

Letter to the patrons of the University on the late resolutions of the Medical Faculty.

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Henderson, William, 1810-1872.
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Publication/Creation

Edinburgh, 1851.

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W. H. Henderson's Comp. 6

LETTER

TO THE

PATRONS OF THE UNIVERSITY

ON THE

LATE RESOLUTIONS OF THE MEDICAL FACULTY.

BY

WILLIAM HENDERSON, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF GENERAL PATHOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

&c. &c.

EDINBURGH:

W. P. KENNEDY, ST. ANDREW STREET.

GLASGOW: D. BRYCE. LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

MDCCCL.

LETTER

TO THE

PATRONS OF THE UNIVERSITY

OF THE

THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE MEDICAL FACULTY

WILLIAM LESTER, M.D.

LETTER, &c.

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

IN addressing the public through the medium of a letter to you, chiefly to vindicate myself from certain misrepresentations of the Medical Faculty of the University, I owe you a few words of apology and explanation. You are not only the Patrons of the University, which has, by a recent decision of its Faculty of Medicine, become in some measure a party in the controversy which at present agitates to an unusual degree the stormy atmosphere of medicine, but, as the representatives of a large and intelligent community, are looked up to as the patrons of reasonable freedom and even-handed justice among those over whom you preside ; so that I have a double claim on you for regarding with indulgence the form in which I publish this defence. I have no other favour to solicit at your hands ; I am no petitioner for the exercise of your authority in any way ; for in such disputations as I may have in the least degree connected with scientific matters, there is nothing I should deprecate so much, even were it possible, as the interposition of magisterial power to defend my opinions, or to oppose an obstacle to the fullest exercise by others of their undoubted right to

liberty of thought and speech. In this way of thinking, indeed, I stand, with one honourable exception, alone in the Medical Faculty ; yet I am not the less satisfied on that account that my conclusion on the subject is as thoroughly right, as it is on another great point, of which I have the undivided honour to be the only advocate in that body.

That I do the Faculty no injustice by the statement I have made, will appear evident from the Resolutions I have to lay before you, which shew plainly their disposition to thwart the progress of principles which are held by a large and respectable class of medical practitioners, and by many intelligent persons of all ranks among the public, to be important scientific truths, by inviting the exercise of your powers, in some way or other, to injure, degrade, or silence a Professor in your University, because he avows his belief that those principles are true. I need scarcely say that it is no justification of the Faculty, in having contemplated such a measure, that they honestly regard those principles as false, for a similar plea might be advanced on behalf of all the intolerance and persecution that disgrace the history of the world.

To accomplish their object, the promoters of this scheme have chosen a course that takes the business of my vindication quite out of the field of scientific controversy, and engages me in a merely personal conflict. Having long anticipated such a result, it has been my endeavour to avert it by such means as I could employ without discredit—by the peaceful discharge of my professorial duties, by replying to no attack made on my opinions within the walls of the University, by heeding no gossip, and retorting no sneer, with which the taste of some of my colleagues has occasionally seasoned their discourses. I have not even offended the Faculty with my presence but on the most

necessary occasions ; for I concur entirely in the sentiments of a much more famous man than any of us, when he says, “were I even wrongfully suspected, and thereby made offensive to my fellow-citizens, I would rather shun their company than be looked upon with hostile eyes.” All, however, has been of no avail, and since the Faculty have preferred the personal assault to the more academic course of rational discussion, it remains for me but to accept their challenge. It may be true that their recent experience of public opinion has led them latterly to shrink from carrying their purpose into full effect ; but the Resolutions which embody that purpose still remain unrecanted and without apology, and I am not tamely to submit to their injustice, to be badgered and bated as I have been for daring to think for myself, and yet allow those who intended to do me the deepest wrong to escape scathless from the false position they had taken, perhaps to seek their object in another way. At the same time, I neither feel so keenly nor regard as of so much moment the conduct of the Faculty in joining theirs to the many voices that are in full cry against me, as to have any apprehension that I shall be betrayed into expressions that shall injure the great and good cause which is aimed at in my person, or that shall offend the excellent and cultivated of all shades of opinion on other subjects, who look with interest on our medical controversy, and whose sympathy, as lovers of fair play, would nerve me for a much more unequal contest than I can conceive this to be.

