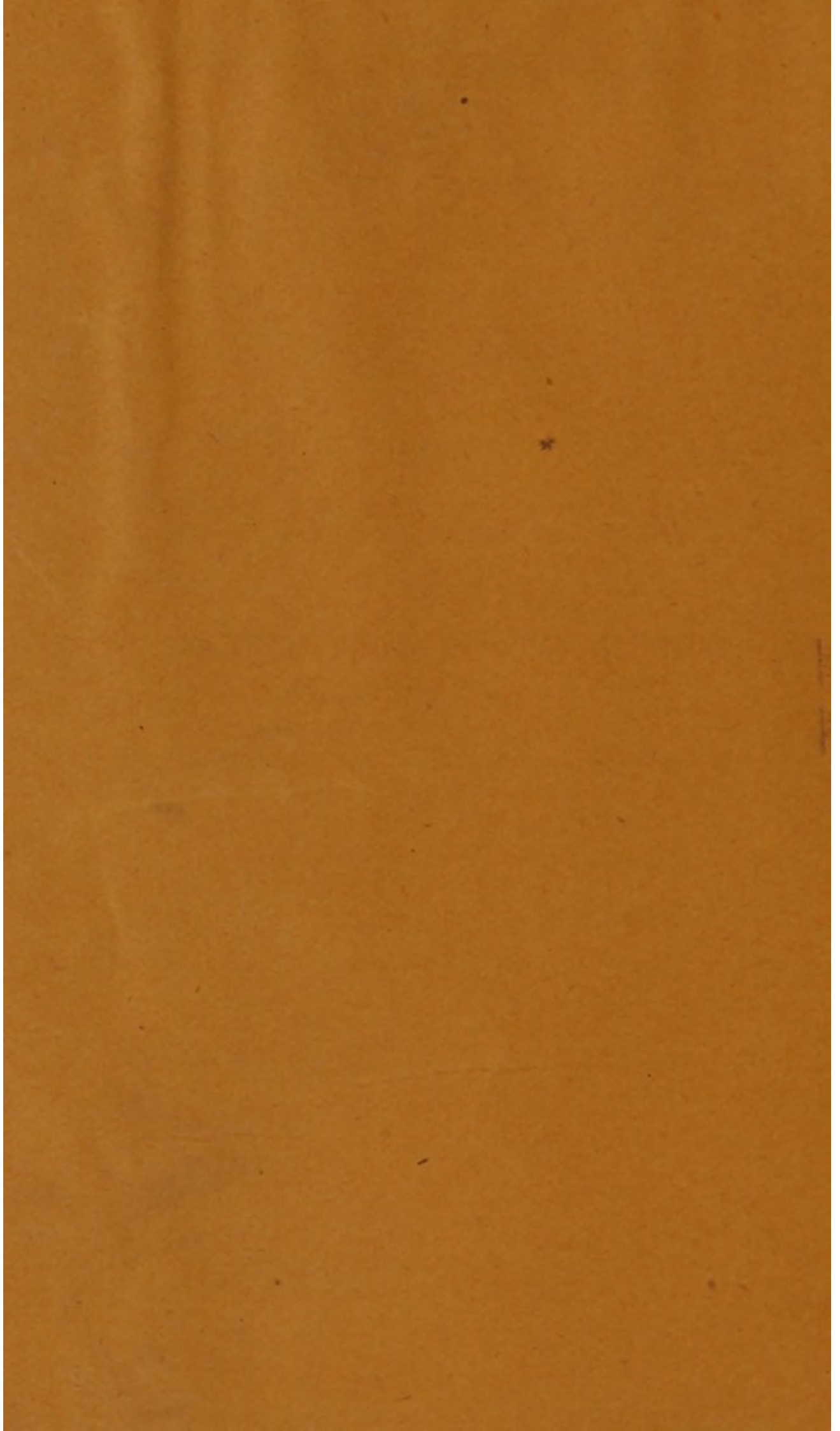
VON MOSCHZISKER (F.A.)

