

**Anniversary oration, before the New-York Academy of Medicine :
delivered in the chapel of the University of the City of New-York,
November the 14th, 1849 / by Alfred C. Post.**

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ANNIVERSARY

ORATION,

Presented by

BEFORE THE *F. D. Lentz,*

NEW-YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE,

DELIVERED IN THE CHAPEL OF THE UNIVERSITY

of the City of New-York,

NOVEMBER THE 14th, 1849.

BY ALFRED C. POST, M. D.

[PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ACADEMY.]

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ANNIVERSARY ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN,

TIME, in his rapid flight, has brought us to the close of another year of our academic existence; and it is with mingled emotions of sorrow and of gladness, that we are assembled here this evening to celebrate our third anniversary. The places of some who have been accustomed to unite in our assemblies are now vacant; six of our associates have been summoned away from the scene of their labours and their usefulness, and we shall see their faces no more until we shall meet them in the spirit-land. DOCTORS JAMES MACDONALD, ABRAHAM T. HUNTER, RAVAUD KEARNEY, PETER S. TOWNSEND, EDWARD EARLE, and JOSIAH D. STICKNEY, have been called away suddenly, most of them in the full vigour of manhood, from a large and widening sphere of influence. Their memories are embalmed in the hearts of many who look back with grateful interest to times when they were struggling with terrific forms of disease, from whose ruthless grasp they were rescued by these champions of the healing art.

And their professional associates look back with satisfaction to their upright and honourable course, and to their ardent and successful efforts to extend the reputation and usefulness of our common profession. Let us emulate their zeal and their devotion to the interests of science and humanity; let us cherish the recollection of their virtues; and let us be admonished, by their sudden departure, to prepare for that summons, which shall bid us likewise to lay aside the vestments of our mortality, and which shall vacate our places in the assemblies of earth. When that summons shall be addressed to us, may we

“ — go, not like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon; but, sustain'd and sooth'd
By an unfaltering trust, approach the grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

But, gentlemen, I have said that emotions of sadness are not the only ones which swell our bosoms, as we are here assembled this evening. When we contemplate the present posture of our profession, we have abundant cause for satisfaction. It is my firm conviction, that at no period in the past history of our race, have the science and art of medicine held so exalted a position as at the present day. And, furthermore, I believe that at no former period have the votaries of our science and the practitioners of our art enjoyed in so high a degree the enlightened confidence, esteem and approbation of their fellow-citizens. It is true that, in past ages, when the masses of the community were sunk in profound

ignorance, the practitioners of the healing art were regarded with a sort of superstitious reverence akin to that with which the medicine-man is looked upon by the savages who roam over our Western borders. The doctor then appeared before the gazing multitude with a huge wig, which seemed to be designed, in many cases at least, to conceal the deficiency of his cerebral development, and with a gold-headed cane, with which he measured his stately steps, assuming a pomp and dignity which were well calculated to captivate vulgar minds. But men of education and intelligence were able, through these flimsy devices, to discern the real deficiencies of his professional acquirements; and wit and sarcasm were freely expended in exposing these deficiencies to ridicule and contempt. It is true that, in many cases, these sarcasms were misdirected, and that ridicule was heaped upon the whole profession on account of the unworthy conduct of some of its members. It is far from being my intention to detract from the well-earned reputation of those who have preceded us in the career of professional labour. I honour the memory of those who, in past generations, have toiled for the advancement of our science: I cherish with grateful emotions the recollection of what they accomplished, without the advantages which we now possess: and I admit the full weight of the obligations which they have imposed upon their successors. But if "there were giants in those days," I do not admit that medical men of the present generation are mere pigmies in comparison with

them. There are some men in our profession, as well as out of it, who are ever looking with an evil eye upon their own generation, and directing their views backward to some past era, as the golden age when all was bright and glorious. To them may well be applied the rebuke which was addressed by the wise man of old to the croakers of his generation: "Say not, wherefore were the former days better than these." The traveller, who has passed over dreary and rugged mountains, presenting no object upon which the eye can rest with satisfaction, when he has left these gloomy scenes far behind him, turns around to view them once more, before the fading light of day shall exclude them from his view. He now beholds their rude outlines softened in the dim perspective, and their harsh and sombre shades mellowed into a neutral tint which invests them with peculiar beauty.

" 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue."

The science of medicine in every department is making rapid strides toward perfection. The experience of past generations constitutes a fund from which the genius of the present age has drawn largely for the advancement of the healing art: and fresh observations are rapidly accumulating in every part of the civilized world, to enlarge the stock of materials from which is to be reared the edifice whose foundation has been so broadly and deeply laid. Anatomy, as far as it applies to the structure

of the human body, may be considered almost a perfect science. The scalpel, guided by the skilful fingers of the anatomist, with the aids and appliances of modern art, has done its work so thoroughly, and recorded its observations so faithfully, that scarcely a fibre or corpuscle, visible to the naked eye, has eluded its scrutiny; and when the limits have been reached beyond which the unaided vision of man cannot pry, the microscope has revealed wonders of skilful workmanship, lying far beyond. Although, in the province of microscopic anatomy, great advancement has been made during the present generation, there is no doubt that much room is left for future discoveries in this interesting field. During the last quarter of a century, the science of physiology has advanced with a rapidity scarcely equalled during any similar period of its history. The labours of Hall, Müller, and Liebig, and of a host of collaborators in Europe and America, have thrown a flood of light upon many of the functions of the animal economy, which had been hitherto involved in impenetrable obscurity. Chemistry also has made and is daily making new and valuable discoveries, especially in relation to the proximate analysis of animal and vegetable substances. Some of these discoveries have a most important bearing on the practical departments of medicine. In *Materia Medica*, great improvements have been made, both in the way of addition and of expurgation. A host of comparatively inert and useless remedies have been laid aside, and their place has been supplied by

the addition of a number of remedial agents of great and universally acknowledged value. There are those now living in our midst, who commenced their professional career at a period when the elegant preparations of iodine and the vegetable alkaloids, such as quinine, morphine, strychnine, veratrine, &c., which now constitute so important a class of remedial agents, had not been introduced into the *Materia Medica*. And such practitioners can well recollect, as they look back to the days of "auld lang syne," how formidable a matter in those days was the treatment of an ordinary case of intermittent fever, when bark was required to be given in substance, until the stomachs of the patients were often provoked to a rebellion which could not easily be quelled. In obstetrics, and in the special department of pathology and therapeutics pertaining to females, most important improvements have been made during the life-time of the present generation. Vague and crude hypotheses have given place to precise and accurate knowledge; and uncertain, dilatory and inefficient modes of treatment have been replaced by methods which are sure, prompt and efficacious. Many a maid and matron, who constitute the light and joy of their respective households, are now promptly rescued from disease, and restored to the full vigour of health and the full bloom of beauty, who under the old system would have lingered out a life of infirmity and suffering, or would have been consigned to an early grave. In general pathology, also, and in the theory and practice of medicine, improvements

have been made, which have contributed in no small degree to the relief of human suffering and the prolongation of human life. In the investigation of the nature and seats of diseases, what a prodigious advance has been made, since Morgagni published his standard work on that interesting subject! What a flood of light has been thrown on the diagnosis of many obscure and latent forms of disease, since percussion and auscultation were introduced by Avenbrugger and Laennec! What accuracy and precision has been imparted to the knowledge of many of the most important morbid conditions of the system, through the labours of such men as Louis, Andral, Chomel, Bright, Graves, and Stokes! There never has been a period in the world's history, when so many active minds have been engaged as at the present time, in the cautious observation of the phenomena of disease during life, in the accurate investigation of the ravages of disease as observed in the affected organs after death, and in the careful comparison and rigid scrutiny of observed and recorded cases, in order to frame from them correct views of pathology, and to deduce from them safe and successful rules of practice.

The department of Surgery is not behind any of the co-ordinate divisions of the healing art, in the laborious and successful efforts which have been made by its votaries, to enlarge the bounds of its usefulness, and to establish it upon a firm and immovable basis. It is no longer a mere handicraft, as it was formerly regarded, and as its name, Chi-

rurgia, would seem to denote. It is no longer associated in ignoble alliance with the trade of the barber, nor are its practitioners at all inferior in rank and station to those who are engaged in the treatment of internal diseases. Among those who have recently been engaged in the practice of surgery, and among those who are now occupied in its pursuits, are to be found names as illustrious as any which are recorded in the annals of science. The labours of Cooper, Abernethy, Lawrence, Brodie, Liston, Fergusson, Dupuytren, Velpeau, Stromeyer, Dieffenbach, Physick, and Wright Post, have shed imperishable lustre on their own names, and have added greatly to the resources of our art for the alleviation of many of the most grievous ills which "flesh is heir to." I might greatly extend this list by the enumeration of many distinguished names, both among the living and the dead. And if it were not an invidious task, I might mention the names of surgeons who are now living in this city, and who are members of this Academy, whose names and deeds shall be remembered, long after their mortal remains shall have mingled with their kindred dust. But although I may not mention their names, coming generations will do them reverence. But I may make a passing allusion to some of those achievements in the cause of humanity, which have conferred a high degree of renown on the surgeons of New-York. A distinguished surgeon of this city, as is well known, was the first to carry into execution the bold operation of applying a ligature to the arteria innominata, an

operation which has since been repeated in different parts of the world. Another distinguished member of this Academy has originated the still more difficult and hazardous operation of tying the left subclavian artery within the scaleni, an operation which thus far no other surgeon has ventured to perform. Another of our eminent surgeons has for the first time divided the œsophagus for the relief of an impermeable stricture of that canal, an operation, in delicacy and in difficulty, scarcely surpassed by any which has been performed upon the living body. Among the memorable operations performed by surgeons of this city, may also be enumerated the extirpation of the upper and lower jaw, and of the clavicle, and the application of ligatures to most of the great arteries which are within the reach of surgical interference. I might also allude here to the excision of the elbow-joint, repeatedly and successfully performed by one of our able surgeons; and to the scarification of the interior of the larynx for the cure of œdema of the glottis, performed repeatedly by the same surgeon. And although this latter operation had been previously hinted at and imperfectly performed by other surgeons, to our fellow-citizen must be ascribed the honour of having been the first who has succeeded in directing to it the general attention of the profession, and the first who has laid down precise rules for its performance.

