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HOMOEOPATHY EXAMINED;

OR,

HOMOEOPATHY IN THEORY, ALLOPATHY IN PRACTICE.

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Sine odio et sine dilectione.

^c
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HOMEOPATHY EXAMINED

BY ROBERT VINTY, M.D.

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PREFACE.

THERE is implanted in the human constitution a tenacious faith in personal experience, and in all impressions made through the immediate perception of the mind. Accordingly we find that, after a very few individual instances of a principle ostensibly illustrated, the irreflective majority of mankind instinctively infer a similar result will ensue, if something happen next to present itself before them, wearing on its face an apparent, and but an apparent, combination of analogous conditions. They do not much trouble their heads about the indispensable *cæteris paribus*. But the points of differ-

ence and of disaccordance between individual instances multiply in the direct ratio of a principle's pretensions to universality of application (ex. gr., the homœopathic). These divergencies, however, escape the discriminative apprehension of the great Many, who are attracted more by qualities directly similar and analogous which lie, as it were, on the surface of things, than by qualities dissimilar and militant, which have a more occult dwelling-place, and penetrate far deeper into the relations of the intellectual world. But it is essential for the testing of truth, that our perception of discrepancy do not destroy our perception of analogy; for, although by the latter we are led to a direct and first recognition of the most obvious aspect of what is true, it is by the former, we have provision naturally made within us for the detection of the many forms of error, and for the disrout

of sophistry. Pure and stable truth consists in the harmony of both these mental perceptions balanced upon the golden central point—the conscientious principle—which, in alliance with the intellectual demonstration, and feeling the plenitude of moral conviction, forges the rivetting band round the last link of the chain.

It must be confessed, the homœopathic theory does not bear the trial of such a mode of philosophic investigation. As far as its fundamental proposition is concerned, it must be considered but a superficial and empirical interpretation of a class of effects in the practice of medicine, well-known to the English and German schools, and admitting of satisfactory explanation from the principle of *alterative* action. Under the vicious presumption that the medicinal changes effected by alterative agents are identical with aberrations of function, in other words,

disease—because taking place in the same part of the system and on the same field, the followers of this new doctrine have misdenominated homœopathic action, what in fact is very nearly the opposite (alterative). Under a semblance of identity they did perceive this incongruity. But, as in all departures from the expression of truth and reason, some secondary bungling means must usually be superadded to bolster up the original error, we find, in this instance, the homœopathic authors have been obliged to concoct the additional absurdity, that medicines exercise sanative agency in the inverse ratio of their subdivision, “rarefacted” (to use their own word) even to infinitesimality.

As in the course of these few pages a more detailed exposition will be given of whatever is false in the theory, or true in the practice of homœopathy; and, also, of whatever

may be considered mischievous or worthy of praise; these prefatory words cannot, perhaps, be more happily concluded than by signaling to notice a class of minds, which, enslaved by a psychological habit, prefer the unknown to the known; the thing occult to the thing demonstrated; and that which is remote and unattainable, to that which is near and possible; and who, too, delight to gratify their tastes and cravings for the marvellous and to lose themselves, equally well in the thaumaturgy and nervous manipulations of animal magnetism, as in the achievements of its kindred pretender, homœopathy.

Here, no doubt, amongst such persons, as formerly in the country of its birth, will this wonder and novelty have its day, and resound for a while, but the force of science and of reason, accumulated through cen-

turies of time, will at last vindicate its prerogative, and, like the transforming touch of the angel's spear, compel whatever is false and disguised to take its own shape and colour, that it may be recognized, shunned, and forgotten.

PARIS, *October, 1, 1836.*

HOMŒOPATHY EXAMINED.

THE HOMŒOPATHIC PROPOSITIONS.