MEDICAL and SURGICAL

SCIENCE

IN THE UNITED STATES **





MEDICAL
AND
SURGICAL SCIENCE

IN THE
UNITED STATES,
SPECIALITIES, EMPIRICISM, &C.

ENLARGED FROM AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE
NEW ORLEANS PICAYUNE OF FEB. 14, 1860.

BY

DR. F. A. VON MOSCHZISKER,
OCULIST AND AURIST.

AUTHOR OF A GUIDE TO DISEASES OF THE EYE
FOR THE USE OF MEDICAL STUDENTS, AND A
TREATISE ON THE EAR, AND THE USE OF
THE ARTIFICIAL MEMBRANA TYMPANI.

NEW ORLEANS:
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TO THE PRESS.

In dedicating the following pages to you, I mean not that you should look upon them as a literary production, but that you should test with judgment the truth they contain. There is more philosophy in them than is dreamed of in your editorial chairs. Do not, therefore, lay them aside, but read them. I need make no apology for what I have written, although, vulgarly speaking, the cap may fit many. I have adhered strictly to the truth; but I ask my readers to remember that the language in which these pages are written is not the author's vernacular tongue. For the rest, I may say, with Horace:

*“ Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti, si non his utere mecum.”*

TO THE HONORABLE

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED
I HAVE THE HONOR TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RECEIPT OF YOUR LETTER OF THE 14TH INSTANT IN RELATION TO THE MATTER MENTIONED IN THE ENCLOSED COPY OF WHICH I HAVE THE HONOR TO ADVISE YOU THAT THE MATTER IS NOW UNDER THE CONSIDERATION OF THE APPROPRIATE DEPARTMENT AND THAT I AM SURE YOU WILL BE KEPT ADVISED OF THE PROGRESS OF THE SAME.

Messrs. Editors—I propose, with your permission, to offer, through the medium of your widely circulating journal, some remarks in relation to the practice of medicine and surgery in the United States; but more particularly in reference to that branch of the science which relates to the treatment of the diseases of the eye and the ear. Well known as I am as an aurist and oculist, having made these branches a special study under the most skillful and experienced professors in Europe, and having had much experience, both in this and the old country, in the line of my profession, what I have to advance upon the subject may not be wholly uninteresting to the public.

Faint, illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines.

*From an Article in the Picayune of
February 14th, 1860.*

When any epidemic disease, such as the cholera, small pox, or yellow fever, prevails to any great extent in the country, the public becomes greatly excited and alarmed, and the papers are filled with treatises upon the subject. Physiology, pathology, and the whole therapeutic and materia medica are exhausted by the learned and the unlearned disciples of Esculapius, in their efforts to stay the fell destroyer. These treatises, however, are generally clothed in the language of the schools, that the vulgar and the unlettered may be forever shut out from the benefits and the mysteries of these close corporations, established by Hippocrates several thousand years ago. But, Messrs. Editors, these are not the only maladies which require care and consideration. There are others, prevailing to an alarming extent in this country, which, although not partaking of the nature of an epidemic, and not by any means as fatal, are nevertheless

worthy of consideration, requiring the skill and experience of the most eminent practitioners. Among these maladies are diseases of the eye and the ear. With these organs imperfect, life is deprived of its greatest pleasure and enjoyment; for what is life without sight and without hearing? It is of no earthly value, but becomes indeed a burthen. Yet what organs are more neglected, or perhaps worse than neglected by being, with rare exceptions, placed in the hands of ignorant and unskillful empirics, who practice upon the credulity of the public, and, like the regicide of old—

“Stole

With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of the ears did pour
The leperous distillment.”

The entire want of all professional knowledge of those nostrum vendors frequently entails serious consequences on the unhappy sufferer.

From statistics in my possession, gathered in the course of my practice in the East, the South, the West, and the North, during the last six years, I am satisfied that in any city of ten thousand inhabitants, at least eighteen hundred of them, including persons of all ages, are suffering either from partial or total deafness. And I have no hesitation in asserting, that in the city of New York, if the facts could be ascertained, it would be found that at

least 70,000 of her inhabitants are, in one form or another, suffering from this malady—some with *Tinnitus*, or what is called “noises in the head,” others with “discharges of the ear,” and others again with “deafness” in one ear or the other, and perhaps in both. But it is foreign to my present purpose to describe the different maladies or to speak of influences which operate to produce deafness; but to refer to the apparent neglect with which a subject of so much importance to humanity has been treated by the medical profession.

