

Dr. Russell's address at the second Congress of homoeopathic practitioners.

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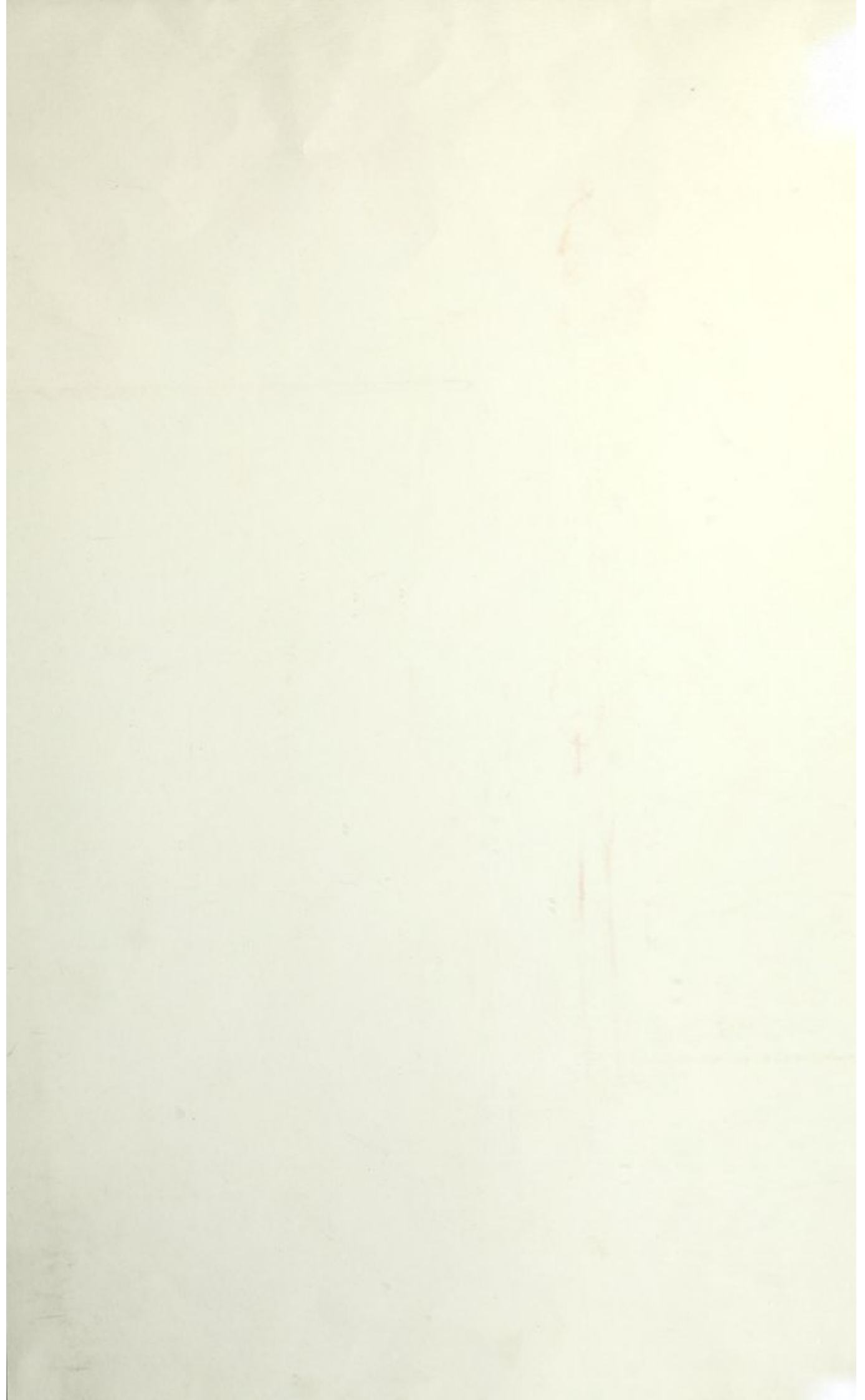
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DR. RUSSELL'S ADDRESS

AT THE

SECOND CONGRESS OF HOMŒOPATHIC PRACTITIONERS.

Held at London, on the 23rd and 24th July, 1851.

(Extracted from the British Journal of Homœopathy, Vol ix.)