On the 24th of June last, the Faculty, in a meeting at which ten out of thirteen members were present, passed the following Resolutions, unanimously :—

“1. That the public profession of Homœopathy, by the Professor of General Pathology, is inconsistent with the efficient

discharge of the various duties which belong to that Chair, and is calculated to injure the University as a Medical School.

“2. That the *Senatus Academicus* be requested to transmit a copy of this Resolution to the patrons of the University, together with the expression of a hope, on the part of the Medical Faculty, that some step may be taken to avert the danger thus threatened to the University.”

Like everything else, either great or little, these Resolutions have a history, and to that I shall briefly advert; not with the purpose of making the Faculty appear ridiculous, but to shew that the University of Edinburgh, in spite of these Resolutions, is still entitled to be regarded as the seat of philosophy and the liberal arts. To me, individually, it could have been no disadvantage though the *Senatus* had complied with the request of the Faculty of Medicine, for my vindication would still rest on common justice and common sense, which even the greatest names in literature and science can, happily, in these times never outweigh. I do not rejoice the less, however, that the proposal of the Faculty was regarded by the other professors with the most decided disapproval, and that too, not simply as impolitic or inconvenient, but as in the highest degree illiberal and unfair, and as not the manner in which differences of opinion on scientific questions should be settled. Had the result been different, could the *Senatus Academicus* of the University of Edinburgh have been capable of any other decision, the remark of one illustrious countryman of ours, that universities were like rocks in a stream, that served but to mark the onward motion of the current, and of another still more famous in the peerage of genius, that they were the “dormitories of science,” would have received an illustration both apt and conclusive.

Why the Faculty should have determined on the extraordinary course which has met with so severe a check from their colleagues, I may hazard a conjecture in the sequel. That it has been somewhat suddenly conceived, admits of indisputable proof. In the June Number of the Journal conducted by the very members of the Faculty with whom this persecution originated, they exonerate themselves from the charges of being lukewarm on the subject of Homœopathy, and of tolerating a colleague who professes a belief in that system, in the following words,—“as to the Professorship of General Pathology, the Medical Faculty have no power in the way of appointment or dismissal; but we have no doubt that if it ever came to their knowledge that Dr. Henderson was making his lectures from this Chair the vehicle of Homœopathic doctrines, they would petition the patrons for his removal. The testimony of students who have attended this course assures us there has hitherto been no ground for any such complaint; *and so long as this is the case, we do not see how the Medical Faculty can take cognizance of the principles upon which their colleague chooses to conduct his private practice.*” A month did not elapse, however, before they altered their opinion, and fancied they could make out some pretext for molesting their colleague, on account of those very principles “upon which he chooses to conduct his private practice.” And what makes this rapid change all the more remarkable is, that it is singularly inconsistent with their conduct during the previous seven years that their colleague has been known over the three kingdoms as a believer in Homœopathy. Thus, the Professor of Clinical Surgery, who took the lead in this proceeding of the Faculty, was the mover, in the College of Surgeons a short time previously, of a Resolution which bore, that meeting in consultation with those who practise

Homœopathy, is to countenance the system, yet he himself has repeatedly given such countenance to it in this city. Lest he may have forgotten the occasions, I may remind him of two that fell within my own knowledge. The one occurred a few days before he set out to take possession of his London appointment, the other a few days after his return from that enterprise. The Professor of Midwifery has still more frequently countenanced it in the same way: and several others are in the like predicament; while one professor, who was present at the meeting and concurred in the Resolutions of the Faculty, requested me by a letter under his own hand to attend his only child during an attack of scarlet fever, a little service which was as freely rendered as it was frankly asked, and has now (shall I add?) been handsomely requited!