I must, however, state that the improvement in acoustic medicine is, comparatively with the progress of other branches, but of recent date, and that its tardy appearance is principally to be attributed to the neglect with which the investigation of the ear, in its diseased state, has hitherto been treated, whence must have arisen uncertainty as to the nature and want of plan in the treatment of the diseases of this delicate organ of sense. It is but a due and just tribute that I pay here to the German school to state that they were the first to pay particular attention to those diseases, as they were also in ophthalmic diseases. The works of such men as Graefe, Jaeger, Bür, Beck Rosas, N. von Moschzisker, Jünken Ruete, Hyrtl, Frank, Kramer, Linke, Müller, Schmaly and Rau, are names which should be familiar to any one who has paid any attention to the

physiology and pathology of the eye and ear. When we investigate the productions of these great minds, we must say, that though human intellect is the creative element of science, entering as it does upon various subjects, but always by the same path; and hence we deduce that science has no national but an universal character—nevertheless we must regard the German school as the one mostly prepared for great scientific investigations. Energetic will and eager perseverance in the acquisition of knowledge are the endowments belonging to the German character. In proof of this assertion, I need but again refer to their works on all branches of science.

Some little effort had been made by the physicians in this country to restore the sight of the blind, but the important organ of the ear seems almost entirely to have been overlooked, and it is strange that amaurosis, or gutta serena—the name of the sympathetic blindness occasioned by disorders of the digestive canal and other causes—should be well understood, and discussed often in the divers medical periodicals published in this country, while the analogous disorder affecting the ear should never have received more than the most cursory attention. “Obstructions of the biliary section, and an accumulation of morbid bile in the gall ducts,” justly remarks an eminent aurist,* “sometimes occasion remarkable

*Yearsley on the Ear.

dullness of hearing; and when deafness exists from such disorder, as evident by the fullness and pain in the region of the liver, and symptoms of general depression, an active aperient, producing copious evacuations of unhealthy bile, will occasion extraordinary improvement in the weakened sense." I have, throughout my entire practice of aural medicine and surgery, warred against that excuse for the ignorance of physicians--that bugbear behind which they have cloaked their main treatment—viz: nervous deafness. By a close examination of disease—by dissection, by physiological facts, and by the action of remedial agents, extending altogether over a great number of cases—I have satisfied myself that nervous deafness is a very rare disease; that is to say, the loss of hearing from disease, torpor or inactivity of the auditory nerve, the different parts of the external, middle and internal ear, comprising the osseous canals, strata of air and liquid, bones, muscles, membranes and secretions, which form media for the transmission of sound to the nerve of sense, all remaining in a healthy condition. On the other hand, I have contended that a majority of those cases heretofore set down, from insufficient or unskillful diagnosis, as nervous deafness, are in reality dependent on diseased state of the mucous membrane of the middle ear.

Nervous fevers very frequently produce a

most marked debility of hearing. Deafness which is associated with nervous fevers, has been frequently observed from earliest times, and has been admitted according to circumstances to afford either a favorable or unfavorable prognosis for the termination of the fever. But, whatever may be the prognostic importance of this deafness, it is always of short duration after the patient recovers.