AFTER the manner of the old method of philosophizing—first conceiving certain hypothetical propositions, and then bringing all seemingly related and analogous instances to undergo the yoke of constrained application—homœopathy has been ushered into the world by an enunciation of some preliminary positions, upon the tenability of which its whole existence as a system essentially depends. And certainly from these it is with no great difficulty dislodged. For we meet with, on the very threshold of inquiry, such a palpable assumption of more than questionable premises, that the ill-based superstructure of its theory will be found to start irresistingly away under the pointed touch of the differential analysis and the force of inductive

knowledge. A few classes of facts, however, indubitably true and substantiated, and which have hitherto, from sheer ignorance, been claimed as exclusively its own, will always remain; but will receive a fuller and more natural solution when restored to their proper place, under principles from which they have been so unnecessarily disjoined.

The first fundamental proposition whence homœopathy derives its name, and to which the others are appended as convenient corollaries—*similia similibus curantur*—requires only a fair exposition to be refuted as paradoxical and logically absurd. For, if similar qualities of action be added to each other, there must consequentially ensue aggravation, and not annihilation, of disease. But if the qualities be different, then is the proposition destroyed and converted into the *alterative* principle. The sophism demands a Latin form for concealment.

The next proposition, that different qualities of action cannot take place at the same time, in the same tissue, or in the same system of the œconomy, is equally gratuitous and falsely assumed,

as the preceding, and contradicted most positively by the daily experience of every physician. But it was necessary to be postulated for, in order to exclude what would have fatally antagonised the application of the homœopathic proposition. For it is a well-known pathological law prevailing throughout the human system, and continually exerting its influence, that there can obtain at the same time, and in the same parts of the body, an interaction of different causative agencies one upon the other (whether coming from within or from without), having the effect of producing modification of function, and by disturbing abnormal states, of leading to the reaction of health. But there is a total exclusion of this principle in the homœopathic theory.

The practice of homœopathy in the exhibition of infinitesimal doses (the last link of the theory), is so thoroughly a deduction from the preceding assumptions, that this rarefacted absurdity may safely be consigned, without any further notice, to share the fate of their condemnation.

Such is the nature and value of these fundamen-

tal homœopathic principles, which, encased in a kind of syllogistic dependance upon each other, converge to a result by bringing forth a pseudo-medical practice, in whose composition it would be difficult to determine whether ignorance or pretension bore the greatest proportion.

IGNORANCE OF THE HOMŒOPATHISTS.

It might, indeed, have been naturally pre-supposed that propositions such as we have just been considering, so offensive to reason and common sense, and so formidable in the extent of their pretensions, could have been never broached and afterwards seriously maintained by any the least acquainted with the theory of therapeutic agency, as grounded upon a knowledge of the chief physiological and pathological laws of the human system. And, in fact, this presumption is fully justified after a scrupulous reading of the best homœopathic authorities. Such culpable unconsciousness, on their part, of existing knowledge, gives us at once an explanatory key to the peculiar form of their assumed positions. For it is the most

common error of the mind, in a state of relative ignorance, to misapprehend the whole circle of truth, and to attach a false and limited interpretation to the phenomena which it contemplates. How much more then must this be the case, when these are the intertangled actions and discoloured hues of disease! Accordingly, there is ample evidence, both of a positive and negative kind, to accuse them of most deplorable ignorance of the modern practice of medicine, of which there does not appear a fragment throughout their publications, either by way of exposition or suggestively, without being ridiculously misstated and tortured from its true bearing. But this is not all. They will be found to have, with apparent wilfulness of partiality, adduced as sufficient and conclusive illustrations of some of their own crude notions, an array of obscure and unauthenticated statements, wantonly evoked for this profane purpose once more to the light of day, from their otherwise eternal burial-places in the old archives of medicine, of all countries, and of all schools,

indiscriminately. With the liberty of adducing *such* authorities, there would be no conceit of the imagination that might not be verified in illustration. It must be confessed, that they have done this part of their task with unwearied German industry and research.

There remains still another accusation against the homœopathic writers—of disingenuousness, or of ignorance (it is difficult to decide which), in bringing forward many of the obsolete or most reprobated errors and abuses of medicine, and charging them, sometimes directly, at other times, by implication, as a true expression of the modern practice. These have they marshalled out ostentatiously and placed in juxta-position with their own system, and then with admirable impudence and complacency, they sound the trumpet, and challenge the world to decide on which side remains the superiority. The truth is, this new doctrine has arisen from ignorance and misapprehension of medical science—not at all from a conviction of its falsity; and the endeavour of its fol-

lowers seems to consist rather in establishing their own theory than in refuting the principles in whose place they pretend it to be substituted.