GENTLEMEN,—It is now nearly a century since the birth of the great man to whom we owe the reformation which gives us our distinctive appellation and task ; and a bare recital of the leading events which have been more or less caused or affected by the idea he first embodied and taught, would more than occupy the space allotted to this address. But it would be more profitable could we discover the spirit which shaped itself in these outward effects, for it is only by so doing that History becomes an oracle, directing us how to act, and telling what we may anticipate.

The career of Hahnemann is too familiar to us all to require narration here. The features of his character most important to bear in mind when we attempt to estimate the results of his life, are those which he derived from the country of his birth and those which he shared in common with all great actors in this world's drama.

Germany, that land of promise, of promise unfulfilled,—that land which has so often given us a Prince for our throne and a Monarch in the realms of thought,—was emphatically his fatherland. There he acquired that width of culture and experience corresponding to his future elevation; thence he derived that simplicity, a frequent attendant if not essential attribute of high genius, a simplicity blended with lofty imagination, which delights to recognize a symbolic significance in things of every day life. Thus, upon one occasion being visited in his retreat at Cœthen by a disciple who had often heard of the garden attached to his house which afforded him his only exercise, being at the time unable from the hostility of his persecutors to venture beyond his own threshold, in reply to the natural observation of “how small this much talked-of garden of yours is, Hofrath,” he observed, “Yes, it is narrow, but (pointing to the sky) of infinite height.” His enemies could not interdict his ascent, however much they circumscribed his rambles. And thus he became a

“Type of the wise, who soar but never roam,
True to the kindred points of heaven and home.”

From the too great inclination of his countrymen to exalt the ideal over the practical, what might be called a tendency to run to ghost, he was saved by an intense desire, inherent in all reformers, to give substantial reality to the truth he had won from “the void and formless infinite.” To the critical element so excessive in his time and country, and which now threatens all creeds and systems with destruction, he united a faith firm as that of a former and greater age and the zeal of a prophet, which even in the act of consuming the old and false, quickens into being a higher and more enduring form of life. To this combination of opposite qualities, to the profound abstract thinker, the scientific enquirer united with the vehement preacher, and the sagacious man of the world, do we owe one of the greatest achievements recorded in the annals of science.

As Hahnemann's character, like that of all men whose lives have told directly upon the human race, was essentially national,

so the development of his system in the various lands where it took root presents distinctions equally characteristic of their inhabitants. In Germany, great in men and ideas and little addicted to spontaneous organization, no sooner was the doctrine promulgated than it was partially accepted, exposed to the keen critical acumen of its subtilizing intellect, commented on with the easy candour of philosophical scepticism, and when practically espoused it encountered the risk of being lost in absurd extremes; for while the Hochpotenzers waged war with the Specifikers, both were warned from the camp of the thirtieth regiment of regulars. And now we may even descry in the distance the homœopathic sceptic, which seems to me the strangest of all anomalies. In short, in Germany men prefer taking the watch to pieces to trying whether it will go. Hence, notwithstanding the number, ability and industry of its adherents, the system has not made the impression on its native land which it ought to have done, and which it would have done had the Germans been a more practical nation. Let us at the same time frankly acknowledge our immense obligation to them, for they seem destined to grow seed-corn which they may not eat. *Vos non vobis* is painfully applicable to this noble race. Alas, that in the land which gave to us the art of printing, the press should be gagged!

Although we are now in possession of a homœopathic map, by that zealous apostle of the cause who gave such volcanic life to it in Sicily, yet we shall not venture upon the "grand tour," but content ourselves by applying the principles we have indicated to the progress of the reformation in Britain and America. We unite these two countries, for they are of one tongue and lineage. In fact, America is the extreme development of Britain in one direction; more than rivalling its parent in energy and enterprize, and presenting almost in caricature those features in which both they and we differ from Germany.

We may venture without offence to say, that this country, chosen by all the earth to rear the palace for the coronation of commerce, is pre-eminent among the nations. But great as it is nationally, we look in vain for individuals who hold a corres-

ponding pre-eminence among those of other lands. The greatest state seems to have only small statesmen.