It is scarcely possible to peruse the Resolutions in which the Faculty profess to unburden themselves of a serious duty, without being reminded of the celebrated paradox, that language was given to man in order to conceal his thoughts. Not, indeed, that the Resolutions are a happy illustration of the doctrine;—quite the reverse, for it can escape no reader of common acuteness, that there is an incongruity between a certain cause they specify, and an effect ascribed to it, which at once raises a suspicion, that what is alleged is not a fair representation of what was actually in the mind of its authors. Language may, indeed, be employed to conceal the thoughts, but that its natural purposes are those of frank and manly honesty, is plainly evinced by the difficulty men generally experience in giving the air of consistency to statements that are not thoroughly candid. It is, therefore, in a certain sense, creditable to the framers of the Resolutions that they are not such great adepts in the style of composition they have chosen as to have made their contrivance

perfectly answer the purpose. It will be observed, that the first part of Resolution No. I. professes a belief that certain University duties are insufficiently executed by the professor of pathology. So far the conception is unmistakably expressed, and no one can justly quarrel with the concern it shews for the proper performance of professorial functions. I, at least, however I might console myself with the reflection that I honestly attempted what I had been appointed to do, must have silently bowed to the censure. But there is another limb to the invention, and it matches so ill with its fellow, as to defy the best surgery to remedy the lameness of their gait when they would march in company. It is the "*public* profession" of Homœopathy that is blamed for the deficiencies which are alleged! There might be no very manifest absurdity in saying that a *belief* in the Homœopathic doctrine was inconsistent with the duties of a professorship of Pathology;—it is conceivable that under the cloak of Homœopathy there might lurk some jealous and unsocial demon that would flatly deny and "repudiate" every other principle in medicine, and in that case, doubtless, a *belief* in Homœopathy would disqualify the present Professor of Pathology for discharging one or two of the lesser duties he is now, as University affairs are managed, called upon to perform. This supposititious case I shall consider in its proper order. It is not the belief of anything, but, as we have seen, the *public* profession of something that is said to be "inconsistent," &c. Now, I retort the charge of inconsistency on the propounders of this doctrine. There can be no possible relation between any amount of publicity on the one hand, that is, any amount of knowledge on the part of the public, and open avowal on mine, of the opinions I hold regarding Homœopathy, and, on the other, the manner in which I criticise a student's prescription or a thesis.

They are totally distinct, incommensurable, and unconnected, and no clear or candid reasoner could have brought them within sight of each other. The authors of the Resolutions would have us believe that they are actuated by anxiety for the right discharge of professorial duties; but the garb in which they dress their argument is so badly contrived that the naked truth protrudes before the eyes of a "discerning public," and vindicates the gift of language from the stigma of being designed only to mislead. It is obvious that the public profession of Homœopathy is the offence, and that the alleged imperfection in "the discharge of the various duties" of the Chair, as in any degree deducible from that, can be nothing but the merest pretence.

By founding their charge on the public profession of Homœopathy, the projectors of it tacitly admit that the belief of Homœopathy, if kept private, or confided to their ear alone, would not be inconsistent with the discharge of the duties of the Chair of Pathology, so that the publicity constitutes the essence of their grievance, and, thanks to the fidelity of speech, they have plainly, however unwittingly, expressed themselves to that effect. Many of their brethren may affirm that that publicity is an evil sufficient to justify the Faculty in taking measures to injure their offending colleague, but no amount of concurrence on that point can help the Faculty, or those members of it, at least, who have given any measure of attention to the Resolutions they have allowed to appear in their names, out of the serious dilemma of having attempted to avenge that offence at the expense of a charge at once uncandid and ridiculous.