From this cursory review of the progress which has been made in the leading departments of the science and art of medicine, it appears to me, gentle-

men, that it must be manifest to every one who hears me, that our profession is occupying higher ground, and is accomplishing more glorious results during the present age, than during any of those which have preceded it. And I have full confidence, that the young men who are now entering the ranks of the profession, will maintain its dignity and its usefulness; that they will enlarge its bounds and multiply its resources, and place it in a still more commanding position before the generation over which they shall exert their influence.

During the present year, our profession has been subjected to a trial of a most formidable character. The cholera, originating in the pestiferous marshes of the Ganges, where year by year it carries on its deadly work, annually numbering its hecatombs of victims, in the year 1844 transcended its ordinary limits towards the West, and began its march around the globe. During the years 1845 and 1846, it slowly advanced through Southern Asia, until, in the autumn of the last mentioned year, it had reached the western shores of the Caspian Sea. After its usual period of inactivity during the winter, in the spring of 1847 it recommenced its desolating career, and in the summer and autumn of that year it extended its ravages throughout the greater part of Russia and Turkey. In the year 1848, it continued its formidable march, invading the principal countries of Western Europe, in a number of which it has reappeared during the present year. In the autumn of 1848, it reached the shores of the American continent, appearing nearly

at the same time at New-Orleans and at our quarantine establishment on Staten Island. In the Northern part of the United States, it did not extend beyond Staten Island, its prevalence being almost exclusively within the hospitals, and being abruptly terminated by the first hard frost. In New-Orleans it prevailed extensively during the latter part of the autumn and the early part of the winter, committing fearful ravages among the population of that city, especially among the crowd of immigrants who had recently arrived from Ireland, and from other parts of Great Britain and from the continent of Europe. In the spring of the present year, this terrible disease again made its appearance on Staten Island, and soon afterwards a few cases were observed in a filthy and densely populated locality in the city of New-York. For a number of weeks after its outbreak in this city, its progress was remarkably slow, presenting in this respect a striking contrast with the epidemic of 1832, which made its onset with such tremendous fury, reaching its height in three weeks, and beginning rapidly to decline after the termination of the fourth week. The recent epidemic, on the other hand, continued slowly and steadily to increase, week after week, adding to the number of its victims, until the tenth week from its commencement, viz., the week terminating on the 21st day of July, when it reached its height, the aggregate mortality of that week, from cholera and other diseases, exceeding 1400 deaths, being nearly 500 more than had ever occurred in one week during any previous year. From that time the

disease declined as steadily and as slowly as it had hitherto advanced, and about the beginning of October scarcely any trace of its presence remained among us.

During the reign of this fearful epidemic in the city of New-York, it extended its ravages far and wide over the United States. It swept like a tornado from the mouth of the Mississippi upward along the course of that mighty stream and its tributaries ; it attacked in succession the chief cities and towns along the Atlantic coast, occasionally appearing in small villages and hamlets, where filth and wretchedness and intemperance invited its approach : it followed our adventurous emigrants by land and sea on their distant journeyings to the golden regions of the Pacific coast. It strewed with the bodies of our countrymen the rugged passes of the Isthmus of Panama, and the wild and savage plains and valleys of Texas and of the Missouri. From the great lakes which form our Northern boundary, down to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the vast prairies which lie beyond the Mississippi, as far as the line which separates the pioneers of civilization from the Indian and the buffalo, the pestilence extended its reign of terror, like a mighty conqueror, spreading death and desolation in its course. It spared neither age nor sex ; it claimed for its victims the smiling infant, the blooming youth, the blushing maid, the matron, the man of mature years and the hoary sire. Upon all it laid its icy touch, and it wrapped them all in its cold embrace. It seized the warrior who had often been victorious over the enemies of his country

on the tented field, but who was at last obliged to yield to the mortal blow inflicted by this invisible enemy. The statesman, the barrister, the scholar, the physician, the divine, the merchant, the mechanic, the labourer, the beggar, were all numbered among the victims of this unsparing scourge.

My principal object in dwelling upon this mournful subject has been to direct the attention of my auditors to the position which was occupied by the medical profession, and to the influence which it exerted upon the community in relation to the pestilence which occasioned such fearful mortality. And in the remarks which I shall make on this point, I shall refer particularly to the prevalence of the epidemic in this city, although the same remarks would in most respects apply with equal force to other parts of our country. The deportment of the medical profession during the recent prevalence of the cholera in this city, was such as to merit and to secure in a high degree the confidence and respect of the community. With the exception of a few individuals who thought it to be prudent, or who found it convenient, to abandon for a season their professional avocations, and to seek retirement or relaxation in the country, and of a few others, the state of whose health imperatively forbade them to remain in the city, the members of our profession manfully stood their ground, not merely sharing with their fellow-citizens the common peril, but fearlessly exposing themselves at every post of danger, where there was any prospect of relieving the sufferings, or of

preserving the lives, of those whom the pestilence had marked for its victims. While employed in this arduous and perilous service, some were themselves cut down by the unseen enemy. They fell, they nobly fell, not like the coward who receives his mortal wound in the back, while engaged in an inglorious retreat, but like the gallant soldier who encounters the enemy of his country, face to face, in the deadly fight, and bravely contends for every inch of ground, until at last, borne down by superior strength, he meets his fate, as he falls "with his back to the ground and his feet to the foe."

It has been represented as a reproach to the medical profession, that the cholera proved fatal in so many cases, in which the treatment was conducted by physicians of high reputation and acknowledged ability, both in hospitals and in private practice. But I do not regard this reproach as merited; for I am persuaded that in almost every instance, with the exception of the comparatively rare cases in which the patient was previously suffering from some other grave disease, the fatal result of cholera was owing to the neglect of medical advice. In order to come to a correct understanding of this subject, let us inquire who were the victims on whom chiefly the pestilence wreaked its fury. It is well known that the principal victims of cholera were to be found among scenes of filth, of intemperance and of vicious indulgence. And it is equally well known to the intelligent members of this community, with what earnestness and importunity the

members of our profession, on all proper occasions, urged and entreated their fellow-citizens, as they valued their lives, to avoid these prolific sources of disease. And if, notwithstanding these warnings and remonstrances, numbers were found so indolent as to remain surrounded with filth, while the purifying Croton was flowing by their doors ; or so wedded to the intoxicating glass, that even the fear of sudden death could not induce them to refrain from its use ; or so much the slaves of appetite, that they could not abstain from the use of noxious articles of food, although the graves around them were rapidly becoming filled with the victims of self-indulgence ; surely it was not the fault of the medical profession, but of the victims themselves, if the pestilence inflicted on them a mortal blow. But it may be said, that although the most numerous victims of the cholera were to be found among the filthy, the intemperate and the self-indulgent, yet the cases were by no means rare, in which persons who lived in comfortable and airy mansions, who were scrupulously neat in all their personal and domestic arrangements, who abstained from all intoxicating drinks, and who confined themselves strictly to wholesome articles of food, avoiding everything which was pronounced by the profession to be injurious, still became the victims of this terrible disease. I acknowledge that, in such cases, all proper precautions were taken to guard against an attack of the disease ; but I still affirm, that, in the vast majority of these cases, the fatal termination was owing to a neglect or disregard of med-

ical advice. In nearly every instance in which a fatal attack of cholera occurred under the circumstances which have been mentioned, the premonitory stage of the disease was allowed to pass by without efficient treatment. And surely this course was not in accordance with the advice of the medical profession, who gave to the community "line upon line," and "precept upon precept," warning them to lose no time in securing medical aid on the first occurrence of the premonitory diarrhœa. Many, who were attacked with this symptom, disregarded it altogether, making no change in their habits or mode of living, and employing no remedies, making light of a disease which was attended with no pain and occasioned but little inconvenience, until suddenly the full force of the pestilence came upon them like the blast of the Sirocco, and it was too late for human aid to avail them. Others, under similar circumstances, did not wholly disregard the disease, but undertook to be their own physicians, and in many sad instances postponed sending for a regular practitioner, until their case had become utterly hopeless. Others, again, placed their confidence in some of the numerous advertised specifics and nostrums for the prevention and cure of cholera, and were thus betrayed into a fatal security, until they found too late that they had leaned upon a broken reed, which, instead of supporting them, had pierced their vitals. Throughout the whole progress of the epidemic, I did not meet with a single instance of cholera occurring in a person previously in good health, and

proceeding to a fatal termination, in which timely application for medical advice had been made, and in which the directions of a regular physician had been strictly followed from the beginning. And I believe that the experience of my medical brethren, in this respect, has substantially accorded with my own. As an illustration of the manner in which patients disregarded medical advice, and sacrificed their lives to a vain self-confidence, I will mention two or three cases which came under my own observation.

A retired sea-captain, who was somewhat advanced in age, and whose constitution had been somewhat shattered by severe and long continued attacks of sickness in former years, but who still retained a certain degree of vigour, proposed, at an early period of the epidemic, to visit Saratoga, and to drink of the waters of the Congress Spring, which had formerly been of service to him. An attempt was made to dissuade him from this course, but he could not be moved from his purpose. After spending some time at Saratoga, he was attacked with diarrhœa, for the relief of which he did not seek medical advice. He came from Saratoga to Troy, and spent a day in that city, still suffering from diarrhœa, but without consulting a physician. He then returned to New-York, and remained another day without professional advice, although his diarrhœa had become more severe, and notwithstanding the remonstrances of a medical gentleman who boarded at the same hotel with him, to whose admonitions he replied that he was not afraid, because he had had similar attacks

before, and they had always done him good. On the morning of the following day, I was summoned to his bed-side ; but it was too late to rescue him from the grasp of the destroyer, who had been allowed so long without resistance to carry on his deadly work, and to sap the foundations of life. I found the patient in a state of helpless prostration : his pulse was feeble and flickering, his skin livid, cold and shrivelled, his eyes deeply sunken, his voice faint, hoarse and sepulchral. He died on the afternoon of the same day, a victim to his own folly and perverseness, in rejecting timely professional assistance, which would no doubt have been successful in restoring him to his wonted health.