The same holds even more emphatically true of America. There as here, the excellence consists in the application rather than the conception of ideas. Hence, as we might have expected, homœopathy was imported ready made into these countries and put to use. The first to give it a firm footing here was Dr. Quin, who, with other rare qualifications for the task, was eminently a man of the world. Sagacious, practical, adroit and bold. The very man for England. Soon others rose, all more or less distinguished by this vigorous practical character, and whose success in every case corresponded to the amount of those qualities they possessed. Over the country in all directions there sprung up practitioners, who with true English instinct organized institutions, such as dispensaries with a committee of management, which now serve as so many centres of independent growth and development, and are spreading like a ganglionic system over the whole island. So that, whereas ten years ago there was but one or two such institutions in the kingdom there are now above forty, almost all of which have a regular board of management, generally comprising persons of great social influence, and are so far independent that in the event of the removal of the practitioner to whom they owe their origin, means would be immediately taken to secure another. Like all British institutions, they have so much stability and plasticity that individual losses can no longer affect their permanence. The number of patients who have been treated at the various dispensaries is now very great, certainly not less than 100,000. In America, too, there exist associations of all kinds for the promotion of homœopathy, some of which have even been sanctioned by the state and incorporated by charter, and obtained the right of granting college degrees, as in Pennsylvania.

To the mere historian this is a pleasant sight, for it assures us that homœopathy *of a kind* has laid so firm a hold of the practical English and American mind, that nothing can now check its steady and rapid advance. It has twice proved its power to combat the most deadly of modern plagues with an

amount of success unparalleled by any other method. The result of the homœopathic treatment both of cholera and yellow fever has greatly increased the public confidence in the system, and won adherents from the old school of physic.

There are now no less than three hospitals in full operation, all ably equipped with efficient medical officers and presided over by men of more than British lustre and renown. So that if there be any truth in history, we may predict for our reformation a future more abundantly triumphant than its brief past. For every day as it adds to the bulk increases the momentum of the body.

But to us to whom the internal development of this great truth is committed, there is much ground of anxiety. It is by no means flattering to our vanity that while it has done so much for us we have done so little for it. We can scarcely point to one original idea suggested, and to but one important medicine added by us, notwithstanding the multitude of books which have been written both here and in America. And it well becomes us to be modest in the height of our success, seeing we owe it so entirely to the ill-requited labours of others, many of whom are scarcely known even by name. Far be it from me to presume to say this in the way of reproof, I merely indicate it as the natural consequence of importing a scientific discovery into this intensely practical and unideal country. Probably the numerous practitioners who have done so much to establish and extend this truth, have been of more benefit than had their time been spent in proving new medicines or reinvestigating the properties of those already proved.

But we are now entering upon a most critical period of our history, and we shall require in the prosperity we confidently anticipate more wisdom to guide our course than when we were insignificant in numbers and reputation. The opposition we are experiencing from the practitioners of allopathy is quite out of proportion to any mischief they conceive our system calculated to produce; and they seem to be acting under the convulsive apprehension of speedy personal extinction. Indeed their recent doings display an amount of folly approaching to the state of the "*quem Deus vult perdere*," and it requires no great

prophetic power to foretell the result. It would certainly have been more congenial to the better part of our natures had the inevitable process of the absorption and extinction of the antiquated and feeble by the fresh and vigorous proceeded more gradually, and with a less mortifying exhibition of the mean passions which lie dormant in every heart, and display themselves when provoked by selfish fear and cupidity. But this was not to be: and in the age which boasts so loudly of its enlightenment, liberality and toleration, we have seen the most celebrated medical university of Europe stoop to an act of as base and cowardly persecution as any which roused the eloquence of Luther against the perfidy of the Vatican.

It is with profound regret we contemplate the ruinous course adopted by these venerable institutions. Cato's famous sentence, "Delenda est Carthago," proved bad advice: for with the fall of Carthage began the decline of Rome. And we should gain infinitely more by a generous rivalry, than by this bitter hostility between the two opposing schools of medicine. But we fear that to expect this, would be to confound the ancient St. Andrew's Knight of the Lance with the modern St. Andrew's Day of the Lancet. One thing however is certain, that as the Red Indian, in spite of his tomahawk and scalping-knife, disappears more rapidly before the ploughshare than the rifle, so the overthrow, or, what would be far better, the conversion of our antagonists will be more accelerated by our peaceful development than by any aggressive measures.

True, it is not easy to bear with the "silent magnanimity of Nature" the furious assaults of the incessant scribblers in the medical press, to say nothing of the torrent of gibes and taunts to which we are daily exposed. But now that *Punch*, that London Puck, has volunteered his services to command the Joke-corps in this forlorn hope, we may expect to be relieved from the wearisome repetition of attempts at witticism by those whose silly laugh is only now tolerated in society on account of their obvious want of knowledge and good breeding. By the bye, *Punch* should clearly be on our side, for he must claim descent from the Laughing Philosopher, and Democritus was the first to announce the homœopathic doctrine, in his

famous answer to Hippocrates, who was sent by his foolish townfolk to cure of insanity the sanest man of his day.

