

# **A statement of the relations of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery in the University of Michigan to Homoeopathy / Alonzo Benjamin Palmer.**

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Palmer, Alonzo Benjamin, 1815-1887.  
University of Michigan.  
National Library of Medicine (U.S.)

## **Publication/Creation**

Detroit : Tribune Printing Company ; Wm. A Scripps, 1875.

## **Persistent URL**

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OF THE

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*A STATEMENT OF THE RELATIONS OF THE FACULTY  
OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY IN THE UNIVERSITY  
OF MICHIGAN TO HOMŒOPATHY.*

The condition of affairs in the University of Michigan, produced by the action of the Legislature and the Board of Regents establishing a Homœopathic college at Ann Arbor, has, in consequence of the misconceptions and the partial and erroneous representations which have occurred, imposed upon the Faculty of the Medical Department the duty of making a statement to the profession and public of the exact state of things existing—of the relations in which they have been placed, the position they occupy and propose to maintain, in regard to the new college, and the system of Homœopathy. Before making the statement they have allowed the first feelings naturally induced by the unexpected action to subside, and have taken time for careful and mature deliberation after consultation with many eminent and judicious professional friends, whose opinions are entitled to the highest respect.

It is well known that for more than twenty years the introduction of Homœopathy into the State University has been a subject of agitation; has been constantly urged upon the Board of Regents; has been thrust upon every successive Legislature; and that various acts have been placed upon the statute book of the State making provision for its accomplishment.

The Regents, however, claiming their constitutional right to govern the University, and believing such course unwise; and perhaps, also, regarding the views of a large portion of the regular physicians of the State, and the strongly expressed opinions and feelings of the medical Faculty, who had built up a large and successful department of the institution, declined to carry the acts of the Legislature into effect; especially as all these acts contemplated the introduction of homœopathic professors into the *Medical Department*, forcing upon the professors of that department associations to which they could not sub-

mit, and introducing into its teaching incongruities which, it was thought, would be disastrous. A few years ago, when even a large appropriation of money was made to the University—money very much needed to carry on its extensive operations—on the condition that two homœopathic professors should be placed in the Faculty, the money was declined.

Wishing to comply with the demands of the homœopaths and those who either favored their system or believed there was justice in their claims, as expressed by the Legislature, and hoping thus to secure the appropriations while not disturbing the prosperity of the Medical Department, the Regents made an attempt to establish a separate homœopathic college at some point other than Ann Arbor; but the plan was decided by the court not to be in compliance with the conditions of the particular act making the appropriation, and the attempt failed.

Other attempts at reconciling the conflicting interests and principles were also unsuccessful, while the agitation continued—the cry of persecution and unfairness was industriously kept up, and the medical Faculty were charged with defeating the public will by their prejudices and pertinacity, and with standing in the way of the prosperity of the University as a whole. Regarding homœopathy, so far as it is more than a pretence and a name, as a false system, they could never, as individuals and citizens of the State, desire its recognition and support by the public authorities; yet as a Faculty they have never offered any opposition to the establishment of an entirely separate institution for teaching anything the people of the State might desire.

A few years ago, soon after the establishment of a similar system in Canada, a measure was proposed in the Michigan State Medical Society for the creation of a State Board of Censors, to be composed of regular physicians, homœopaths, and eclectic, who should examine those proposing to practice any form of medicine or surgery in the State, upon all subjects except what are technically called the practice of medicine and materia medica, and should grant a *joint* certificate or diploma, which should constitute a legal qualification to practice; all not having such diploma, and who had not for some years previously been in practice, being prevented from attending professionally the sick.

During the last session of the Legislature, a special meeting of the State Society was called, a committee was appointed to forward the measure, and a bill embracing these provisions was presented to the Legislature and its passage urged. The bill however, met with opposition from various sources; and from what were regarded its imperfections and impracticability, and especially from its influence on the homœopathic question in the University, it was opposed by members of this Faculty, and it failed to become a law.