Another case which I will mention, is that of a German widow having four young children. This woman was attacked with the premonitory diarrhœa during the last week in June. She asked advice of a physician whose office was in the same house in which she resided. He advised her to go to bed and to submit to an efficient course of treatment. She objected that the care of her children required her exertions, and said that she could only subject herself to such treatment as would not interfere with her attention to her ordinary affairs. Accordingly, palliatives were administered, by which the disease was partly checked, but without being radically cured. On the fourth of July, about a week from the commencement of her diarrhœa, I was called to see her, and found her in a full collapse ; she died on the evening of the same day. Thus was another life

sacrificed, and four fatherless children were deprived also of the care and affection of a mother, from an unwillingness to incur the inconveniences and to practise the self-denial connected with a strict compliance with medical advice. In the two instances which I have mentioned, there was a great degree of recklessness, and a long-continued neglect of professional counsel. But there were other cases, in which the premonitory stage of the disease was of much shorter duration, and in which the fatal symptoms advanced with such rapidity, as almost to exonerate the victim from the charge of gross recklessness or imprudence. I will briefly mention a case of this kind, to illustrate the danger even of a comparatively short delay, and the importance of obtaining the advice of a physician as soon as possible after the invasion of the disease. Soon after the epidemic had passed its culminating point, and had begun slowly to decline, I was requested by one of our most eminent physicians to take temporary charge of a young woman suffering from cholera, as he was under the necessity of making a professional visit out of the city. The patient was living as a domestic in the house of a physician of high standing, who had for a fortnight been confined to his room by sickness, and who, at seven o'clock that morning, had left the city in the hope of re-establishing his health by spending a few days in the country. The same morning at four o'clock, the young woman to whom I have alluded was attacked with diarrhœa, and although the doctor remained in the house three hours after she

was attacked, she allowed him to leave home without consulting him or informing him of the fact that she was indisposed. At ten o'clock, she sent for a physician, who found her in a state of collapse, and at four o'clock the same afternoon, she died. Here then was an instance in which life was sacrificed to the neglect of the patient for a few hours to secure medical attendance, a neglect the more inexcusable, because there was a physician under the same roof and within the sound of her voice.

The cases which have been described afford a fair illustration of nearly all the fatal cases of this terrible epidemic, and they show clearly that the fatal event was due, not to the want of skill on the part of the medical profession but to the imprudence and negligence of the subjects of the disease. But it may be urged that, however gross may be the indiscretions of the patient, however long he may have postponed his application for medical aid, and whatever progress the disease may have made before the physician is called in, still it might reasonably be expected, that professional skill should be competent to arrest the disease, and to restore the patient to health. But it appears to me, that this is to expect from the medical profession, more than the public have a right to look for. If we are enabled to lay down rules by which the disease may in most cases be prevented, or at least to point out the manner in which its insidious approaches can be recognised, and if when early summoned to the patient we can confidently prescribe a course of treatment by which the fatal result of

the disease may be prevented, and the patient may in most instances be speedily restored to the full enjoyment of health, I think that we have accomplished as much as the community is fairly entitled to expect from us. I do not say that this is all that we ought to aim at, or that it is all which we do actually endeavour to effect, or all that we are enabled in any case to accomplish: for "while there is life, there is hope;" and although the spark may be glimmering in the socket, it is our duty to aim to guard it from utter extinction, and to use every exertion to restore it to its wonted glow. And even under these unpromising circumstances, success does occasionally crown our efforts. The pulse, which had almost ceased to beat, resumes its strokes; the death-like coldness gives place to the warmth of rekindled life; the livid hue which betokens dissolution is replaced by the glow of health; the hollow and glazed eye is restored to its accustomed fulness and brilliancy; the feeble, hoarse and husky voice regains its natural strength and quality. But such gratifying results are not usually to be expected; and it is madness in any individual to presume on their occurrence in his own case, and under the influence of this presumption to neglect application for medical aid at the only period when it is likely to be successful. What would be thought of a feeble garrison in a fortified town, badly provided with arms and ammunition, when besieged by a large army abundantly provided with all the munitions of war, and offering no quarter to the besieged, if they should reject the proffered aid of a

friendly leader, who had ample means at his disposal to rout the besieging army and to relieve the garrison? Would they not be liable to the charge of folly and presumption, if they should prefer to rely on their own feeble resources, or if they should attempt to frighten away the enemy by a display of rush-lights or of Clark's candles, or should load their cannon with snipe shot, under the pretence that the more minutely the lead was divided, the more powerful would be its action? And it would be but a slight mitigation of their folly, if when breaches had already been effected in the walls of the citadel, or its foundations had been undermined, and a train had been laid which required only the application of a torch to produce an explosion which would convert their town into a promiscuous heap of ruins, if under these desperate circumstances they should seek the assistance of an army whose timely aid they had rejected. But enough, I think, has been said to exonerate the medical profession from all censure on account of the fatal effects of the cholera, and to show where lies the responsibility for these direful results.

The services which were rendered by physicians to the community, during the prevalence of the epidemic, were by no means confined to their attendance on the sick, or to advice given in individual cases. Most efficient service was rendered by our profession to the public authorities, by instructing them as to the regulations which were to be adopted for improving the sanitary condition of the city, and for providing hospitals and district physicians for the benefit

of the poor, who constituted so large a proportion of the subjects of the pestilence. And it becomes me here to speak, in no measured terms of eulogy, of the labours of the special medical council, which was associated with the sanitary committee of the Board of Health during the prevalence of the cholera. By their faithful and arduous labours, by their wise counsels, and by their calm and dignified communications to the public, they did much to allay the apprehensions of the community, to restore public confidence, and to mitigate the severity and to limit the extent of the pestilence.

Great as was the aggregate mortality in this city during the prevalence of the epidemic, there is no reason to doubt that it would have been vastly greater, but for the wise and efficient measures which were recommended by the medical profession to arrest its progress. It is an unquestionable fact, that the purification of the streets and gutters, and the removal of nuisances, by the public authorities acting under the advice of the medical profession, and the hygienic precautions which were observed by individuals in accordance with the advice of their physicians, as well as the actual attendance of medical men upon the sick, were instruments in the hands of a benignant Providence, in greatly diminishing the ravages of the disease, and in preserving a multitude of valuable lives. And if we should again be visited by this terrible scourge, I believe that the eyes of the community would be directed to our profession with increased confidence, as the principal foundation of

their hopes, as far as human agency is concerned. And in such an event, could I stand on a commanding eminence, and speak with a voice which would penetrate the most secluded spot in our city, I would urge my fellow-citizens, as they value their lives, and the lives of those who are dear to them, to abandon every false ground of confidence, to forsake quackery in all its forms, and to place their reliance on the regular medical profession, as the only sure ground of safety and of hope which human instrumentality can furnish.

If the medical profession is calculated to exert so beneficial an influence on the community, it is a matter of the utmost importance that ample provision should be made, not only to maintain its present high position, but to advance it to one of greater dignity and usefulness. The members of our profession are on an average short-lived. The cares and anxieties connected with the "*res angusta domi*," which characterize the earlier years of medical men, and the unceasing occupations, the exposure, and the privation of rest and of relaxation, which attend the later years of our professional life, have a manifest tendency to cut short our days, before we reach the full period which is ordinarily allotted to man. The events of the last summer, to which allusion has already been made, present a mournful illustration of our mortality. To supply the deficiencies which are created by sickness and death in the ranks of the profession, as well as to meet the demands which are growing out of the unparalleled increase of our

population, a large number of young men must be annually brought forward to assume the duties and responsibilities connected with the healing art. And upon the education and the qualifications of these young men must depend the solution of the question, whether they shall be a curse or a blessing to their fellow-citizens. The subject of medical education is one of such deep interest to the community, that I feel justified in dwelling on it for a short time on the present occasion. I am not one of those who believe that on this subject we are making a retrograde movement. Since I commenced the study of medicine, one generation of medical men has passed away from the stage of life, and another has taken its place. It is my firm conviction, that the generation to which I belong, as a whole, received a more thorough practical education in the different branches of medical science, than any of those which preceded it, and that the young men who are now commencing their professional career, are laying a still broader and deeper foundation for future reputation and usefulness. And it is my fervent desire, that from generation to generation, the course of medical education may be more and more complete, and that the future members of our profession may be qualified to discharge their high responsibilities with more honour to themselves, and with more benefit to their fellow-men. But while I cheerfully admit that the facilities for acquiring a thorough medical education are greater than in former years, that the courses of medical instruction are more comprehensive and more com-

plete, that the means of illustration are more ample, and that a greater amount of diligence and zeal is displayed by those who occupy the post of instructors, I am still persuaded that there is much room for improvement. There are certain changes in our system of medical education which the spirit of the age imperatively demands ; and unless these changes be introduced by those who have the control of our existing organizations, new institutions must be organized to accomplish the reforms which are so loudly called for. In the first place, the regular courses of lectures, which in nearly all our medical colleges are completed in a term not exceeding four months, should be extended to a period of not less than six months. In some of the most important departments of medical instruction, the courses are necessarily exceedingly defective, in consequence of the short time which is allowed for their completion. For example, in the departments of practical medicine and surgery, I well remember, when I was attending lectures as a medical student, that no instruction was given with regard to many of the most important as well as the most common diseases which are met with in practice. And I have no doubt that many of our young practitioners at the present time, feel the same embarrassment which I felt at the commencement of my professional career, when called on to treat diseases which had been entirely omitted in the courses of public lectures. It has been objected by some of the professors in our medical colleges, that if they should extend the term of instruction, they would drive away

students to other institutions, where they could be inducted into the profession at a less cost of time and of money. I believe that this plea does injustice to the medical students of our country, who would be attracted instead of being repelled, by the greater advantages which would be held out to them, for the acquisition of professional knowledge. But even if the case were otherwise, and the extension of the term of lectures should be followed by a diminution of the number of pupils, and a pecuniary sacrifice to the professors, still the change ought to be made; and ultimately a reaction would take place in favour of those who should have made such honourable sacrifices for the good of the profession, and their institutions would be more firmly established, and would attain a higher degree of prosperity.