FACTS OF HOMŒOPATHY.

Having thus exposed the absurdity and logical inconsequence of the homœopathic notion, and its being an idle and supposititious means only of explaining so exclusively the varied complications of diseased phenomena, and the multiplied relations which exist between therapeutic agency and the common laws of the human physical constitution, here, for the completion of our argument, might we stop. But a number of well-established facts remain, which have been, under error, triumphantly adduced as corroborations of the truth of the theory. These, however, can be much better referred, as has been mentioned before, to the well-known physiological and pathological laws which obtain in the human system. It is not so much the few facts themselves as the false principle by which they are explained, that is the true subject of controversy. The ingenious sophistry

with which they have been violently displaced from their right principle, and afterwards serried together in all hues and colours, as homogeneous evidence of the empirical proposition upon which the homœopathic theory is founded, can only be thoroughly detected in all its involuted bearings by a mind enlightened by philosophic and medical knowledge. The majority of cases successfully treated by the homœopathic disciples will be found amenable to the following conditions, either severally or conjointly, which, indeed, may be regarded as the least objectionable points of their practice, and which alone acknowledge a rational principle of causation. But, be it most emphatically remarked, they have no kind of relationship or dependance whatever upon the theory of homœopathy. These conditions consist in, an immunity from disturbing causes by avoiding excess of interference; a calculated hygienic regimen in all its branches; the exhibition of minute doses of the most powerful of the narcotic poisons; or of the class of remedial agents having an *alterative* action upon the system.

The class of persons most peculiarly influenced by such a combination of curative means, are those endowed with a delicate and highly excitable nervous system, whose organization, innately, or from subsequent efficient causes, has been rendered eminently susceptible to all impressions, whether coming from without, or generated within the internal structures of the body. In such individuals the nervous actions have become disproportionate to those of the other tissues of the frame. They bear too energetically upon the organic material, and cruelly wear it out. Compared with the heavy physical nutrition of former times, it is, indeed, a remarkable feature of the present generation, that the physiological state of all classes of society has been insensibly exalted into the finer and more nervine qualities of organic temperament from the prodigiously increased activity caused by earlier, more varied, and more systematic education; by a much more extended sphere of moral and intellectual pursuits; and, not least, by the fevered and mischievous excitement attendant upon the habits of social and political

life: so that there is never time given to gather up for a while the reins of unintermittent action, and look out, in repose and at a distance, upon the scene and movement of external things. This forced and habitual activity terminates at last in a predominant organic development of the nervous system. The primitive tissue of the individual undergoes a modification of quality, and he must be regarded, both medically and otherwise, in all respects, in relation to the altered type of temperament. Such has been the inward change gradually coming on in the physiological state of modern society, and this more markedly amongst the upper classes, where will be found the preponderating number of those anomalous affections, both acute and chronic, benefitted by the controlling agency of sedative means, in combination with rational habits, and enlightened hygienic treatment calculated to develop more favourably the antagonizing nutritive action of the system. This therapeutic principle, in relation to quality of temperament, has long ago been embodied into practice by the best modern physicians. It is, after all, but

a fractional part of the general domain of medicine from which it has been separated, and presented under a hard and imposing name as something marvellously new, by the many-sided ignorance of the homœopathic authors. But, as in all narrow and garbled conceptions of principles, it has been carried out by these last far beyond its legitimate sphere of action, and applied, with unbending Egyptian exclusiveness, to cases where the indispensable conditions, lately described, did not obtain. As might have been expected, experience on an extensive scale soon negatived such an indiscriminate mode of procedure. And, accordingly, we find all its trials have singularly failed, although conducted with care, with ability, and under the guarantee of public inspection, when made in the hospitals of Germany, of Naples, and of Paris (independently of the numerous experiments of individuals), where the cases treated presented a fair proportion of diseases arising from aberrations of the vascular and functional action of the different organs of the body. This trial upon the unselected cases of disease in general was the true touch-stone of the