The rapid progress of our system, involving as it must do the gradual reversing of our relation with the old school, will endanger the loss of that wholesome stimulus which makes each of us feel that he is at present working in the field of a microscope, with the eye of anything but charity fixed upon his actions. If this be withdrawn, there will be considerable risk of the distance between the physician and his patients being too much diminished, and that not so much by the elevation of the latter as the depression of the former.

So long as our whole strength is expended in diffusing rather than augmenting truth, we are tending to equalize the amount of knowledge whose difference distinguishes the professional and non-professional public. So that even now a clerical amateur thinks himself entitled to read us a lecture upon the particular medicine and the particular dose we ought and ought not to give. And we feel that we have exposed ourselves to this severe sarcasm. When we read a popular treatise on Astronomy, by Herschel, we are conscious that in his capacious mind there lie vaults of wealth beyond what he has thought proper to produce for our instruction, and the light he gives, though enough for our unpractised eye, only confirms our previous estimate of his unattainable elevation. But it is far otherwise with popular works, written by those who have not yet obtained the medal of the Legion of Science. The amateur, when he has mastered his manual, imagines more or less foolishly, that he is equal to its author, and expresses his confident opinion upon all matters contained therein. This is the natural consequence of the arithmetical aspect of our books of reference. Once admit the principle that the selection of a remedy depends upon the mere number of the symptoms it has in common with a disease, and it requires a far less complex machine than that of Babbage to supersede the necessity of calling in a doctor. It is not easy for those just entering upon domestic practice, with plenary powers derived from Jahr and Company, to understand how we can admit in its fullest extent the value of the simple rule as an unerring guide to the choice of the right remedy, and yet main-

tain that its application is so difficult that even Hahnemann, in the full maturity of his experience, exclaims: that he should feel inclined to worship as a God the man who was thoroughly acquainted with all the virtues that lie in Belladonna alone. So that the complaint of the Father of Medicine: *Ars longa vita brevis, experientia fallax*, holds as true now as it did two thousand years ago. Without wishing to wrap ourselves in a cloak of mystery, or to assume the *odi-profanum-vulgus* air, it is quite obvious that every art has its multitude of technical peculiarities, which require the apprenticeship of a life thoroughly to master, besides its simple laws which may be understood by any person who takes the pains to reflect upon them.

The obvious remedy for this awkward approximation of the two classes, is to set before ourselves a higher standard of attainment, such as Hahnemann had. It is by working in his spirit and towards his ideal that we are his disciples, and not by servile copying of his written directions, much less by implicit faith in the traditionary legends about his miraculous cures. And perhaps I may take the liberty of pressing on your attention the claims of the Journal with which several of us are connected. It has been the anxious wish of the Editors that it should represent the growth of our system; and among the testimonies to the recognition of its value, we have one more flattering than agreeable in the fact of a reprint to the amount of a thousand copies having been made in America. I should hardly have thought myself entitled to advert to this, had there been an active scientific spirit manifesting itself in other directions, but I fear we are content with what we have attained to, and perhaps nothing but a sharp reverse will teach us that the end of growth is the beginning of decay; that not to go forward is to go back; and whenever we cease to gain we begin to lose. In the words of Goethe—

“ Stumbleth he who runneth fast,
Dieth he who standeth still;
Nor by haste nor rest can ever
Man his destiny fulfil.”

Now that backed by so powerful and distinguished a body of supporters we have given a challenge to all other schools by the

opening of public hospitals, it is of the utmost consequence that excelling them in our special method of treatment we should equal them in our general attainments.

We cannot over-estimate the value of our hospitals ; not only nor indeed mainly on account of the statistical evidence they are calculated to afford, but as presenting a field of observation to enquirers. For medical statistics are generally very fallacious. It is a common error to transfer the certainty of numbers to the things they indicate but do not represent. Numerals are simple unchangeable substantives, and never vary in their material relations. Two is and always must be equal to two. But when they become adjective then this no longer holds true. Two men are not necessarily equal to two men. It is a common error to suppose that because calculation is so valuable in ascertaining the probable duration of life, some similar process may be applicable to questions regarding the treatment of disease. This essential difference is overlooked, that in the former case the elements of the calculations are extremely simple, and in the latter just the reverse. We know that within a given space of time all now alive shall be dead. It is no very difficult problem to find the probable term of each life. Although all we can even here determine is the aggregate, not the individual period of death. But it is altogether different with disease. Disease is not a thing, it is an abstract term for a combination and series of changes occurring in a living person. And if two men are not equal to two men, much less are two sick persons equal to two other sick persons, though all are ill of the same disease. When we speak of two cases of brain-fever, we mean two individuals differently organized originally, subjected from their birth to different influences which have modified and increased their primary dissimilarity, and who have into the bargain a morbid action going on in an important organ, and which probably still more exaggerates their natural unlikeness.