In the second place, clinical instruction should receive a much larger share of attention than is commonly awarded to it in most of our medical colleges. It is a matter of the utmost importance in the education of medical students, that they should acquire a practical familiarity with disease, such as can only be attained at the bedside of the patient. There are many students of medicine who are diligent in their private studies, assiduous in their attendance on public lectures, and thoroughly drilled in the offices of their preceptors, so that they are enabled to pass a most satisfactory examination on the different branches of medical science, who are nevertheless sadly deficient in a practical knowledge of the diseases which they are to treat, when they assume the responsibili

ties of medical practitioners. And this deficiency will be painfully realized by themselves, when, after entering upon their professional career, they shall stand by the bedside of a patient suffering from some grave disease, and shall feel that they are umpires of life and death, and that they have failed to acquire the practical knowledge which would be a safe guide to them under such trying circumstances. The defect in our system of medical education, to which I am alluding, is not easily to be remedied, as far as those institutions are concerned which are located in villages and small towns. But in our large cities, ample materials are to be found for an extended course of clinical instruction. In the city of New-York especially, with its numerous dispensaries and infirmaries, and two large and well-regulated hospitals, conveniently situated and accessible to medical students, most abundant opportunities are afforded for illustrating almost every variety of disease. But in neither of our medical colleges are students required to attend any of these institutions, where they might acquire a practical knowledge of disease. And as the courses of lectures, which they are required to attend, make so heavy a demand upon their time, a large proportion of the students do not avail themselves of the opportunities which they might enjoy, of observing for themselves the phenomena of disease and the effects of remedies. It is true that in both of these colleges, and in nearly all of the medical schools in our country, there are weekly clinical lectures delivered by some of the pro-

fessors, and a large amount of practical instruction is thus communicated. But, from the necessity of the case, nearly every form of severe and acute disease is excluded from these college cliniques, and no facilities are there afforded for the investigation of the more severe forms of morbid action, with which it is especially important that students of medicine should become familiar. The only means by which this defect in medical education can be remedied, is to require of every student satisfactory proof of regular attendance upon clinical instruction in a hospital, before he can be allowed to graduate. I am persuaded that such a requirement would give great satisfaction to the profession at large, and that it would contribute in no small degree to elevate the standard of medical acquirements, and to increase the amount of practical skill in the profession.

The private instruction of medical students, in the offices of their preceptors, constitutes a very important part of their education, and deserves a much larger share of attention than is commonly awarded to it. No physician or surgeon ought to undertake the instruction of private pupils, without being amply provided with books, engravings and anatomical preparations, to aid them in the prosecution of their studies. And no one ought to assume the responsibilities of a private teacher, who is so fully immersed in the cares of an extensive practice, as to prevent him from devoting a large amount of his personal attention to the instruction of his pupils. Of course, this remark does not apply to those who receive pupils into

their offices, and employ competent assistants to superintend and direct their studies. How often does it occur, that physicians undertake the private instruction of pupils, with a most meagre provision of books, and without a skeleton or any other preparations ! And how often do private teachers fail to exercise any daily supervision over their students, so that the only palpable relation between the pupil and his preceptor is, that one pays, and the other receives a fee ! These things ought not so to be, and the medical man who looks upon the relation between teacher and pupil as a mere mercenary affair, betrays a narrowness of mind which is inconsistent with the true dignity of the profession which he represents.

The preliminary education of medical students is a subject which deserves the serious consideration of the members of this Academy. It is undoubtedly true, that a large number of young men annually join the ranks of the profession, whose minds have not received that careful training which is best adapted to strengthen their faculties and to qualify them for vigorous intellectual exercise. There are some who become students of medicine, whose previous education has been almost confined to the simple elements of reading, writing and arithmetic, and whose knowledge even of these elements is very defective. When such persons enter the medical profession, they necessarily lower its dignity, and impair its influence with the enlightened portion of the community. It certainly ought to be required of every medical stu-

dent, that he should have some knowledge of Latin and Greek, of Algebra and the higher Mathematics, and of Natural, Intellectual and Moral Philosophy. And if the members of this Academy and of kindred institutions would exert their influence to effect the reform which is demanded in this important matter, there is no doubt that a gratifying measure of success would attend their efforts.

There is another subject connected with medical education, which is entitled to the most earnest attention of the members of this Academy. I allude to the loose manner in which the examinations for graduation are conducted in some of our medical colleges, in consequence of which a large number of young men of inferior qualifications are thrust forward into the profession, when they ought to be subjected to a much longer period of pupilage; or if found incorrigibly negligent or ignorant, to be excluded entirely from the ranks of medical men. This is an evil of great and alarming magnitude, and should call forth the united and persevering exertions of medical men for its correction. As long as the standard by which our medical colleges are judged consists rather in the number than in the high qualifications of their graduates, so long will the professors in those institutions be tempted to make their examinations as easy as possible. A Frenchman, who had committed a flagrant breach of the rules of morality, was once told that he had no conscience. His reply to his reprover was, "I will prove to you that I have more conscience than you have. You will admit

that all men are born with conscience alike : now as you have made use of yours, and I have allowed mine to remain as nature gave it to me, therefore I have more than you." Judged by this standard, the professors in some of our medical institutions would seem to have their consciences largely developed, as they pay so little regard to the admonitions of this silent monitor, in the graduation of their students, that the proverb is often applied to them, "all is grist which comes to their mill." The true remedy for this evil consists in the separation of the teaching and the licensing power, and the establishment of distinct boards of examination, in which should be vested the sole authority to confer diplomas. The members of these boards should receive fixed salaries, and their emoluments should in no measure depend on the number of students whom they admit to graduation. In this manner would be effectually withdrawn all motives of self-interest, which, under other circumstances, might tempt the examiners to multiply the number of graduates, and to break down the barriers which should prevent the intrusion of unqualified persons into the ranks of the profession.

Before bringing this address to a close, it may not be improper to make some allusion to the subject of quackery, and to the influence which it exerts upon the medical profession and upon the community at large. Quackery is no new thing under the sun : it has existed in all ages, and it is to be found among all nations. Its main design is ever to acquire gain by practising on the ignorance of mankind. It

accordingly varies its form according to the state of society which exists in the place which it has chosen for the theatre of its operations. In rude and barbarous communities, it is commonly associated with some prevailing superstition, and this enables the person who practises it to acquire an astonishing influence over the public mind. Among savage nations, we often find the priest assuming also the character of physician and of conjuror. He professes to hold a mysterious intercourse with spiritual beings, and to exercise a controlling power over the lives of his fellow-citizens. He is regarded with the greatest reverence, and few are found so hardy as to dare to incur his displeasure.

One of the most remarkable superstitious usages which have been practised for the cure of diseases, is that of a charm or incantation, consisting of certain verses or words to be sung or repeated by the patient or his friends. And, no doubt, some diseases which are very much under the control of imagination, have actually been cured in this way. This may perhaps be considered as one of the few instances in which "ignorance is bliss," and "'twere folly to be wise." So strong has been the confidence of men in the efficacy of this mode of treating diseases, that a proverbial expression has grown out of it: when a remedy is administered which gives very speedy relief, it is said to "act like a charm." There was another mode in which charms sometimes acted beneficially, besides that in which their agency was exerted merely through the imagination; viz.:

by causing the patient to abstain from the use of supposed remedies, which in reality tended to counteract the processes established by nature for his recovery. Thus at a period when it was customary to apply to wounds complicated dressings, which retarded the healing process, it was found that certain wounds which were treated by charms were cured in a much shorter time. The treatment consisted in the application of simple dressings to the wound, and the practice of incantations and other ceremonies over the weapon with which it had been inflicted. Sir Walter Scott alludes to this practice in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel."

"But she has ta'en the broken lance,
And wash'd it from the clotted gore,
And salv'd the splinter o'er and o'er ;
William of Deloraine, in trance,
Whene'er she turn'd it round and round,
Twisted as if she gall'd his wound ;
Then to her maidens she did say,
That he should be whole man and sound."

The efficacy of this mode of treatment was ascribed solely to the charm, and it was considered still more wonderful that it should be successful without the various applications, which, under other circumstances, would have been made to the wounded part. The charm has long since been dropped, but surgeons have almost universally adopted the simple method of dressing wounds, and have found it the the most effectual in causing them to heal.

It is not my purpose, on the present occasion, to attempt a complete history of the multitudinous forms which quackery has assumed in order to win the con-

fidence and to empty the purses of the community. It would be in vain to attempt to comprise even an epitome of such a history within the time which is allotted to me. I purpose to confine myself to a brief notice of some of the forms of charlatanism which are now practised in this country, and which have, to a certain extent, obtained the confidence of a portion of our fellow citizens. The advocates of these different systems are at total variance with each other as to the modes of treating diseases; but all agree in representing their own methods as safe, speedy and effectual in subduing disease and restoring health. And this they declare in no ambiguous terms; they express no doubt of the success of their treatment, no fear lest the disease may be misunderstood, or the remedy misapplied. And herein they differ most widely from the man of science, who has learned enough to know how limited are his acquirements, and who has observed enough to know how fallacious is his experience. Such a man is prepared to admit the truth of the aphorism of Hippocrates, the father of medicine: *Ὁ βίος βραχύς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρὴ, ὁ δὲ καιρὸς ὀξύς, ἡ δὲ πείρα σφαλέρη, ἡ δὲ κρίσις χαλεπή.* "Life is short, art is long, opportunity fleeting, experience fallacious, judgment difficult."