That in these strictures on the Resolutions, I am not taking advantage of what ought to be regarded as a merely inadvertent awkwardness of expression in order to expose the Faculty to contempt, will be sufficiently evi-

dent when I state that those who were the chief promoters of these proceedings do not scruple to affirm that Homœopathy is nothing but profession,—that those who profess it do not believe in the principles they avow! They are of course at liberty to form on that point such charitable conclusions as their particular dispositions may suggest, but when they pretend to infer from such an accusation a consequence which is an outrage to the simplest logic and common candour, they have only themselves to blame for the result.

There are other members of the Faculty of more fairness and greater courtesy, and they may have intended their indictment to imply that a *belief* in Homœopathy disqualifies me for the discharge of my duties in the University, I therefore proceed next to the consideration of that supposition.

That they do not charge me with teaching Homœopathy from my Chair appears from the passage I have quoted from their Journal for June, and is yet more recently attested by the following quotation from the same periodical for the present month :—“The principles and practice of Homœopathy have never been taught there (*viz.*, within the walls of the University) by any Professor.” While this is true, in so far as I am concerned, it must not be presumed that I have been deterred from such teaching by the fear of the Faculty, or of the profession. My commission from the patrons does not require me to lecture on the principles of Therapeutics, otherwise no consideration should have hindered me from expressing my deliberate convictions on the comparative uncertainty and inefficiency of most of the Allopathic and Antipathic principles, or from explaining and advocating others much more worthy of being universally adopted. The students, whom some of the Faculty have had the delicacy to interrogate on this subject, might

have gone further in their evidence, and have deposed that when I have adverted to Therapeutics at all, it has been to illustrate Pathological principles by the effects of drugs administered according to the ordinary practice. In their imperfect conception of the liberty which he feels who is untrammelled by prejudice, and indifferent to unmerited rebuke, to avail himself of all varieties of truth, by whatsoever artificial distinctions men choose to divide them, this, too, may be regarded by the Faculty as an inconsistency ; and their limited knowledge of Homœopathy may lead them to conjecture that it is excluded from my lectures out of deference to those who are opposed to it. The latter supposition is worthy of a single observation, and it is this,—that the Homœopathic action of remedies, being a *specific* action, admits as yet of no rational explanation, can throw no light on Pathological principles, and can therefore have no place in General Pathology. When the two first of these statements shall be no longer true, when any member of the Faculty or of the profession at large shall reveal the principles on which specific remedies, mercury, arsenic, iodine, &c., act in producing their results, then, though the discoverer should be the bitterest of the present adversaries of Homœopathy, I shall not hesitate to avail myself of the light his discovery may throw on the principles of Pathology. In doing so I shall probably lecture on Homœopathy, for I believe that the specific action of remedies is no other than Homœopathic action. When that time comes, the Faculty may follow the example of their brethren in the University of Montpellier, and apply to the proper authorities to deprive me of my class if not of my Chair. The professor of Pathology in that university was forbidden by the Minister of Public Instruction to mention Hahnemann or Homœopathy in his lectures ; but I cannot believe that in similar circumstances

the more liberal rulers of a British Institution would care to imitate, even in that comparatively lenient measure, an example presented to them in the unscrupulous days of Louis Philippe. The Faculty of Montpellier did not attempt to injure their colleague for his "public profession" of Homœopathy; they took exception only to his lectures. It has been reserved for a Medical Faculty in this land of liberty to signalize themselves by a higher flight of intolerance.