Depressing mental affections, grief & care, melancholy, violent terror, &c., act much more permanently, and in a far more decidedly injurious mode on the vital power of the auditory nerve; they give rise to the most obstinate cases of nervous deafness. The methods of observation of diseases of the ear, as well as the optical, acoustic and other instruments employed in their diagnosis, have been very much improved within the last ten years. Such improvements are of great practical importance; this branch of the healing art having been long retarded or kept in its primary or empirical state, for want of that guiding light which can only be supplied by an established and scientific pathology. Yet with all these advances of aural pathology and improved methods of diagnosis, the general practitioners are still in the habit of prescribing oils, and blisters, without any further examination as to the causes; squirting hot water into the ear is a favorite prescription,

but against which I cannot too earnestly warn physician and patient. The unscientific employment of this frequently valuable remedy has often excited acute disease in a predisposed tympanum, and has even induced fatal consequences. The state of the internal ear should be well examined before any syringing is ordered, as it has frequently happened that water forcibly thrown against the membrane, when unprotected by wax, or a foreign body, has produced injurious effects, which have been more or less lasting. The practice should also be conducted with the greatest care when the membrane is known to be ulcerated, or when such condition is only suspected. Again, medical men are too often ready to flatter patients, who, perhaps, in the first stages, apply to them, that it is an unimportant affection and will disappear. If children are the subjects, they will say that it had better be let alone, they will outgrow it; and so it is let alone. As deafness is rarely attended by pain, the diseases become more and more confirmed from year to year. "A prejudice," says Dr. Wild, "has prevailed, even with physicians, that the ear is too delicate an organ to be operated upon, or, as it is commonly expressed, tampered with, and thousands have been permitted thus to remain deaf for the rest of their lives, who might have been restored to their hearing, had proper assistance been early applied. This, I ap-

prehend, arises, in a great measure, if I may be permitted to venture the remark, from the entire ignorance of the faculty, perhaps, with a few honorable exceptions, with the anatomy of the organ, its pathology, its diseases, and consequently, with their mode of treatment." Surgical science, from its almost omnipotent power—representing the right hand of Deity—has, in other departments, wrought miracles, but, in this, it has, in a measure, been powerless.

This neglect of the maladies of the ear by most of the regular physicians has given rise to a host of empirics, who, by their nostrums, new inventions of acoustics to be placed in the ear, seek to impose upon the credulity of the community, and fleece them of their substance without affording their patients the least possible relief.

How many priceless though disordered eyes, have been absolutely put out and their owners doomed to utter darkness by presumption, bold, yet ignorant enough to tarnish the sun by a profane touch? How many thousand ears have been closed to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely, by the nostrums of quacks or the ignorance of empirics.

There are charlatans in all professions, from the man who places the spectacles on your nose, and calls himself oculist, optician, to the man that cuts your corns and styles him-

self Professor of the Pathology and Physiology of the Foot, and so on ; all this is bad enough, in all conscience, but when it is practiced in medicine and surgery, and particularly on such important organs, it becomes an insufferable nuisance. It is worse than that—it is a crime. Hence, in every section of the country, the high sounding advertisements of these empirics are to be seen. The country is flooded with their handbills reciting the astonishing miracles which they have performed and the wonderful cures they have effected.

From the sleeping charlatan in petticoats to the wide-awake one dressed in his silver white cravat, down to the dandy jack with his spotted velvet vest, ornamented with enormous gold chains, with which he hopes to fasten you to his rascality, these empirics abound. The first named promise to bestow on you the gift with which nature has blessed her ; to converse with the stars, and through them read your present and future ailments, and prescribe to all the "ills that flesh is heir to," and all that is required is to blister her hand with a golden eagle, the influence of which will put her in a *clear seeing* trance—that is, she will so clearly transmit the eagle into her pocket that you never see it again. The white cravat, in the most select, set down, stereotyped phrases, will

show in what immense danger you are, unless you swallow his nostrums, and so keep his pocket (between which and your disease there is an enormous sympathy) from becoming empty. Dandy Jack will take hold of your fantastic toe, and tell you that you are in danger to be carried off in a galloping consumption, unless he extracts every root of the corn, soft or hard, on your foot, each root of which he places before you on a table, and, miraculous to relate, each root turns into a gold piece of the value of ten dollars, and you may depend on a good crop being made out of your corns.

The regular faculty become indifferent, and men of eminence and science in their profession, who have spared neither time nor expense in acquiring a thorough knowledge of medicine and surgery, become disgusted with the whole business, leaving everything in the hands of the ignorant and unprincipled.