Some charlatans throw off entirely the form and the garb of science, and pride themselves on their want of education, as if science and common sense were antipodes to each other. These are persons of the baser sort, who appeal to the lowest prejudices of the most ignorant and degraded classes of society.

Such are those who are known by the title of Indian Doctors, and who attach great importance to their remedies, as having been discovered by savages, and therefore eminently free from the charge of speculation and hypothesis which they suppose to be the attributes of learning.

Nearly allied to these are quacks of another class, who are known as root-doctors, herb-doctors, steam-doctors, botanical physicians or Thomsonian physicians. One of their distinguishing characteristics is their exclusive attachment to remedies drawn from the vegetable kingdom, and the abhorrence with which they regard medicines of mineral origin. From the pompous title which some of these charlatans assume, viz.: botanists or botanical physicians, it might be supposed, that however they might neglect or despise other branches of science, they at least pursue the study of botany with unwearied zeal and industry. But this is very far from being the case: it is doubtful whether, among the immense numbers of this class of quacks who infest our country, there is an individual who is entitled to be called a botanist. Their treatment is characterized by an extraordinary degree of rashness. They are in the habit of employing remedies of a very active kind, and capable of producing very powerful effects on the constitution; and from their entire ignorance of the structure of the human body, and of the functions of its several organs in health and in disease, they necessarily administer their remedies without that accurate discrimination which is essential in order to

secure their safe operation, and to produce their appropriate effects in the removal of disease. The remedies which they are most in the habit of employing, are hot vapour baths, emetics and powerful stimulants. All of these are agents of great power, and capable of doing great mischief when injudiciously employed. But while they use these powerful agents with so fearless a hand, scattering, in their ignorance, "fire-brands, arrows and death," they regard mineral medicines with abhorrence, as poisons, which ought never to be introduced into the human stomach. This prejudice in favour of the superior safety of vegetable medicines, has spread widely throughout the community, and has even entered our legislative halls. There was a law recently in force in the State of New-York, prohibiting all persons not regularly licensed to practise medicine, from administering any remedies, except those of vegetable origin which were the products of our own soil. How absurd a regulation, and how utterly inadequate to guard the health and the lives of the community from the ignorant or unprincipled administration of injurious remedies! A sufficient proof of the absurdity of this law is found in the fact, that, while it forbade a person to give a dose of salts, or of magnesia, it authorized him to administer the deadly stramonium and hemlock, and to exhibit the prussic acid, an agent more rapidly and more certainly destructive of life than any poison which is derived from the mineral kingdom. There is no doubt that the treatment adopted by the Thomsonian quacks is sometimes ef-

ficacious in curing diseases : as a clock which is not wound up will point to the correct time twice in twenty-four hours ; or as a sportsman, who fires without taking aim, will sometimes, by chance, hit his mark. But it is manifest that remedies of so active a kind ought only to be administered by those who are acquainted with the laws which govern the animal economy, and who are capable of distinguishing the circumstances in which their use is likely to be attended with beneficial effects, from those in which their action will be injurious to the health, or destructive to the life of the patient.

There are quacks of another class, known by the title of bone-setters, who have gained a considerable amount of reputation, which has enabled them to accomplish the great design of quackery, viz. : to "put money into their pockets." Powers of an almost miraculous kind are attributed to them. It is commonly reported, and by many believed, that they can take hold of a cat, and dislocate all the bones in its body, and then, with wonderful dexterity, reduce them to their natural situation ! This remarkable power of reducing dislocations, and also of curing sundry diseases of the joints, which is attributed to bone-setters, is not supposed to be the result of an extraordinary amount of anatomical knowledge of the bones, ligaments and articulations. No ! these wonderful men are not accused of having wasted their time in dissections ; no joint of man or of cat has been subjected to their scrutiny. The extraordinary faculty which they possess, and which distinguishes

them from the rest of mankind, is congenital, and runs in certain families, all of whose male members possess the wonder-working power! It is a common saying of these bone-setters, when a person applies to them with a sprain or other injury of a joint, even if the injury be a slight one, "Sir, your hip, knee and ankle, are all out of joint." The operator then takes hold of the limb, and, by dint of violent wrenching and pulling, pretends to have reduced the dislocations. The patient felicitates himself on his good fortune in having fallen into the hands of a man who had the sagacity to detect a dislocation which had eluded the observation of a regular surgeon, and he admires the dexterity with which it was reduced. There are numerous cases, where it is perfectly evident to an anatomist that there is no dislocation of any of the bones entering into the structure of a joint, in which the bone-setters tell their patients that there is a small bone out of place, and that in joints where no small bone exists! And yet the humbug has its effect: the patient's second cousin knew a person who knew another, who hurt his knee and applied to a bone-setter, who told him that his hip, knee and ankle, were all out of joint. This evinced great sagacity on the part of the bone-setter, to discover a dislocation not only in the knee which was hurt, but also in the hip and ankle, which had not to his knowledge sustained any injury. The hip, knee and ankle, were violently pulled, the dislocated bones were declared to be reduced, and after awhile the knee got well. Now, this marvellous cure, effected by the bone-setter on the knee of the friend of the

acquaintance of the second cousin of the patient, has convinced him that the bone-setter is really a wonderful man, and that the intuitive knowledge of the structure of the joints which he possesses is worth vastly more than the knowledge acquired by the anatomist as the result of laborious investigation. And the bone-setter's declaration, that a small bone is displaced, is believed by the patient, although the anatomist in his dissections has never found a trace of the existence of such a bone. Although the pretensions of these charlatans are so evidently and monstrously absurd, yet there are not wanting men, even of considerable intelligence, who yield credence to them : so strong is the love of the marvellous in the mind of man !

Among the forms in which quackery exerts its widest influence, is that of patent medicines. These remedies are sold in enormous quantities, and frequently exert a very deleterious agency. They are puffed in the public prints, as capable of curing coughs, colds and consumptions, asthma, sprains and bruises, dyspepsia and jaundice, epilepsy and sore throat, blindness, lameness and deafness, corns and warts, chills and fevers, worms and St. Vitus's dance, and all the other maladies to which mankind is subject ; and long lists of cases are published in which their use has been attended with signal benefit. There is a great variety of these remedies, both in the form of internal medicines and of external applications, and nearly all professing to cure a great variety of diseases, many of them of an incurable kind.

I recollect once to have seen an advertisement setting forth the virtues of Dr. Ramrod's Essential Tincture of Gridirons. Among the marvellous cures effected by this powerful tincture was one, which I will endeavour to relate as nearly as possible in the narrator's own words: "As I was sitting one evening in June in my office, meditating on the changes to which all sublunary things are exposed, I suddenly heard an unusual noise, and looking around me, I saw a vast number of rats approaching towards me: It was in vain to attempt to escape; I was attacked on all sides, and in less than five minutes I was almost completely devoured, there being only two fingers, three toes, the tip of my right ear, and one third of my left thigh to be found. My son entered the room and was shocked at seeing the state to which I was reduced; he ran immediately to Dr. Ramrod's Dispensary, and procured a bottle of his invaluable Tincture of Gridirons, which was applied without delay, and I was immediately restored; and although ten years have elapsed, I have never been devoured by rats since."

It is a favourite theory with the venders of patent medicines, that all diseases are the result of impurity of the blood, and that they may all be successfully treated by one remedy, each one representing his own nostrum as the great panacea. According to this beautiful theory, it is a matter of indifference whether a man has epilepsy or white swelling, fever or scurvy, smallpox or stroke of the sun, inflammation of the eye, or consumption of the lungs. However great

may be the variety of symptoms or the diversity of causes, the disease is essentially the same, it is an impurity of the blood. In one case, this impurity of the blood may have been occasioned by a blow with a hatchet; in another, by a fall on the ice; in a third, it may have had its origin from the pestilential air of a marsh or the confined effluvia of a crowded prison; in the fourth, from the exclusive use of salted food during a long sea voyage; in a fifth, it may have arisen from contagion; in a sixth, from exposure to the vertical rays of a tropical sun; a seventh may have had for its cause a smoky chimney; an eighth, silk stockings and kid shoes with the thermometer at zero. The effect in all these cases is the same, the disease is one, the fountain of life has been poisoned, the blood has been rendered impure. What then has the patient to do? The answer is simple and intelligible to the meanest capacity: Let him take the panacea, the great purifier of the blood. Whatever be the nature of the disease, this, this is the unfailing remedy. But suppose that the patient has already taken it, and found it ineffectual? Let him take more; it can do him no harm, it cannot render his blood too pure; in the end it will certainly effect a cure. But suppose that the patient has felt decidedly worse, since he began to take the medicine? It only proves that a contest has been commenced between the disease and the remedy: the remedy undoubtedly is superior in power, and will finally be victorious. If five pills occasion an aggravation of the symptoms, let him take ten; if ten

increase the violence of the disease, let him take twenty; if twenty are followed by more alarming symptoms, let him take forty. Let not his courage falter; let him remember the maxim, "fortuna favet fortibus." But suppose that, in this violent struggle between the deadly disease and the life-giving remedy, the patient should die, a not improbable supposition? It would only be a more convincing proof of the efficacy of the wonder-working pills, and a monument of the patient's folly in not taking enough to save his life.

The making and selling of nostrums is no novelty, and the present is not the only generation which has been gulled by them. One of these medicines after another has appeared, has enjoyed a transient reputation, and has then "gone to the tomb of all the Capulets." In a few instances, the powers of quack medicines have been so highly esteemed, that large sums of money have been given to the proprietors to reveal their composition; but as soon as the mystery has been unravelled, the charm has disappeared, and the remedy which was once regarded as so important, has been consigned to oblivion, the common grave of quacks. And the remedies which are now so much esteemed, on account of their wonder-working powers, will undergo the same fate; and other Swaims and Morrisons and Grandfathers will appear in other days, to reap an income from the credulity of the ages in which they shall live, and, like those who have gone before them, will in their turn be forgotten.