The Legislature and the Board of Regents, however, seeing the willingness of a majority of the State Society, supposed to represent the opinions and feelings of the regular profession in the State, to enter into an association with homœopaths in examining candidates and granting a joint diploma, very logically concluded that no serious offense could be given to the profession by establishing a relation much more remote—certainly far less intimate—between regular scientific medicine and homœopathy in the University.

The Faculty do not propose to discuss the wisdom or the folly of any of these measures. They are now matters of the past, for which they have no responsibility. It is claimed that the law in Canada referred to, has operated much against the interests of homœopathy: and it is certain that the adherents of this system have opposed the passage of a similar law in some of the states. The full effect of this action in our State Society the future alone can determine. But there can be no doubt that the state of things in the University, which some who favored the mingling proposed by the State Society are now so forward in condemning, is a logical consequence—a legitimate outcome of the actions of the Society.

During the whole history of the medical department of the University, the members of its faculty have been, as some think, even over zealous, but according to their judgment, conscience and ability, they have been firm and consistent in opposing every form of error, folly and deception in medicine. In the protracted struggle with homœopathy, though receiving important aid and sympathy from individuals, so far as organized effort is concerned, they have had little support. They at least have stood the brunt of the opprobrium which so many, not under-

standing the real character of the issues, have attempted to heap upon them. Of this they did not complain, and were willing to retain that position with all its consequences.

This state of things continued until a few months ago, when, during the absence of some of the Faculty from the State, and in opposition to their well known wishes, and also in opposition to the expressions of others, certain complications were effected which have caused much excitement and comment, especially in the profession, not merely throughout the State, but the country, have called forth many expressions from both friends and rivals, often hastily uttered, and from an imperfect knowledge of the facts. Hence the historical sketch which has now been given, and the statement of the exact character of the relations existing, which follows, have been deemed necessary.

The acts of the Legislature and the Board of Regents have resulted in the organization of a "Homœopathic Medical College" under the management of the Regents of the University. It consists of two professors, one of "Materia Medica and Therapeutics," and one of the "Theory and Practice of Medicine," of course according to the professed homœopathic system.

This homœopathic college, created under an act of the Legislature essentially different from any acts in regard to homœopathy previously passed, which the Faculty had so strenuously opposed, and which the Regents had so constantly declined to carry into effect, is entirely distinct in its organization and name from the "Department of Medicine and Surgery"—no homœopathic professors, as previous acts provided for, are placed in the Medical Department, but a separate college established; the two faculties never meet in any joint sessions, the lectures are given in separate and distant buildings, the students of each are registered in separate books under different titles, and are to appear in the catalogue under different headings and in different places. The diplomas to be granted are different in title and character—those of the homœopathic students are to be designated as homœopathic—the names of none of the Faculty of the Department of Medicine and Surgery are to go upon them, and of course the names of the Faculty of the Homœopathic College are not to go upon those of the other department. The Faculty of the College of Medicine and Surgery do not recommend for

graduation, and have no responsibility whatever in sending forth or licensing to practice (as was to have been done by the mixed board proposed by the State Society,) homœopathic students, or testifying to their fitness to become members of the medical profession.

But the students of the homœopathic college have the privilege of attending the instruction in the College of Medicine and Surgery, on Anatomy, Chemistry, and all the branches, excepting those on "Practice of Medicine," and "Materia Medica," and they are to be examined in the different departments of study by those who teach them, and are to have their knowledge or want of knowledge in *those departments* certified to. If the student becomes a proficient in chemistry, anatomy, etc., the simple fact is stated, while no intimation is given that he is qualified to practice medicine, or to be a proper professional associate of medical men. Holding to the belief that the system of homœopathy, as taught by Hahnemann and his followers, is absurd in theory and useless in practice, and that those who profess the theory but systematically violate its principles, are unworthy of confidence, no member of the faculty could certify to the fitness of any one professing it to practice the profession, and for similar reasons no professional association can be maintained with them. This position may seem illiberal to those not fully understanding the subject, but all enlightened physicians know that the exclusive system of homœopathy is so diametrically opposed to what is regarded as rational medicine, that no compromise between them is possible. Real homœopathy, as its name implies, insists that there is but one law of cure—that of *similia similibus curantur*; and this pretended principle, as its founder contends, stands as an insuperable barrier between homœopathy and all that denies this assumed universal law. The object of professional association and consultation is to benefit the sick by directing the use of therapeutical measures; and as there can be no possible agreement between a regular physician and a homœopath, on the subject of treatment, such consultation would necessarily be useless while each adhered to his respective course. Should either be willing to adopt the measures of the other, sharing the responsibility of a case, regardless as it would be, of the interests of the patient, he would be unworthy of any honorable association whatever; and he who professes what he does not believe or practice,