There is but one other professorial duty which I have to perform—the examination of candidates for graduation; and I have been told by one of the members of the Faculty who concurred in the Resolutions, that there are two parts of that examination with the conducting of which a *belief* in Homœopathy is supposed to be inconsistent. One of these is the criticism of the two or three prescriptions which each candidate is required to write. Now I have not only never denied the existence of Allopathic and Antipathic modes of administering medicines, but six years ago publicly and plainly, in a treatise on Homœopathy, expressed my conviction that such methods of treatment have their measure of advantage, and that in judicious hands many of them are of no inconsiderable service. It matters not that I believe the Homœopathic method to be of greatly superior efficacy; Homœopathy is not taught as yet by any professor in the university, and I am not entitled to demand from students a knowledge of what they never were required to learn. In admitting that there are other modes of treatment besides the Homœopathic, which may be of service to the sick, I am no more to be charged with inconsistency, than I should be in maintaining that there are slow coaches on the old roads, as well as railway trains on the new. And where only slow coaches are permitted to be employed, I

can see no reason why I should be disqualified for passing my opinion on them, merely because I deliberately think that railway carriages are greatly to be preferred. If a very moderate estimate of the common remedies be inconsistent with a candid judgment of ordinary prescriptions, will the Faculty hold that one of the most eminent of their own school, Dr. Forbes of London, could not discharge that very simple duty, and would be unfit for a medical professorship, because he has declared that things in the old system have come to such a pass "that they must mend or end?" I apprehend they would not; and yet I do not suppose that I think so meanly of the old system as that gentleman does.

Precisely the same remarks apply to the other part of these examinations—the criticism of such theses as are submitted to my judgment. The exacting of such essays at all from candidates is an idle custom, and, as in the examination for admission into the Faculty of Advocates, little if anything more than a form. The advocates, I understand, invariably buy theirs; the medical graduates *may* do the same; there is no check to prevent them, and they doubtless often take advantage of the laxity. That I am not singular in thinking lightly of this great duty, will appear from the following anecdote of the late Dr. Gregory, which I have heard from the benignant lips of the present occupier of his Chair, the almost fabulous strength of whose conservative principles is attested by the circumstance that they could bend his noble nature to a seeming acquiescence in these proceedings of the Faculty. That celebrated professor on being condoled with by a friend on the labour of perusing so many long dissertations as were piled on his table, replied to the following effect:—"You don't suppose I read them through! Do you eat

up a whole gigot in order to know the quality of your mutton? A slice is enough." As for me, I may think our inaugural mutton not always of the best quality, but if it be as good as our pastures at present afford, I am bound to be satisfied, trusting that the progress of scientific culture will provide us by and by with a superior description of both.

These remarks should be enough to satisfy every temperate and reflecting man, whatever his medical creed may be, that there is no inconsistency between my opinions and my University duties, and that they furnish no grounds either for a legal deposition by the Patrons, or for my voluntary departure from the Chair which I occupy. I care as little for the emoluments and accessories of a Chair as any man in the University,—but to quit spontaneously that which I possess, would be a confession that one entertaining my opinions was disqualified for holding it or any other medical professorship. Anything so false and absurd I shall never admit. There is no confession of faith in medicine to which a man is bound to adhere, and by which he can be tried. Like all other natural sciences, it is progressive, and therefore subject to continual change. "Theories," says Liebig, "are true but for the time;" the subjects of knowledge increase in number and extent, and the principles which spring from them alter and multiply in a proportionate degree; so that no one stereotypes his knowledge, or ought not, on being made a professor. "The education of a man of open mind is never ended;" and in medicine, of all sciences, it never ought to end; nor is there a restriction on its progress in the public any more than in the private ranks of his profession, save what the physician himself chooses to impose.

So much for the first charge which the Faculty attach

to the public profession of Homœopathy. The second, which affirms that it "is calculated to injure the University as a Medical School," may, I think, be disposed of with equal ease. We have had now an experience of seven years by which to test the influence of the public avowal of my opinions on the prosperity of the University; for ever since the summer of 1844, when I resigned the Professorship of Clinical Medicine, in consequence of my adoption of Homœopathy, my views have been sufficiently known to have attracted the frequent notice of Allopathic journalists and physicians. On comparing the number of medical students registered at the University annually during the seven years which ended in 1844, with the annual registrations in the seven years which have since elapsed, we obtain data for a fair estimate of the amount of injury likely to accrue from the cause which the Faculty profess to dread.