Among the Protean forms which quackery has

assumed, in order to prey on the credulity of the public, one of the most irrational and monstrous is that which is known by the name of Mesmerism, or Animal Magnetism. Its cardinal doctrine is, that a subtle fluid emanates from the human body, and is capable, by divers pawings resembling the pow-wow of a conjuror, of being communicated from one to another, exerting a strange and mysterious influence upon body and mind, so that the person to whom the influence is communicated, ceases to exercise his own powers in obedience to his own will, but in all his mental and corporeal acts, is a passive agent of the person who communicates the influence. But this cunning mixture of jugglery and witchcraft has been so often exposed, and its shameful trickery so fully unmasked, that I regard it as entirely unnecessary to dwell longer upon the subject.

Another form of quackery, which is now somewhat in vogue, is known by the popular name of Hydro-*pathy*, or the *Water-cure*. It proposes to dispense with all medicaments, and to cure all diseases by the use of water, chiefly employed as an external application, and, for the most part, at a low temperature. The system originated with a peasant named Priessnitz, residing at Græfenberg in Silesia. Notwithstanding the humble origin of this system and its exclusive nature, it has succeeded in gaining the confidence of large numbers, including many persons of wealth, rank and education, both in Europe and America. There is no question that bathing, whether general or local, under many cir-

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cumstances, exerts a very decided influence in the preservation and in the restoration of health. I am fully inclined to concur in the sentiment of Pindar, “*αριστον το μεν υδωρ :*” “water is a most excellent thing ;” and I have no doubt that a more free application of it both to the persons and the dwellings, especially of the lower classes of the community, would be attended with incalculable advantage to health. But it would hardly seem necessary to bring forward an argument to prove the absurdity of a system, which regards water as the sole agent to be relied on in the cure of diseases, and which rejects all other remedies, although their employment has been proved by repeated experience to be attended with the most beneficial results. And if it were not a matter of daily observation, it would scarcely appear credible that intelligent men or women should be willing to entrust their health and their lives to a class of quacks, holding a system so irrational and so exclusive.

An attempt has been made within a few years to introduce into this city a system of charlatanism of English origin, known as Chronothermalism. But as the success of this system has been so meagre as barely to elevate its solitary professor from the rank of a pedestrian, and to enable him to ride in a gig, and as even this limited measure of success is far beyond its merits, I do not regard it as worthy of any farther notice.

The last species of quackery to which I shall direct your attention, is one which far exceeds all others

in the arrogance of its pretensions and the absurdity of its doctrines. It has assumed the form of a new system of medicine, and has been dignified with the pompous name of Homœopathia. The author of the system was a German named Samuel Hahnemann, a man who rivalled in self-conceit his extraordinary countryman, Paracelsus, who declared in a public lecture, that there was more learning in the sole of his shoe than in the writings of Galen and Avicenna. Paracelsus long bore the merited title of Prince of Quacks, but was at last compelled to yield the palm to Samuel Hahnemann. The work by which Hahnemann made known his system to the world, received from its author the modest title of "Organon," implying that, as its illustrious predecessor bearing the same name had overturned the præexisting systems of philosophy, which were built on false foundations, and had established on their ruins the inductive system ; so this production of German genius should overturn all the existing systems of medicine, and rear in their stead a proud and lofty structure, which should be admired by all future ages. And doubtless he looked forward to the time when the names of the reformer of philosophy and the reformer of medicine should be placed side by side in the temple of fame, and should there shine with a lustre far eclipsing the glory of Æsculapius and Hippocrates, and Galen and Sydenham.

The fundamental doctrines of Hahnemann's system are these : 1st. All medicines are capable, when given to a person in health, of producing a train of

symptoms, constituting an artificial disease, or what Hahnemann calls a drug-sickness. 2d. Medicines act absolutely and unconditionally, their action not varying according to the state of the system at the time when they are given, but uniformly producing the same effects. 3d. Every disease arising from natural causes, consists of a train of symptoms closely resembling those which are occasioned by taking a particular medicine when in perfect health, but still differing essentially in its nature. 4th. Every disease is capable of being certainly cured by the exhibition of the medicine which, when given to a healthy person, produces a train of symptoms similar to those of the disease itself. 5th. The power of drugs over the human constitution is vastly greater than that of the ordinary causes of disease ; so that however violent the symptoms of a disease may be, the drug, if properly selected and administered, will infallibly subdue the disease. 6th. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a dose of a homœopathic drug so minute that it will not have a more powerful effect on the system than the disease has. 7th. The efficiency of drugs is vastly increased by certain manipulations. 8th. No medicine, nor any treatment, not calculated to produce symptoms similar to those of the disease, is capable of curing it.

I will now briefly review these doctrines, taking them up one by one, and exhibiting them in their true light. 1st. All medicines are capable, when given to a person in health, of producing a train of symptoms, constituting an artificial disease. This is

true in a limited sense, if we regard every deviation from a state of perfect health, or every change of the feelings, as a disease.

2d. Medicines act absolutely and unconditionally, their action not varying essentially according to the state of the system in which they are given, but uniformly producing the same effects. This proposition is essentially false : medicines are not absolute, unconditional agents : their action has a reference to the peculiar state of the system at the time when they are administered. One or two examples will suffice to show it : The conjunctiva, which lines the eyelids and is reflected over the eyeball, is one of the most delicate and sensitive parts of the body, in its ordinary state scarcely bearing the contact of the blandest substance ; and yet it is a fact well known to surgeons, that, in certain states of disease, it may be touched with lunar caustic, a most violent irritant, not only with impunity, but with decided relief of pain and mitigation of all the symptoms of disease. Another familiar example is the following : A person who is troubled with acidity of stomach may take a considerable dose of an alkali with decided advantage, and without suffering any inconvenience ; while the same alkali, administered to a healthy person, would occasion a disordered state of the digestive functions.

3d. Every disease, arising from natural causes, consists of a train of symptoms closely resembling those which are occasioned by taking a particular medicine when in perfect health. This proposition is entirely contrary to the experience of physicians.

There are a few instances in which the symptoms produced by the improper use of medicines, bear a somewhat striking resemblance to those of diseases occurring from other causes ; but it is by no means the case that any medicines can produce symptoms similar to those which characterize the vast majority of diseases, such as smallpox, measles, gout, rheumatism, pleurisy, consumption, &c.

The 4th proposition, and that which is regarded as the most important in the system, is this : Every disease is capable of being certainly cured by the exhibition of the medicine which, when given to a healthy person, produces a train of symptoms similar to those of the disease itself. Of all the crude theories, unsupported by fact or by sound argument, which the fancy of man has given rise to, I hardly know one which seems to me more extravagant than that which is founded on the proposition under consideration. It is true that in the history of medicine there are a few facts which, when superficially observed, seem to lend their influence, as far as they go, in favour of Hahnemann's doctrine ; but they are all capable of being explained in a manner much more consonant with reason, analogy and common sense. They are adduced by Hahnemann, as proving incontestably the truth of his doctrine. I will mention several of them. A person who has been successfully inoculated with the matter of cowpox, is, as a general rule, incapable of being affected with smallpox. It is admitted that the cowpox and the smallpox have a certain resemblance to each other, in the

form of the eruption, and it is perhaps true that they have a common origin : but in many respects they are widely different from each other. The cowpox is a very mild affection, having a single vesicle or a very small number, generally unattended with any considerable febrile excitement, or any well marked constitutional symptoms. The smallpox, on the other hand, is a disease of great violence, having a copious eruption, attended with high fever, frequently with inflammation of different organs, and with a general disturbed state of all the functions. But admitting, for the sake of argument, that the cowpox and the smallpox are so much alike in their symptoms, that the cowpox might, on this ground, be considered as a homœopathic remedy for smallpox, would its action in other respects agree with the law of nature discovered, or rather invented by Hahnemann ? Can a person affected with smallpox be cured by vaccination ? The experiment has been tried, but I am not aware that it has ever succeeded in a single case. But according to Hahnemann's fundamental doctrine, homœopathic remedies are infallible. Now, one of two things must be true : either cowpox is not a homœopathic remedy, in which case, its action as a preventive of smallpox cannot with propriety be adduced in favour of the doctrine ; or if it be a homœopathic remedy, its invariable want of success in curing smallpox is a proof that this class of remedies is, at all events, not infallible. A doctrine, which pretends to infallibility, is overthrown by proving a single exception. There is another objection to the admission

of cowpox as a homœopathic remedy, viz., that its action on the system is much feebler than that of the smallpox; but, according to Hahnemann, a remedy, in order to cure a disease, must be more powerful than the disease itself. Hahnemann brings forward, in illustration of his theory, the facts that a person who has a frosted limb is often benefited by rubbing the part with snow; and that the pain of a burn is sometimes relieved by holding the part before a fire. Neither of these facts agrees well with the homœopathic theory, and both are capable of being better explained on other principles. Hahnemann expressly states that a homœopathic remedy is an agent, which is essentially different in its nature from the cause of the disease, although the symptoms to which it gives rise are similar to those of the disease. But in the cases which have been adduced, the fire and the snow are represented both as the causes of the diseases and their remedies. The true explanation of the fact is this: sudden transitions of temperature are injurious; the parts must therefore be kept for a while at a temperature approaching that which caused the mischief, and must be brought gradually to their accustomed degree of heat, that they may have time to accustom themselves to the change. The other facts which Hahnemann brings forward to prove the truth of his doctrine, are equally unsatisfactory with those which have been mentioned. Whenever a medicine in ordinary use has been found to act uniformly in curing a disease, so that it has been regarded as a specific, Hahnemann lays claim

to it as a homœopathic remedy. Thus it has long been known that fever and ague may be almost uniformly cured by the administration of the different preparations of Peruvian Bark. Accordingly, Hahnemann maintains that bark, given to a person in health, will produce symptoms similar to those of fever and ague, and that it is by virtue of this action, that it is effectual in curing the disease. Let us examine how this experiment is instituted, that we may know what importance to attach to it. A healthy person is directed to take in a day an ounce of powdered bark with five ounces of alcohol and two pounds of water; according to circumstances, this quantity may be doubled or quadrupled. A person, then, who has taken in a day one to four ounces of bark with five to twenty ounces of alcohol, the latter amount equivalent to two and a half pints of whiskey, is examined and cross-examined as to his feelings. The result of this investigation is, that eleven hundred and forty-three symptoms are noted down as constituting the bark-sickness, and that these symptoms have some resemblance to those of intermittent fever; ergo, bark is a homœopathic remedy for intermittent fever. Before the time of Hahnemann, the homœopathic doctrine was well expressed in the old ditties:

“Tobacco hic, tobacco hic,
When you are well will make you sick;
Tobacco hic, as I've heard tell,
When you are sick, will make you well.”