must be regarded as a deceiver and imposter. Such a man cannot be associated with on either honorable or moral grounds. Any professional association, then, by regular physicians, with the professed adherents of this exclusive and radically opposing system, must be useless or worse, leading to confusion and to the destruction of the confidence of patients. These principles must be seen to be logical and fundamental, and they are firmly held by the faculty; and when understood must shield those who refuse such associations and the sharing of such responsibilities from the charges of senseless illiberality. All this, however, does not prevent discussion, or efforts for finding and enforcing the truth, and exposing and refuting error.

The medical faculty finding themselves, as an accomplished fact, in the relations to the homœopathic school which have been described, and in view of the principles of professional associations stated, have presented to them the question, as to their duty to the University, which some of them have served during the most of their active lives, to medical science, to which they are all devoted, and to their professional brethren, whom they so highly respect. With the question as to whether the Legislature and Board of Regents acted wisely or not, they have nothing to do. The practical question is as to their duty under the circumstances.

The distinguished and venerable Prof. Gross, evidently writing under the influence of a strong impulse, feeling, as he says, "with every member of the regular profession" for the organization of homœopathy "a sovereign and unmitigated contempt—an organization with which it is impossible for us ever to associate or fraternize," and supposing the relation to which the faculty are subjected implied such association and fraternization, very naturally advises immediate resignation. Understanding, as the members of the Faculty do, the sentiments which, from Dr. Gross' premises, prompted this advice, we have no reproach to utter and no feeling of unkindness to indulge. His advice, though it may have been given hastily, was doubtless given conscientiously and from feelings which the profession will respect. Others, however, standing quite as high in the estimation of the profession for wisdom and devotion to its interests, think it would be cowardice in the Faculty, and worse, that it would be treason to the interests of medical science and to the profession to

abandon the field, surrendering a stronghold without resistance—fleeing from their guns when the invaders, if they may be so considered, had placed themselves within the most effective range.

The opinions and feelings of the Faculty regarding homœopathy are those which have been long entertained and which have been sufficiently expressed. They are under no restraint but such as the cause of truth and their characters as gentlemen impose, to treat it with favorable consideration; and as to results, they have little fear of errors and absurdities among sensible people, if truth and reason are left free to oppose them. Brought into no affiliation with the homœopaths, but ready to have them bring to the light whatever doctrines they may choose to present to those who seek their teachings, the Faculty of the Department of Medicine and Surgery believe it their duty to go on in their liberty as heretofore, presenting the truth “as they see the truth,” and opposing error and folly as they may think the cause of true science and humanity demands. In nature the “survival of the fittest” is the law; and in the world of ideas the results of investigation and discussion, the operations of intellect and reason ought, and will ultimately rule.

It is the opinion of many fully conversant with the subject that a great error of policy has been committed on the part of the profession generally in yielding to feelings of repugnance, and keeping so far aloof from this system, treating it with silent contempt or with exclamations of derision, without argument or even a calm statement of its pretensions. It must at all events be admitted that under the policy which has been pursued the system has flourished and created for itself a demand among the people. Although as science advances—as vague speculations in medicine yield to ascertained facts—as the laws of life and the nature and causes of disease become more apparent, and the natural courses of diseases and the operations of medicines upon them are better understood, the dreamy absurdities of homœopathy become more glaring, yet under the cover of obscurity—in the profound ignorance among even educated people as to what the system really is—under the cry of persecution and the false pretension of advancement and reform,

this system maintains its position with the public. This result is, to be sure, aided by the recoveries resulting from the efforts of nature and from ordinary therapeutical measures in the hands of professed homœopaths being falsely credited to it. A system like this flourishes most in darkness and obscurity, and no form of error or deception was ever put down by senseless denunciation, without investigation and exposure.