The number of medical students was as follows:—

1838 ... 575 students.	1842 ... 451 students.
1839 ... 556 ,,	1843 ... 351 ,,
1840 ... 467 ,,	1844 ... 331 ,,
1841 ... 433 ,,	

Thus the decrease on the seven years was 244. Contrasted with these figures we have the following:—

1845 ... 358 students.	1849 ... 368 students.
1846 ... 316 ,,	1850 ... 412 ,,
1847 ... 346 ,,	1851 ... 413 ,,
1848 ... 361 ,,	

There has therefore been an increase of 82 students at the last annual registration as compared with that of 1844. Had the numbers continued to decrease since the latter date at the same rate as they had previously done for seven years, we should have had to rejoice last session over 87 students instead of 413, or somewhere about $6\frac{3}{4}$ a-piece.

Again, on comparing the number of graduates annually

made during the period of six years ending in 1844, with that of the seven years since, we find that there were—

1839 ... 119 graduates.	1842 ... 86 graduates.
1840 ... 111 „	1843 ... 91 „
1841 ... 103 „	1844 ... 66 „

being a decrease of 53.

1845 ... 79 graduates.	1849 ... 50 graduates.
1846 ... 64 „	1850 ... 67 „
1847 ... 58 „	1851 ... 45 „
1848 ... 63 „	

In the last period, therefore, there has been a considerable fluctuation, and an average decrease between its lowest number and the number in 1844 of three annually; while in the former period the annual decrease was, with one exception, a constant occurrence, and the average nine. Had the like annual decrease happened since 1844, we should have had at last graduation three graduates instead of forty-five. It may not be without interest, in connexion with the point now under consideration, to advert to the statistics of graduation at Glasgow during corresponding periods. In the six years which ended in 1844 the number of graduates at that university had decreased from 117 to 45, and in 1850 it had further decreased to 29; what the number is for the present year I have not learned.

It is not my business to detail the causes which have been in operation during the last fourteen years to alter the condition of the medical schools in these two universities,—to enumerate the new schools which have sprung up in England and in Ireland to give instruction in their native countries to those who were formerly obliged to seek it at a distance,—to tell of the new colleges where graduates are made, and the easier terms on which university honours may be procured. It is enough for me to say that

such causes have all come into operation within the period to which I have adverted, in order to make it a matter of satisfaction that in Edinburgh we are still so prosperous, whilst other schools have been nearly or altogether ruined by the competition. That I am not alone in supposing that such causes have proved injurious to our medical school, by lessening the numbers of our graduates at least, appears from the following expressive passage by the Professor of Clinical Surgery, who in 1840 discovered among "the many adverse influences at present co-operating against the prosperity of our University," (Homœopathy was not then in the way, otherwise it would have come in for its share of the blame,) these several moral and medical evils "that the University of St. Andrews, *which possesses no Medical School*, by a shameful prostitution of her privileges, confers the degree of M.D. on candidates who have never studied a day within her walls; that students are drafted over from Edinburgh several times a year for the purpose of receiving this spurious honour; that there are agents having the name of Examiners, resident in Edinburgh, who pander to the authors, and accompany the victims, of a sordid policy," &c.*

Should the number of graduates, or of registered medical students, henceforth decrease at a rate greater than was observed prior to 1844, (which was the first session of my connexion with the University,) it will become reasonable to suspect that some new cause shall have come into injurious operation, and it will be a fair subject for speculation to determine what that cause may be. That it cannot be my "public profession of Homœopathy," the facts I have adduced are sufficient to prove. That has stood the test of seven long years, and has not prevented an increase

* Letter to the Lord Provost, &c., p. 8.