Thus they may differ in every other respect and agree only in this, that their brain is inflamed. And yet all these enormous differences are overlooked, and they are secured as so many equal atoms to be exposed to an endless process of multiplication and addition, and from data thus imperfect are drawn

algebraical formulæ which we are told are as certain as the propositions of Euclid.

I do not wish to undervalue statistics, but merely to suggest the propriety of carefully limiting them to their legitimate sphere of application, which seems to me to have been transgressed by some of our ablest physicians.

There are few of our reasonings for practical purposes founded upon mathematics; but there is another kind of evidence, far more accessible and equally cogent:—the direct appeal to the senses. We do not recognize a thing by enumerating its properties, but by a much more rapid and subtle process. As no sane man can doubt, after a certain number of times, that he can be mistaken in the appearance of a simple obvious and well marked disease, so may the same certainty attend the observation of manifest effects of remedies when their operation is watched. Hospital reports, especially tabular ones, are open to a thousand objections; but seeing is believing, and any one who is familiar with disease and sees its course modified or arrested under our treatment, in a way he never saw before, cannot resist the conclusion that the result is due to the means employed. Besides the conviction obtained by those who observe for themselves, we cannot doubt but that the fact of cultivated and trustworthy physicians attesting their belief in the system from personal observation, has an invaluable effect in inducing others to pursue a similar course. Nor is the advantage to the student entering the profession to be overlooked. It becomes us to afford all facilities to those who venture to oppose the tyrannical decrees of universities and colleges, and to give them every encouragement in the prosecution of those studies for which they have to encounter the risk of degradation and insult. Every hospital is a school, and while we should deeply regret to see candidates for the homœopathic diploma separating themselves before the termination of their curriculum from their academic fellows, yet, whether the degree is to supersede or to be superadded to that of the old school, it is quite obvious that before long some examination into the qualifications of those who profess to practise homœopathy will be demanded by the public and granted by the state. And I trust that the claims of Edinburgh may not be

forgotten. We have already one professor there, who is now doing us valiant service, and I feel assured that the recent futile and malignant attempt to deprive him of his well earned position will more clearly demonstrate the fact, that so far from a profession of homœopathy disqualifying a teacher from giving instruction in the preliminary branches of study, the greater nicety of its therapeutics demands a more intimate acquaintance with all the varieties of morbid action, the laws of which constitute pathology. For if the system we have devoted our lives to advance and improve be something more than a cabalistic spell muttered over phantastic globules, if it be indeed one of the greatest thoughts of the day, then it must assimilate to itself all true knowledge and learning. If the sciences were ever necessary to medicine, they are more so now. Truth fulfils, never supplants truth. The value of the past is enhanced by the present, as the revelations of the old testament could not be fully understood till the promulgation of the new.