pretensions of the homœopathic theory. It was attempted, and it failed. So that, like the empiric with one solitary notion, the blind homœopathic disciple continues daringly to apply his, as the sole universal law over the whole dominion of human pathology, and does not disdain religiously to believe that even the absorption of morbid structures and depositions, no less than the cicatrization of gaping wounds, will remain uninfluenced by the occult sanative virtue locked up in the millionth part of a grain of some plant of the field; to be more marvellous, certainly, in its energy than any alchemistic transmutation since the good old time of Raymond Lully.

IRRELATIVENESS OF THE THEORY OF HOMŒOPATHY
TO ITS FACTS.

Thus far have we noticed a character of facts, incident to the practice, but foreign to the theory of homœopathy; which last being, (as already mentioned), but another name for the principle we are now about to consider, ingeniously disguised, however, from immediate recognition

by the close investment of the infinitesimal-dose absurdity. But to pursue our argument. Every philosophic physician considers disease (some do) not as a substantial entity, with a dress and qualities inherent to itself, residing, under a character of individuality, as an enemy in the interior of the organization, but as an aberration of some function or functions of the system, the laws of whose action he studies in the principles of physiology and pathology. It is upon these functions, not upon the nosological creation—disease—that he brings his sanative agents to bear. Each class of these, according to its distinctive virtues, is found severally to modify the quality of action, peculiar to the different organs of the body. The homœopathic originators have ignorantly mistaken this modified quality of action, effected by the different classes of remedial agents upon the glands, surfaces and tissues of the body, for something identical with the diseased action. Because a certain effect is discovered to be produced by a remedial agent in the same locality where deranged action is going on, misled by this one cir-

cumstance of resemblance, and blind to the many others of difference, they assume the identity of the two, and cry out bravely “*similia similibus curantur.*” This, however, physicians have been accustomed to call the alterative action of medicines, for the simple reason, that their sensible agency upon the implicated organ, by *altering* its action, gives opportunity for the natural state of function to re-integrate itself, and by that means to work out the return to health. But the homœopathsists, not having penetrated deeply enough to arrive at such a *rationale*, absurdly say (when their words are interpreted to an honest equivalent), identity of locality, identity of action. Here the incongruity is glaring. Give them, on the other hand, their own words, and the reasoning, (as shewn in the beginning of the argument) if pursued consequentially, would elicit nothing less than there ought to ensue aggravation, and not extinction of, diseased action.

These few pages having been written more for an exposition of the theory, than for a statement of the parasitic details, of homœopathy, our task is

now done. Nor is it from forgetfulness that no mention has been made of the preposterous psoric hypothesis—the Serbonian bog of the homœopathic professors—in which are conveniently disposed of, and buried, some fathoms deep, the many legions of disease intractable and rebellious to the authority of their system. To conclude, it can be well-repeated,, they have purchased their fame at a cheap rate, in first disguising (unconsciously perhaps) an ancient principle of medicine by a misnomer, and then, under its sophisticated garb, claiming it as the most wonderful discovery of modern times.

CONCLUSIONS.

I. That the fundamental propositions of the homœopathic theory are absurd and illogical.

II. That there has been evinced, on the part of the homœopathic originators, a gross ignorance of the modern practice of physic.

III. That the practice of homœopathy is not in accordance with its theory, but allopathic, the rarefacted-dosing principle excepted.

IV. That the evidences of the homœopathic theory resolve themselves into those of the alterative principle of modern physicians.

V. That the loss of time under nugatory homœopathic treatment, in the severer inflammatory affections, would frequently be attended with loss of life, or destruction of organization, and in the more chronic, with irrecoverable alteration of structure.

VI. That the long-continued exhibition (homœopathically) of the most powerful of the narcotic poisons, in weakly-organized individuals, would produce, by insensible degrees, læsions of innervation of an alarming kind, and carry such detriment to the nervous system as would often insidiously, but not less fatally, undermine the integrity of their constitution.

THE END.