in the number of students. If we are to begin a course of rapid decline, the history of the last session must furnish the cause; and those who are curious in such inquiries will have to settle the contending claims of the well-known mesmeric soirées of the Professor of Midwifery, of the "Letters to a Candid Inquirer" of the Professor of Chemistry, with all their spiritual wonders of animal magnetism and second-sight, and though last, certainly not least, of the late conduct of the Medical Faculty, which cannot but abate that *prestige* of dignity and scientific wisdom which had descended to them from their venerated predecessors. I refer here not merely to the Resolutions, but to the treatment of the candidate who was lately rejected, for the time, partly on the ground that he admitted his intention to study Homœopathy. When it is considered that the number of adherents which Homœopathy possesses among the public is now very large, and that among its supporters are not merely men of rank, but many others favourably known by their attainments and good sense, and some highly distinguished by their literary or philosophical talents, it will be admitted that our medical teachers cannot be expected to vilify Homœopathy, or to close their doors against those who are inclined to practise it, without exciting either hostility or contempt among classes whose estimation cannot be safely disregarded. If the Medical Faculty would act wisely and fairly in reference to Homœopathy, and to candidates for their degree, they should test experimentally the claims of the system they repudiate before they venture to condemn it. It will not do to sneer at it as a mere system of infinitesimal doses, for should any one affirm it to be so, I am entitled to tell him that, if he do so without having studied the subject, he speaks in ignorance, let him pronounce his opinion with what pretentious pomp he may; and that if

he do so after having studied the subject, he says what he must know to be untrue. While we maintain that no College or Faculty in existence is in a condition to decide what may be the smallest quantity of a medicine that is capable of acting on the sick, and that doses very much smaller than our Colleges and Faculties have any conception of, actually do operate as remedies, the whole question of doses is left open to the discretion and experience of the physician, who may be as strictly a Homœopathist as Hahnemann himself, though he should give his medicines in the ordinary form, simply if he select them according to their Homœopathic fitness. This alone is Homœopathy, and it has been studied, or the study of it recommended, by men quite as considerable in social and scientific rank as any member of the Faculty. Our late townsman Dr. Andrew Combe was a good specimen of the more philosophic physicians, and he wrote of Homœopathy thus:—"I am not, and for a long time have not been, *hostile* to Homœopathy. I have long thought that the Homœopathists have made out a case for *serious inquiry*, and on that ground urged our medical nephews to avail themselves of the opportunities presented to them to investigate its claims, and verify them in practical observation. If I were to continue in my profession, I should consider it a duty to *test* these claims."*

Brera, the Professor of Practice of Physic and Clinical Medicine in the University of Padua, one of the most eminent examples of the practical physician, wrote of Homœopathy in these terms:—"Homœopathy, though it may appear vain to some, singular to others, and extravagant to a great number, does actually reign in the scientific world just like any other school; for it has its Chairs, its Books, its Journals, its Hospitals, its Cliniques, its Professors

* Combe's Life, p. 456.

who teach, and its Public who listen. . . . Such being the case, it can no longer be treated with contempt ; it merits that calm examination, that severity of judgment which have been applied to all systems of medicine successively,"* &c. &c.

The late Mr. Liston, Professor of Clinical Surgery in University College, London, was the finest example of the practical surgeon this country ever produced, and his opinion of Homœopathy appears in the following extract from his Lectures. After detailing the particulars of the cure of cases of erysipelas, which he had treated with Homœopathic remedies, that great surgeon thus addressed his pupils:—"Of course we cannot pretend to say positively in what way this effect is produced, but it seems almost to act by magic ; however, so long as we benefit our patients by the treatment we pursue, we have no right to condemn the principles upon which this treatment is recommended and pursued. You know that this medicine (Belladonna) is recommended by Homœopaths in this affection, because it produces on the skin a fiery eruption or efflorescence, accompanied by inflammatory fever. *Similia similibus curantur*, say they. . . . I believe in the Homœopathic doctrines to a certain extent, but I cannot as yet, from inexperience on the subject, go the length its advocates would wish, in so far as regards the very minute doses of some of their medicines. The medicines in the above cases were certainly given in much smaller doses than have hitherto ever been prescribed. The beneficial effects, as you witnessed, are unquestionable. I have, however, seen similar good effects of the Belladonna, prepared according to the Homœopathic Pharmacopœia, in a case of very severe erysipelas of the head and face, under the care of my