“There was a man of Thessaly,
He was so wondrous wise,
He jump'd into a bramble bush,
And scratch'd out both his eyes.

And when he found his eyes were out,
With all his might and main
He jump'd into another bush,
And scratch'd them in again."

The author of this charlatanism cunningly prevented the injurious tendency of his doctrines from being made manifest to the world, by directing his medicines to be given in such minute doses that they cannot do any positive harm.

5th proposition. The power of drugs over the human constitution is vastly greater than that of the ordinary causes of disease, so that, however violent the symptoms of a disease may be, the drug, if properly selected and administered, will infallibly subdue the malady. The author includes in this proposition medicinal substances in general, not confining it to those powerful agents which, when given in large doses, act as poisons destructive of life; and he classes among remedial agents many substances which we are in the habit of taking with our food and drink, and others which are generally regarded as nearly or quite inert; common salt, for instance, and powdered charcoal. Now this doctrine, when carried out to its legitimate consequences, would teach us that a fraction of a grain of common salt or charcoal has a more powerful effect on the human constitution than the plague, the yellow fever, or the deadly cholera. "Credat Judæus Apelles, non ego." To use a nautical expression, "it may do for the marines, but the sailors will never believe it."

6th proposition. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a dose of a homœopathic drug so minute, that

it will not have a more powerful effect on the system than the disease has, or that the disease will not be subdued by it. The extreme absurdity of this doctrine, and the extent to which it has been carried out into practice by Hahnemann and his followers, are such, that it requires a strong exercise of charity to admit that they are not either knaves or fools. The truth of this statement will, I think, be obvious to all who hear me, when they are made acquainted with the facts on which it is based. The manner in which homœopathic remedies are directed to be prepared is as follows: A grain of a medicinal substance is to be dissolved in a hundred drops of water; this constitutes the first dilution. One drop of this is to be mixed with a hundred drops of alcohol, constituting the second dilution; one drop of this again in a hundred drops of alcohol, constituting the third dilution; and so on to the thirtieth, sixtieth dilution, &c. Hahnemann rarely directed a medicine to be given before it had been diluted at least eighteen times in this manner; he more frequently directed the thirtieth dilution. A drop of the third dilution contains a millionth of a grain of the medicine, or the quantity of alcohol necessary to dissolve a grain would be more than half a barrellful. I do not mean to say that so large a quantity of the liquid is actually employed, because at each dilution ninety-nine parts out of a hundred are thrown away. A dose of the sixth dilution contains a billionth of a grain; the quantity of alcohol necessary to dissolve a grain would be

more than half a million of barrells, or a quantity sufficient to float ten ships of the line. A drop of the ninth dilution contains a trillionth of a grain; the quantity of alcohol necessary to dissolve a grain would be more than five hundred thousand millions of barrells, equal to the contents of a lake forty miles long, twenty miles broad and one hundred feet deep. A drop of the twelfth dilution contains a quadrillionth of a grain; the quantity of alcohol necessary to dissolve a grain would be more than five hundred times the contents of Lake Superior. A drop of the fifteenth dilution contains a quintillionth of a grain: the quantity of alcohol necessary to dissolve a grain would exceed in bulk the whole mass of the earth. A drop of the eighteenth dilution contains a sextillionth of a grain: the quantity of alcohol necessary to dissolve a grain would surpass the volume of the sun. A drop of the thirtieth dilution contains a decillionth of a grain, or a fraction represented by 1 for a numerator, and 1 followed by sixty ciphers for a denominator: the quantity of alcohol necessary to dissolve a grain would exceed the volume of a quadrillion suns. That you may the better appreciate the extreme minuteness of a homœopathic dose of the thirtieth dilution, I request your attention to the following statement, on the accuracy of which you may place the most implicit reliance. If a grain of a medicinal substance be divided into such doses, the number will be sufficient for every man, woman and child on earth,

estimated at a thousand millions, to take a dose every second for as many millions of centuries as there are grains of matter entering into the structure of the earth. And this, be it remembered, is the preparation which Hahnemann recommended for ordinary use. And how then is this potent remedy directed to be taken? Is the patient to take one or more gallons per day, that the system may be thoroughly brought under its influence? No! Is he to take an ounce, a teaspoonful, or even a drop, to be repeated at short intervals? No! He is to prepare a hundred sugar-plums, each of the size of a grain of millet-seed, and these hundred sugar-plums are to be moistened with one drop of the thirtieth dilution before mentioned; and then the patient is to smell one of these medicated sugar-plums once in three or four weeks: and this is sufficient to cure radically an obstinate and dangerous disease! This is no exaggerated statement: it is a true account of the manner in which homœopathists profess to cure diseases. And it is not by any means an extreme case: for an instance is recorded in which a fifteen-hundredth dilution of sulphur in spring water was prepared according to Hahnemann's method, and a drop of this fluid was found to possess very distinct medicinal virtues. Now it matters not to these luminaries of science that sulphur is insoluble in water: chemistry is too gross a science to have any thing to do with their ethereal operations: for they also profess to dissolve glass in water, and pretend that the solution has remarkable remedial powers. The

fifteen hundredth dilution of sulphur to which I have alluded, supposing the sulphur to be really dissolved, and also supposing it to be infinitely divisible, would contain, in a drop, a portion of a grain of sulphur, represented by a fraction having 1 for its numerator, and 1 followed by three thousand ciphers for its denominator. The quantity of fluid necessary to dissolve a grain, to constitute the fifteen hundredth dilution, would probably exceed, by an inconceivable amount, the whole mass of matter contained in the visible universe. Add planet to planet, and sun to sun, and system to system, and multiply them all by millions, and millions of millions, until the finite seems to be almost swallowed up in the infinite, and the mind is lost in the immensity of the calculation, and still you will fall greatly short of the vast amount. Or if you could fly with an angel's wing, and with a rapidity exceeding that of light, countless ages would pass over your heads, before you could traverse the boundless waste of waters. There is one way in which I can conceive of such a remedy exerting an influence in the cure of diseases, that is, by its ludicrousness provoking immoderate laughter; it being a well-known fact, that laughter has a remedial influence in chronic diseases. I will relate to you an instance in which a person who was almost ready to die for want of nourishment, was perfectly restored in this manner by the exhibition of a homœopathic portion of animal food. A lady once fancied that she had stricture of the œsophagus which rendered it

very difficult for her to swallow her food. The difficulty went on increasing from day to day, until she was altogether unable to swallow any kind of solid food, and was obliged to confine herself to broth and other liquid nourishment. In process of time, the stricture became so close that she could swallow nothing but water, and even that with great difficulty; she of course became greatly emaciated for want of nourishment, and she almost despaired of her life. Every physician in the neighbourhood had been consulted: some had ridiculed her complaint as being entirely imaginary; others had proposed various plans of treatment, which she had faithfully followed, but they had all been ineffectual. At last she had an opportunity of consulting a physician of great eminence, and in whom she was led to place implicit confidence. She told him that she was entirely well in every respect but the closure of her throat; and if it were possible to find any nutritious substance as thin as water, or thinner than water, so that she could swallow it, she thought that she might ultimately recover; if not, she must infallibly die of starvation. The doctor, after a moment's deliberation told her, that he thought he could propose a kind of food which would be exactly suited to her case. The direction was as follows: Take a large kettle which will hold at least ten gallons, fill it brim-full with water, and hang it over the fire in such a position that the rays of the sun, entering at the

window, will fall upon the surface of the water. Then hang in the window a lean starved crow, so that the shadow may fall upon the water in the kettle : boil for four hours, and make soup of the shadow. The lady immediately burst into a loud and immoderate fit of laughter, called for a beef-steak, which she ate with avidity, and was no more troubled with stricture of the œsophagus.

During the last summer, a recipe for rum-cordial was published in the Commercial Advertiser of this city. It takes off happily the doctrine of infinitesimal doses, of which it is by no means an exaggerated statement. As it may be new to some of my hearers, I will venture to repeat it.

Take a little rum ;
The less you take, the better ;
Pour it in the lakes
Of Wener and of Wetter.

Dip a spoonful out,
Mind you don't get groggy,
Pour it in the lake
Winnipisseogee.

Stir the mixture well,
Lest it prove inferior,
Then put half a drop
Into Lake Superior.

Every other day
Take a drop in water :
You'll be better soon,
Or at least you ought to.

Hahnemann's 7th proposition is, that the efficacy of drugs is vastly increased by certain manipulations.