To such an extent has this practice of puffing and blowing obtained in this country, that the man of worth and science, who has really something of value to communicate to the public, hesitates about employing the same means which the unprincipled use to obtain notoriety. This should not be. Let them remember the motto :

“ Fortes scutum salus ducum.”*

* “ A strong shield is the safety of commanders.”

The press—that powerful engine for good or for evil—is thus, in a measure, monopolized by these quacks and pretenders. This should not be the case. It is the great medium in this enlightened age—the nineteenth century—of communicating with the people, and should be employed by the educated and enlightened professional man for the benefit of the race and not thus perverted to the worst and basest of purposes.

It will not be out of place, however, to make the following remarks: Newspaper puffing has often been the subject of the sneers of the medical press, and yet there is not a periodical published by the faculty without particular care being taken that the newspapers of the city in which it is published, and in fact every paper of some repute, shall be provided with copies in order that they may duly notice the same; thereby showing that they depend as much upon the popularity obtained through the newspapers as upon the intrinsic merit of the periodical. Again, no introductory lecture to a medical class or closing lecture is delivered without particular pains being taken that the local reporters of the newspapers shall be present and write a laudatory notice. I would ask to whom but the student and the faculty is such a notice of any interest, and why keep the public posted of the fact that Professor — delivered an admirable lecture?

In vindication of newspapers, (although they need no vindication.) I would say that a misconception exists with regard to what is termed puffing. Newspaper publishing, like any other undertaking, is a business, the object of which is to make money. Of course, respectable newspapers will not open their columns to all kinds of advertisements, as there are many of them that would make the most hardened sinner blush; but if an advertisement is so worded as not to be objectionable to the reader the publisher cannot refuse it and the advertiser has a right to demand some notice to be taken of it—what is termed “calling attention to it.” These notices are sometimes written by the advertisers themselves and their insertion paid for. It is the same with those communications we find signed “Science,” “Truth,” or “A Public Benefactor,” &c. They are from the pens of the advertisers themselves, for no honest man who has any good to communicate will be ashamed of his name.

Editors are not responsible for what appears in their papers in the shape of an advertisement or notice, as long as it is couched in unobjectionable language, but whatever is written as an editorial (and those in the habit of reading newspapers will know the difference,) the public has a right to hold the editor responsible for. A respectable paper will always

take the trouble to inquire into the pretensions of those they notice editorially. Pretenders and nostrum mongers will sometimes give the very thing they have written themselves as extracts from such or such a paper, heading the article with "We copy from &c.," and they will place some fictitious name as the testimony of some eminent physician whose name has never been heard before. It may be asked how is the success of all those charlatans to be accounted for? The simple fact is that people, ever so sensible, who, if they had some thing of value to repair, would inquire scrutinizingly in the ability of the workman to whom they entrust the article, are neglectful of the simplest precaution when their health is in question they run at the first quack nostrum or old woman's remedy which may be recommended to them, or fall into the hands of those who, taking advantage of the weakness of human nature pretend to perform miraculous cures in such diseases that they know the sufferer will readily fly to any hope held out, or such as have been neglected by the profession, among which the deaf have mostly suffered. Would that I could convince the profession of the sincerity of my feelings on the subject, and they would lay aside prejudice and unite to root out false pretenders and nostrum vendors, and if I cannot bring them to my views, would that I could say with Virgil:

"Fletere si nequeo superos
Acheronta movebo."^{*}

No one has, perhaps, had more occasion than myself, to see the harm done by nostrum vendors who pretend to be oculists and aurists, by giving their stimulating drops, which consist of all sorts of useless drugs, or sedative liquors, doing more harm to the eye and ear than would the disease itself if it had been left to run its course. Dr. Watts says of man,

"Strange that a harp of a thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long;"

and it is wonderful that with the continual exposition of the eye, so few are wholly lost through natural causes. But when this most exquisite and useful organ, becoming slightly damaged, suffers a hopeless injury through the unskillfulness of treatment, the case is lamentable, and truly has Dr. Mackenzie said, "The great secret in treating eye cases, the secret without which everything else must fail, is to know and discriminate the various states of disease to which the eye is subject. The successful removal of eye diseases depends almost entirely on accurate diagnosis. Discover what the disease is, make out accurately the pathology of the case before us, make out the rationale of the symptom, local and general, and if the case be curable, the cure is generally simple. Confound many different diseases,

* "If I cannot influence the gods,
I will move all Hell."

huddle them promiscuously together under a few general and perhaps unmeaning terms, and to a certainty we shall mistreat some of them.'