* British Journal of Homœopathy, April 1848.

friend Dr. Quin. The inflammatory symptoms and local signs disappeared with very great rapidity. Without adopting the theory of this medical sect, you ought not to reject its doctrines without due examination and inquiry.”*

The Faculty may decline to follow the advice or example of these distinguished men, but it is far from being likely that the students in our schools will read with indifference those deliberate statements from men who stood among the foremost in their several departments, or that they shall be insensible to the suggestions of curiosity when aroused by such weighty testimony. To oppose penalties and regulations to the beliefs or purposes of their pupils, will soon be found a vain expedient for cutting off the supply of qualified and licensed practitioners to the ranks of the rising system, and we hope to be spared the annual recurrence of scenes which place this city, that was wont to take a first place in great intellectual and scientific movements, not only behind other seats of learning in free countries, but actually behind such dens of despotism as Vienna and St. Petersburg. In both these cities the young science which struggles in Britain for bare toleration, under the ban of Colleges and threatenings of pains and penalties, is sanctioned by the authority and protected by the strong arm of the State. The *Odium Medicum* can be more tyrannical than the employers of Haynau, and more intolerant than the imperial jailor of Siberia.†

It may not be easily believed that the prompter of the notable Resolutions of the Faculty is the conductor of a Medical print published weekly in London, and

* Lancet, 1836.

† That very Dr. Arneth who, last winter, was so much thought of by some members of the Edinburgh Faculty, and so complimented by an Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Society, is the person alluded to in the following

under the ostensible editorship of the notorious Coroner of Middlesex, and radical Member for Finsbury; yet I can discover no other explanation of that precipitate revolution in their opinion and purposes to which I have adverted in a former part of this letter. While some member of the Faculty was penning the admission that they did not see "how they could take cognizance of the principles upon which their colleague chooses to conduct his private practice," that publication had begun a series of abusive articles in which the Faculty were threatened with extinction if they did not endeavour to get rid of their obnoxious colleague, or protest against his heresies. It is astounding that men in their position should have been terrified by so much bad English, and bad temper, and from such a quarter too; or should have attached the smallest weight to the statements of a writer, who, as Addison says of all "party liars," is plainly anxious "to commend his zeal, without any concern for his veracity." If, in order to prosper, the Medical School of Edinburgh must doff its dignity and independence, and stoop to such a patron as this, I hope, for the honour of the country, that prosperity at such a price will appear to my fellow-citizens too disgraceful to be endured. I believe, however, that no such humiliation is necessary in order to preserve even that kind of prosperity which the Faculty

passage by the Editors of the *Homœopathic Journal*:—"We learn from Dr. Arneth of Vienna, that he has just received the appointment of assistant-physician to the Midwifery department of the General Hospital there. Although, he writes, there are among the professors and others occupying situations in Austria, many who now profess and practise Homœopathy, yet these all received their appointments before they embraced the doctrines of Hahnemann; this is the first instance where a practitioner actually engaged in Homœopathic practice has received an appointment of this nature, and is a speaking sign of the growing confidence in our system in the Austrian dominions."—*British Journal of Homœopathy*, 1848.

seem to regard as of primary importance; and nothing can contribute more to such a result than the cultivation, by each member of that body, of his own department of science without prejudice and without fear, and the exercise of a liberal spirit towards his colleagues. These may not be the arts to win the applause of vulgar and violent men, but they are essential to the happy consciousness of personal rectitude, and to the approbation of the good and the wise; whose approbation alone is the sure foundation of honour as well as of success.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

Your very obedient Servant,

WM. HENDERSON.

EDINBURGH,

9th August, 1851.