There are many firm in the conviction that encouraging homœopathy to show itself in the light, bringing it to the test of scientific observation and calm discussion, will be fatal to its pretensions. This certainly can be done without fraternizing with it. Under this belief the *New York Medical Record*, a leading journal of regular medicine, approves the recent action of the "Commissioners of Charities and Correction"—the body which governs Bellevue Hospital and the other public medical institutions of New York—in setting aside a portion of an Asylum for the purpose of a homœopathic hospital, where the working and the results of the system will be more than heretofore under scientific observation.

In a recent correspondence held by a member of the Faculty with Prof. Austin Flint, Sr., of Bellevue Hospital Medical College, a gentleman whose works are standards of authority among physicians, and whose high character for wisdom, personal honor and devotion to the interests of the profession are so well known, the views of this gentleman on the course best to be pursued toward homœopathy, and the relations of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery of the University to the Homœopathic College, their duty in the present crisis, and the influence of the complication on the standing of the College, are clearly expressed, and so much of the correspondence as is necessary to make his position fully understood is introduced even at the risk of protracting this statement :

" ANN ARBOR, Aug. 21st, 1875.

" Prof. A. FLINT, M. D. :

" DEAR DOCTOR—I remember in a conversation with you some two years ago, you said that you thought the true interests of medical science would be promoted by allowing the homœopaths to advocate their doctrines where there would be an opportunity of meeting them and showing their weakness and absurdity, and that we at the University of Michigan would do

a good work for science, however the interests of our Medical College might be affected, by allowing them to come into the University. I felt then the force of your statement, but, as you will remember, expressed a strong unwillingness to jeopardize the peace and interest of our school, subjecting ourselves to the attacks of rivals and the possible distrust of friends, for the prospect there was of affecting such an object. A state of things has now occurred contrary to our wishes and efforts, but which may be made to result as you suggested, and I beg the privilege of calling your attention to a statement of the exact state of things existing, and to ask your advice as to the course we should pursue for the accomplishment of an object we in common have at heart—the interests of true medical science and the honor of the profession.”

A copy of the proceedings of the Board of Regents, establishing the Homœopathic College, was sent, and a brief statement of the state of things given.

The following answer was promptly received :

“NEW YORK, Aug. 26, 1875.

“DEAR DOCTOR—I recollect my conversation with you a couple of years since, and I recognize in the account of it which you give in your letter of the 21st inst., the sentiments which I then advanced. I entertain them still, and I believe the result will show their correctness. I am sorry to differ from my much beloved friend Dr. Gross, but I think your Faculty have no occasion to resign and abandon the field. You are in no sense responsible for the action of the Legislature; you are not brought into association with the homœopathic professors; why, then, should you not go on as you have heretofore? I cannot see why this course should affect in the least your present personal, professorial, or professional relations, at or away from home; and I cannot see why the standing of your school should be affected.

“Yours very truly,

“A. FLINT.”

A similar letter giving information of the situation and asking for advice, was addressed at the same time to Dr. J. Marion Sims, whose inventions and success in his specialty have re-

flected such honor upon American surgery, and made his name familiar throughout the world; whose residence abroad has made him cosmopolitan, and whose claims to consideration as recognized at home, have placed him in the position of the present President of the American Medical Association; and in his reply, besides expressions of a personal character, which it is unnecessary to repeat, he uses the following language:

“As I am not the man ever to desert my post, I can answer your query in but one way.