He illustrates the doctrine in the following manner :
“ When a drop of a medicinal fluid is once agitated with one hundred drops of alcohol, that is, the vial which holds them both held in the hand, and moved rapidly by a single brisk movement of the arm from above downward, the two substances are thus accurately mixed together, but much more intimately by two, three, ten, or more such movements ; that is, the power of the medicine is much more refined, and, so to speak, the spirit of the medicine ever more unfolded, and developed, and made more penetrating in its action on the nerves. And when a person wishes to attain, by these repeated dilutions, the object of moderating the power of the medicine on the constitution, it is not well to give to each of the vials of dilution more than two such movements.” This whole proposition is as arrant nonsense as can be conceived. The whole import of it is this : that after two substances are agitated together until they are thoroughly incorporated with each other, by continuing the agitation you develop new and mysterious powers, which are increased in proportion as the agitation is continued. These powers, which are developed by agitation, he seems to regard as of an immaterial and spiritual nature. It is evident that Hahnemann attributes the virtues of his drugs to his peculiar method of dissolving and diluting them : for it has been objected to him, that if his doctrine were true, great danger would arise from drinking of the water of a large lake into which a grain of a medi-

cial substance had fallen. And in the words of Dr. Leo-Wolf, "he answers in his usual dictatorial manner, that such objections are utterly foolish, because the mixture in ever so large a quantity of water could never be so intimate as in each solution made separately by two strong shakes, viz: with the arm from above downwards; from below upwards would not answer this purpose." Dr. Leo-Wolf proceeds to say, "We leave this his defence to the judgment of those who have witnessed a stiff breeze at sea, to say nothing of a hurricane, and who may justly believe that the many millions of grains of salts dissolved in the ocean might have been shaken enough in the course of centuries, to make each drop of sea-water a strong homœopathic drug or poison, as well as the few shakings of a solution of one grain of table-salt by the arm of a homœopathist from above downwards can develop a virtue so efficacious that it must be inhaled only once every month. I will present to you one more expression of Hahnemann, as quoted by Dr. Leo-Wolf, and leave you to judge whether it does not equal the wildest ravings of astrology, alchymy, or necromancy. Speaking in the introduction to the sixth volume of his *Materia Medica*, of the power developed from metallic gold by triturating and diluting it twelve times with sugar of milk, he asserts, "that one quadrillionth part of a grain," that is, a quantity bearing a much less proportion to a grain than a grain does to the bulk of Lake Superior, "is so powerful, that a person suf-

fering by melancholy, despising life, and inclined, from insupportable anguish, to commit suicide, has merely to smell a few minutes of a vial containing one grain of the just mentioned solution, and this wretched being will in an hour be delivered from his evil spirit, and the full love of life and cheerful temper be again awakened in him." Is this not fully equal to the virtues of Dr. Ramrod's Tincture of Gridirons? Hahnemann speaks of the virtues developed in his medicines by his repeated dilutions as "a new creation," "a glorified state," &c.

The 8th proposition of Hahnemann's theory, and the last to which I shall direct your attention, is this: No medicine, nor any treatment, not calculated to produce in a healthy person symptoms similar to those of the disease, is capable of curing it. This doctrine of course strikes at the root of the whole system of medicine as practised by regular physicians; it not only declares that there is another system better than the one in which they have been instructed, but it also teaches them that their whole system is nothing but a delusion. It informs them that they have been entirely deceived in their observation of the effects of remedies which are not of a homœopathic character. If then the homœopathic doctrine be true, the threatening symptoms of croup are never relieved by emetics; inflammation of the eye or of the lungs is never subdued by bleeding, cupping, leeching and blistering; scurvy is never remedied by the use of acescent vegetable food; in short, almost

every remedy in ordinary use must be regarded as powerless in arresting the progress of disease. Who is there in this assembly, who has not the evidence of his own senses in favour of the success of medical treatment in the hands of regular physicians, at least on some occasions? And who is there that will be prepared to admit that the whole science of medicine is entirely destitute of truth? And yet the homœopathists require us to admit all this, and to regard no treatment as having any agency in the cure of diseases except that which is founded on homœopathic principles. They totally reject blisters, poultices, fomentations, baths, and all external remedies, and deny that they have any remedial virtues.

I have thus given a brief exposition of the system of homœopathy as taught by Hahnemann, and as originally practised by his followers. But the absurdities of the system have been so fully exposed, that its advocates have become alarmed lest they should lose their golden prize. In order, therefore, to accommodate themselves to public opinion, especially in this country, they have made some important modifications of Hahnemann's system, especially in the matter of infinitesimal doses. They have also ventured, in the treatment of serious diseases, which they were manifestly unable to cure by their own remedies, to resort to those which are ordinarily employed by regular practitioners, to whom they apply the nick-name "Allopaths." Whenever, therefore, a homœopath resorts to the use of such re-

medies as bleeding, cupping, leeching, blistering, poultices, mustard plasters, cathartics, emetics, &c., it should be considered as an acknowledgment of the inefficiency of his own system.

Before concluding my observations on the subject of quackery, I propose to consider some of the reasons why charlatanism is so successful in gaining the confidence of a large portion of the community. The first reason to which I shall direct your attention is the great ignorance which exists with regard to the structure and functions of the human body. This ignorance is not confined to the uneducated classes of society. The majority of those who have had the advantages of a liberal education, are ignorant almost of the first principles of anatomy and physiology. The second reason is, the bold and unhesitating manner in which quacks are in the habit of announcing to the world the infallibility of their remedies. The newspapers teem with advertisements of infallible remedies for almost every disease, whether curable or incurable, with which mankind are afflicted. And it is not unnatural that persons who are suffering from these maladies, and who have failed to obtain relief from regular physicians, should have their attention drawn to the chance of relief held out to them by quacks, who boldly declare that they can certainly cure them. Scientific and candid physicians are constrained to admit that there are diseases which are incurable on account of the inroads which they have made upon the vital organs; and that others, in the present state of medical science, must be regarded as

incurable, because we are unacquainted with any remedies which are calculated to subdue them. There are therefore many cases in which a conscientious physician is obliged to tell his patient that there is little or no prospect of his being cured by medical treatment. Under such circumstances, the quack comes boldly forward, and unhesitatingly proclaims his ability to cure the disease. And as drowning men catch at straws, so the patient, unwilling to give up his case as desperate, clings to the hope held out to him by the charlatan, until he finds by experience that it has no foundation to rest upon. Another quack presents himself with equal boldness, and declares that he has an infallible remedy for the disease: his offer in turn is accepted, and his remedy on trial is also found unavailing. And thus the unhappy patient flees from one infallible remedy to another, each one perhaps aggravating his disease, until at last he is hurried to his grave.

Another reason for the success of quacks, in imposing upon invalids, is, that they often hold out a prospect of cure, without interfering with the pleasures and the appetites of their patients. A person, affected with a chronic disease, applies to a physician, who tells him, that in order to recover his health, he must practise great self-denial; he must be very temperate, or even abstemious in his diet; must keep regular hours, must give up the use of tobacco and other injurious stimulants, must devote fewer hours to his business, and must persevere in this course for many months. This seems to the

patient a hard saying : and he is inclined to regard the remedy as worse than the disease. While in this state, he reads the advertisement of a quack, who promises to cure his disease by shampooing his bowels, without requiring any change of diet or of habits. According to the old proverb, "id quod volumus, facile credimus," he views this method as a very rational one, and determines to adopt it. He at first imagines that he is better, but he soon finds, to his disappointment and sorrow, that "leviathan is not so tamed." He then reads another advertisement, setting forth the virtues of certain pills or bitters which promise to cure him without a change of regimen. He thus tries one remedy after another, and occasionally perhaps experiences partial relief, but finds them all equally ineffectual in curing his disorder.

Another reason for the success of quacks to which I have alluded, is the love of the marvellous which pervades the community. There are many persons who are ever ready to go after any thing which is new and extraordinary, rather than to walk in the beaten track. This is strongly exemplified in the eagerness with which many persons, a few years ago, adopted the extravagant system of abstinence prescribed by Sylvester Graham. When a rational system of temperance and moderation was suggested to them by regular physicians, the suggestion had not the charm of novelty. It was the same lesson which for ages had been taught by inspired and uninspired sages, and it passed by unheeded. But when tem-

perance was carried to such an extreme as to be intemperate, and when moderation degenerated into ascetic abstemiousness, the new doctrine excited their admiration and won their confidence. And, no doubt, many persons who had been previously guilty of excess, were benefited by adopting the system, although they would have derived greater benefit if they had not carried their abstemiousness to such an extravagant length.

The last reason which I shall adduce for the success of quackery, in imposing upon the public, is its occasional success, whether real or only apparent, in curing diseases. It is a well known fact, that many diseases are cured by the natural powers of the constitution. In these cases, the merit of the cure is often ascribed to remedies, which in reality have had no agency in effecting it. But there is no doubt that the remedies of quacks are sometimes really effectual in curing diseases, for many of them are valuable medicines, actually borrowed from the prescriptions of scientific physicians. Why then should not physicians give certificates in favour of such medicines, that the public may know how to distinguish the good from the bad? The answer to this question is obvious. The most valuable medicines, as a general rule, are those which have sufficient power to do good or harm, accordingly as they are judiciously or injudiciously administered; and persons not instructed in the science of medicine are not capable of deciding correctly when and how they should be given. "Ni sutor ultra crepidam." "Let

the shoemaker stick to his last." The occasional success of quack medicines is trumpeted abroad through the land, while their more frequent failures, and the mischief which is done by them, are studiously concealed. But why is not the imposture exposed to the world by those who have been deluded by quacks, and have suffered from their treatment? One potent reason is, that they are ashamed that the world should know that they have been so weak and credulous as to listen to the pretensions of quackery.

Some members of the medical profession are apt to give way to desponding thoughts on account of the prevalence of charlatanism, and the hold which it has gained upon the community. To them it appears like a raging flood, which threatens to sweep away the foundations of truth, and to whelm in ruin the interests of science and of humanity. But, gentlemen, we have no reason to fear such a result. The systems of error, of fraud and imposture, which lure the unwary and unstable to their ruin, must pass away and be forgotten, "like the baseless fabric of a vision." But the system of scientific medicine, based on an accurate knowledge of the structure and functions of the human body, and on the accumulated observation and experience of ages, is "like a house built upon a rock." The tempests of calumny may assail it, the floods of quackery may sweep over its foundations, but it will remain throughout all generations, unshaken and secure, bidding defiance to the winds and waves of opposition, until time shall be no more.