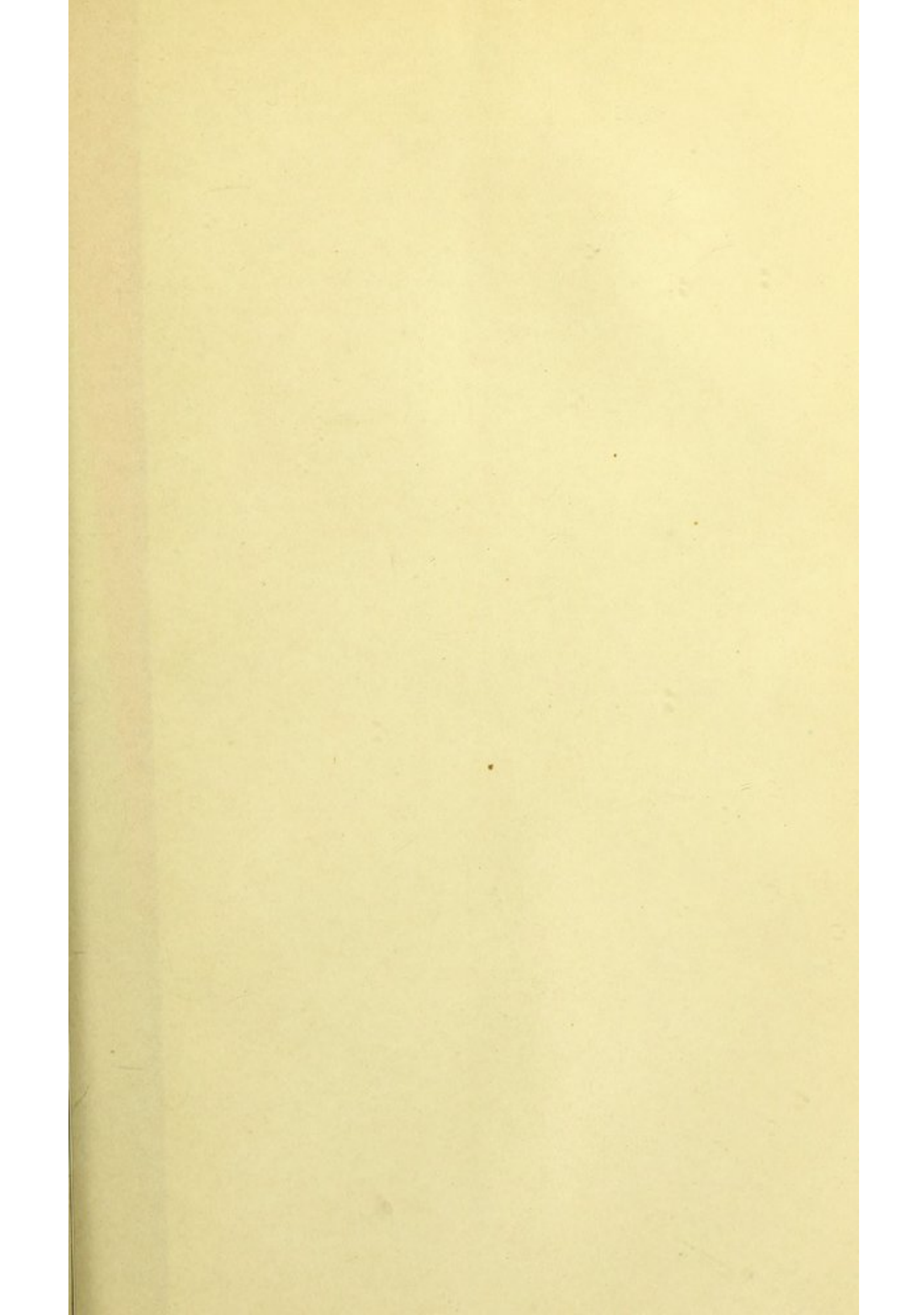
Indeed it is one of the most gratifying reflections how naturally all the cognate sciences and curative methods arrange themselves round the central truth of Homœopathy. Thus we welcome all the contributions of the chemist and pathologist, as well as the instructions of those who have studied the application of water in its various relations to disease, and all practical investigations on that most mysterious of curative agencies—mesmerism, which even in the cradle rouses such undue fears in the timid, and excites equally exorbitant hopes in the credulous. In short, we give a hearty welcome to all appliances which promise to eradicate the distempers or alleviate the sufferings and prolong the life of the family of mankind. We do not even fanatically refuse the measures employed by our allopathic brethren. (For though the Jews do not study the new testament, that is no reason the Christians should not study the old.) We find in the dietetic medicines, such as cod-liver oil, a valuable auxiliary to our specific treatment. Much less do we reject the improved methods of diagnosis, so elaborately and successfully cultivated by many allopathic physicians, and one of the most recent innovations in an important department of practice

has been largely tested and warmly advocated by one of our most energetic and distinguished practitioners.

Indeed we confidently anticipate the day when homœopathy and allopathy, and all such discordant sectarian names, shall merge in one general system, and when there shall be but one art of healing as there is but one Hope, one Faith, one Life, and one true Physician. To hasten the advance of this glorious consummation requires higher attributes than any that science affords. It demands of us to forget the petty jealousies which have done so much to retard our progress, and that we should act with more mutual toleration and larger charity.

Let us then unite in a higher sense than we have yet done, helping and cheering one another in the arduous task committed to our care, and above all things keeping each his own honour unsullied, that thus we

May bear without abuse,
The grand old name of Gentleman
Defamed by every Charlatan,
And soiled by most ignoble use.



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