Lawrence remarks that "it often depends on the physician whether the patient should recover his sight or lose it forever." The above remarks may be used with regard to diseases of the ear; and if these are addressed to the profession, who are supposed to have some knowledge of these maladies, what should be said of the shameless pretender to the treatment of those delicate organs? I know a beautiful young lady in Baltimore, who, from a slight inflammation in her eye, through the clumsiness and quackery of a vendor of medicines, who styled himself oculist and aurist, has had as fair an eye blurred and hopelessly blemished as I ever gazed into, and it was only by extraordinary care and watchfulness that I was able to save the other eye. Medical science has no secret, and the man that will palm on you his wonderful medicines is an impostor. If he cannot give you the regular prescription, the medicine is worthless, and more eyes and ears are destroyed by such nostrums than could be imagined, by those who do not pay special attention to these branches of medicine. The public should be warned against using any medicine, particularly to drop in the eye or

ear, without knowing of what it consists and who is the prescriber. The regularly educated oculist and aurist would spurn the thought of having secret medicines said to possess special merits to cure all the diseases these organs are subject to.

What constitutes an oculist and aurist is, first, surgical skill as an operator, which requires more delicacy, steadiness of hand, nerve and discretion than all other operations; then, experience in the diseases of those organs, a perfect knowledge of the anatomy, pathology of the eye and ear. Armed with these and a love for his profession, fully conscious of the responsibility and anxious to fulfill his duty, one possesses what constitutes a good oculist and aurist.

The oculist and aurist should also be a regularly educated physician, as this will enable him to prescribe such a course of treatment as will, with a full knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and other branches, best conduce to the object desired, and at the same time not impair, but promote the health of the patient.

By making it a speciality, he is the better qualified to practice with skill and success in his particular department. These specialities, however, are not so much favored by the professor in this country as some others, for the reason, as is alleged, that it creates a necessity for the specialist to resort to the means

commonly used by quacks to bring themselves into public notice. This they consider derogatory to the dignity of the profession.

But how often, I again repeat, is this done by the professor, only in a way which is vulgarly called whipping the devil round the stump. The following is part of a letter on that subject, which appeared in the New York Herald :

We see in the matter of advertising, for illustration—the benefit of which most other professions and arts are smart enough to avail themselves of—the greatest stupidity in regard to their interests, and the most obstinate adherence to old and exploded ways and customs. Everybody knows that advertising, as a means of success, has been abused and brought into discredit by quacks, impostors and others ; but does it follow, as a sequence, that there shall be no legitimate use of it by the profession ?

The principle, “no use because abuse,” finds its advocates in narrow and prejudiced minds. It would make sad havoc if carried out in their own practice, and it is not a little singular that men who have the credit of being liberal minded in other things should be numbered among its supporters.

This repressed desire of becoming honorably known, on the part of some, through legitimate means of advertising, blossoms out in their meetings in every conceivable variety of disputes and unprofitable discussions, to which it is difficult to find either the “superior” or the “posterior” extremity, and

that do very little to advance the cause of science, or raise themselves in the estimation of the public, but which, being reported, as they generally are, in some daily, serve temporarily to relieve the itching for attention by bringing their names before the people, and about as frequently brings forth some merited criticism as their oxidized names appear in print.