“I think the Regents of the University have the right to create new chairs and appoint new teachers whenever they please to do so. \* \* The appointment of special Professors of Homœopathy is a great innovation, and is doubtless not a little galling to your faculty. \* \* The Regents have wisely respected your sensibilities in not forcing these new professors upon you as a faculty. They have simply placed them in the same relation to you as they would other lecturers on special branches. Your autonomy is not disturbed. You are exactly where you were before these appointments were made; and I think, under all the circumstances, you ought not to resign your places.

“The Medical Department of the University that you have labored for a quarter of a century to place on a solid foundation is not to be toppled over because of a difference of this kind between you and the Regents. Your duty to your profession and to the broad principles of medicine forbids you to resign. To fly from your posts is to acknowledge weakness and to insure defeat all along the line.

“My advice then is—‘Don’t give up the ship.’

“Believe me, dear Doctor, most truly yours,

“J. MARION SIMS.”

Other letters of similar import have been received from gentlemen standing high in the profession in different parts of the country, but the length of this article forbids further quotations.

It is not deemed necessary to refer to articles which have appeared in the newspapers on the one side or the other, or to baseless rumors which may be expected to obtain currency upon

a subject exciting so much public interest. Neither is it thought best to prolong this statement by reviewing the productions which have appeared in the medical journals. The simple facts of the case, when fully understood, will be the best justification of the course which will be pursued.

The Faculty would respectfully ask those few who advise their resigning to consider what would be the effect of such a step? One of two things would certainly occur: either the University would be given up to the undisputed possession of the homœopaths, or a Medical Faculty would be formed which, if not fraternizing with homœopathy, would be less firm in resisting its advances and in exposing its follies. Does the profession of the State or the country desire either of these results? If the claims of homœopathy are not to be put aside by contemptuous silence, but are to be met by argument and reason—if as some believe, a most important, and perhaps decisive, hand to hand contest between this form of error and scientific medical truth is to occur in the University of Michigan, would they prefer as their champions new and untried men, or those who have at least stood firm in the contests which have already occurred? Indeed, the present arrangement is already opposed by a large number of the homœopaths of the State and the country, and it is regarded by many as a temporary expedient which will fail of success.

From whatever point of view, the more the Faculty consider the subject the more preposterous appears the idea of abandoning their posts. In this view they are strengthened by the only expression which has been made by the State Medical Society of which they have any record. This expression occurred in June, 1865, when a committee, consisting of Wm. Brodie, I. H. Bartholomew, C. T. Southworth, Wm. H. DeCamp and Hamilton E. Smith, reported the following resolution, which unanimously passed:

“*Resolved*, That until such time arrives that the Board of Regents shall change the curriculum of the Medical Department, we are of opinion that the professors thereof should continue to hold their respective chairs. But should such a change be accomplished as would directly affect the curriculum, we believe that in honor to themselves and the profession to which

they belong, and whose sympathies they receive, they could not consistently remain, and their resignations should be respectfully submitted."

The curriculum of the Medical Department is not in the least affected—no student of that department is taught homœopathy—no homœopathic or other irregular teachers are brought in their presence; the exercises of the department are to go on as heretofore; the only changes which will occur will be in a more thorough preliminary examination and in a broader course of instruction as medical science shall advance.

In conclusion, the Faculty desire to repeat, that in view of all the facts and considerations of the case, they fully believe their duty requires them to remain at their posts while the curriculum of their department is not changed, while no affiliations or professional association with homœopaths or homœopathy are required, and while freedom of discussion is maintained; and in this, the entire teaching faculty as constituted at the time the action of the Regents establishing the new department took place concur. In this course they expect ultimately to be sustained by all judicious members of the profession, who, without prejudice or passion, acquaint themselves with the facts, who calmly consider all the bearings of the subject, and whose interests or sympathies for rival institutions have no influence upon their views.

Whether cheered by the voice of a united profession in the contest which is to come for rational medicine, or annoyed and disheartened by bickerings and dissensions, they hope to gain triumphs for truth and reason, and enjoy the consciousness of duty performed.

In behalf of the Faculty,

A. B. PALMER, M. D.,

*Dean.*

WBK 1173, 1875