This back door way of coming into notoriety shows itself in other places and in other forms than in the Academy. The lucrative practice of many of our professors and so-called first class practitioners, if the truth was known, has had its origin, obtained its growth and maintained its support mainly through the report of individual cases and clinics in the public papers, or by their connection with some public institution, which is only another means of advertising, thus bringing into notice what otherwise must have remained in obscurity. But having once crossed the bridge that spans the gulf, they at once proceed to fortify themselves by "blowing it up," with any other poor traveler who may chance to be on it, and recommending their followers to plunge into the rapids if they would cross. The consequence is that many are swallowed up in the sea of expense that surrounds them; many of wider capacity but more limited means, are compelled to keep silent for fear of professional ill feeling towards them—remain in obscurity, starve, if need be, in the strait jacket they have put upon them, before they may use any public means of becoming known; for unless a man have some means other "than sticking out a

shingle" in a great city like ours, to bring his name before the people, he might as well be an Egyptian mummy in the interior of the great pyramid, for all any persons knowing or caring to find out anything about him.

To this I would add, with due deference to a profession with which for many reasons I desire to maintain an *entente cordiale*, I cannot but protest against the continuance, in this sensible, practical, steam-engine, telegraph, commercial age, of so musty an old prejudice and idea. Since the Baconian logic has prevailed in the civilized world, medicine has become a practical science, founded on experiment and observation. It is one with which it is no longer a presumption for the people to desire to familiarize themselves, nor a breach of professional dignity in the M. D. who seeks opportunities for, and employs every fair and honest mode of enlightening the minds of the people as to his ability to remedy "the ills which flesh is heir to." The prejudice against communicating through the newspapers such information as may guide and direct the people to the proper means of relieving their misfortunes and maladies is unphilanthropic and silly.

"Salus populi suprema est lex."*

If a man possess any peculiar art or knowledge, by which he can benefit his species, it is

*To consult the welfare of the people is the first great law.

the dictate of common humanity to advertise it to the largest number. It is true quacks and empirics may employ the same medium, but the people will learn to discriminate between the real and the fictitious—between truth and falsehood—between merit and imposture. Empirics have made fortunes through newspaper advertisements, because of this very refusal of the regular professional and scientific physicians to employ the same cheap, ready and universal mode of informing the people how, when, and by whom they may be properly attended for any maladies or physical afflictions that may beset them. In this view of the subject it becomes, therefore, a duty of the faculty to protect the people against empiricism, by abandoning the old exploded mysticism and isolation which they have so long hugged as essential to the dignity, respectability and power of the profession.

It is only by a division of study and labor that excellence is achieved in any branch of science. This is especially so in our wonderful organization—the miracle of Omnipotence, which cannot be mastered by any one mind. The intricacies of a watch demand the labor of many hands. Harvey has taught us the circulation of the blood—Gall opened to us the mysteries of the brain, and Jenner bequeathed to us a panacea for the plague. These were specialities, and I could enumer-

ate hundreds of others who, by confining themselves to one particular branch, contributed much to enlighten the world and advance the science of medicine.

If the medical profession, instead of making war upon Homeopathy and Hydropathy, (which I conceive to be founded on scientific principles, although I belong to neither school,) would devote a portion of their time to exposing quackery and rooting out that which is worse than quackery, they will have the hearty coöperation of most of their brethren. Let a committee of scientific men be appointed in New York, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Baltimore and other large cities, for the purpose of examining the qualifications of those who wish to devote themselves to a speciality, and to those who are sufficiently qualified give a certificate. I myself, though by my writings on the eye and ear I should be well known to the profession, and possessing the credentials of the best European schools, am still willing to abide, for example's sake, by the severest tests of the faculty, as Oculist or Aurist.

Let medical colleges encourage specialities, and in a short time ignorant pretenders will be banished from the land. Let a list of those who are qualified be published in some suitable form; and such and such only will be trusted and treated with any consideration by the

public. All others will be regarded as cheats and impostors, and treated accordingly. In this way, in a very short time, the whole tribe of empirics and charlatans will disappear, and cease to practice upon the ignorance and credulity of a confiding community; the character of the profession will be elevated, and the confidence of the community be restored. The performers of miracles on the blind and on the deaf, by the atmospheric system, will thus be banished forever.

F. A. VON MOSCHZISKER,
Oculist and Aurist,
124 Canal street, over the Union Bank.

