

Homoeopathy via young physic.

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*Sir William Hamilton Bart
with the Author's kind regards*

HOMŒOPATHY
VIA
YOUNG PHYSIC.

BY
DR. J. RUTHERFURD RUSSELL,
OF EDINBURGH.

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HOMOGRAPHY

LIX

YOUNG PHYSIC.

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HOMŒOPATHY *via* YOUNG PHYSIC.

THERE is a point in the development of a complex science, such as medicine, at which it seems to be overburdened by the multitude of its facts and the insufficiency of its generalizations. When it has reached this stage, and come to a dead lock, it gets no aid from those who have the reputation of being its most successful cultivators. For the very endowments which gave them renown at the time when the science required merely the accumulation of materials, or the critical selection of facts and their lucid arrangement, disqualifies them from the higher task of grasping the subject as a whole, and viewing it by the light of general philosophy, discovering the true centre from which it must be re-organized. This great achievement requires more than the highest powers of analytical acumen, it requires the intuition of synthetic genius. And when the voice of the great discoverer, who is destined to renovate his department of knowledge, makes known the central truth, there is none on whose ear it falls more repulsively than on that of the high-priest of the special science itself. Great discoveries belong to philosophy rather than to science; and no class of minds is less prepared to receive them than are those who have devoted themselves to the study of scientific details alone.

There is nothing more strange or more lamentable than the total absence of philosophical discernment displayed by those who are now the appointed guardians of medicine. While deploring its present uncertain and unscientific character, they do not seem at all aware of the real cause of its poverty, and propose remedies which would be as useless if got as they are impossible to get. Their inability to perceive what medicine stands in need of, arises from the same cause

as their rejection of Homœopathy. If there be any thing more striking in Dr. Forbes' memorable article than this, that throughout the whole of it he speaks of theory in medicine as if it were quite an unimportant thing, and as if the whole end of the labours of the medical philosopher were attained if he made himself sure of a sufficient number of facts, it is the constant recurrence of the expression "philosophic practitioner,"—whose philosophy seems to consist in doubting much and in doing nothing. Unsparingly as he condemns Homœopathy as tending to degrade physic by making its practitioners artisans, the position he would appoint to medicine is singularly opposed to the usual requirements of an art and a science. Science is certain knowledge, giving the power of prediction; art is the application of that knowledge. But his science consists in knowing that we can know nothing, and the art he recommends us to practice is the *dolce far niente!* He speaks of Homœopathy as "an ingenious system of medical doctrine, tolerably complete in its organization, tolerably comprehensive in its views," and says that "it is as good and rational a theory as most of our medical theories." With the great leader of philosophic practitioners it seems a very light matter whether a theory be right or wrong. He seems to regard it very much in the light of the shell of an oyster, useful only for containing a nutritious body of facts. It is not surprising that, considering theory to be so very insignificant a matter, he lightly observes, with an inconsistency which might be culpable in one who took a more serious view of the value of theory, "that we may indeed have sufficient proof to satisfy any reasonable mind that the theory, or doctrines, or principles of Homœopathy are false," although he does not enter into any such proof, but waives it till a more convenient season. He turns away contemptuously from the consideration of the theory, doctrines, or principles, and eagerly asks what the *facts* are worth.

The facts arrest and startle him. He finds that under the guidance of this theory practitioners of medicine restore to health more patients than under the orthodox method, which disdains, as an infringement upon the liberty of the faculty, to acknowledge obedience to any theory whatsoever.

This fact of the greater success of Homœopathic treatment, is a hook in the nose of Allopathy, which must in some way or other be extracted. The problem is this:—By the most authentic returns, more cures are effected in certain dangerous diseases under Homœopathy than under Allopathy; how, then, is the inference to be prevented that, therefore, Homœopathy is good, and the position to be established that it is radically bad? This is done in the simplest and most ingenious way. Good and bad are relative terms: it is the same thing to say that a man is better than a monkey, as to say that a monkey is worse than a man. It merely requires the transposition of the predicates. If we say Homœopathy is better than Allopathy, we suppose some good in the former—more good at least than in Allopathy. But we have only to say Allopathy is worse than Homœopathy to get rid of the dilemma. And this is the position our great antagonist assumes! But it is urged, if Homœopathy be bad, and Allopathy still worse, how do you retain your allegiance to Allopathy? To this he answers: it is bad *in esse*, but good *in posse*; it contains the germs of its entire renovation, and it only requires proper attention to foster the latent rudiments of good into vigorous growth. How comes it, a sceptic might inquire, that you, who have so long held a chief place in the cabinet of Medicine,—you, her appointed, acknowledged, respected minister, should, till now, never have whispered your belief that the system you have been directing requires a thorough reformation? How is it that this momentous truth has been forced from you by the doings of so insignificant a body as the Homœopaths? Surely, in the history of our art, among the triumphs of Homœopathy will be recorded,—“It forced Dr. Forbes to give his candid opinion of the state of medicine. It forced him to make confessions during his life, which otherwise he might have reserved for his testament.”

But let us follow out the process of Young Physic, and see exactly what it is, and to what it leads:—Allopathy and Homœopathy are both bad. In their hospitals many patients die, although more recover. The average mortality in both is much alike; the kind of diseases which kill them is much alike. It is plain that, as there is no great difference in the

amount of recoveries under the two systems, they must both derive their efficacy from the same cause. Now, as the methods of treatment are wholly opposite, the benefit must accrue from something beyond or outside of the treatment altogether. The only thing beyond that, common to both, is the natural power of recovery. Here, then, is the real explanation of the cause of the equality in the mortality and recovery in the two sets of hospitals:—that those who are able to stand the treatment and the disease, get well; and those who are unable, die. The practice of medicine (*medendi*, curing) turns out to be nothing. All that the physician can do, is to open his wards and see fair-play between Nature and Death. If the struggle between them end in favour of the latter, he has the satisfaction of confirming his diagnosis; if in favour of the former, of dismissing his patient.

Is it, then, really come to this—that, after two thousand years of observing disease, we are no further advanced in its treatment? In what respect is Young Physic superior to Hippocrates? They both advise the same thing: Watch, say they, the progress of disease, but do not interfere. Young Physic, however, remarks, that all who have deviated from this rule have done mischief. All that his greater experience has taught him is, to have greater confidence in the canon of Hippocrates. How long is this new cycle to run? Are we to stand, like sentinel-stars, for other two thousand years, silently watching the course of disease, while ever and anon an eccentric man of action suggests some practical innovation, till, at the expiry of this double millennium, another Forbes arises, and with his critical crowbar demolishes the systems of these practical men, and dooms his fellow-mortals to endure all the pangs of sickness, with nothing but the consolations of philosophy to alleviate them? In short, what is the germ in Allopathy on which Dr. Forbes rests his hopes? The only positive recommendations we can find are—carefully to watch the progress of disease, to employ all proper hygienic measures, and *to use the numerical method in noting down the effects which have been or may be observed to follow the administration of the medicines.*

The first two recommendations, however excellent, can hardly be considered as at all differing from those given by Hippocrates ; and as Dr. Forbes evidently expects much good to accrue from the last, it is to it we shall now direct our sole attention : and if we can establish that the only results of such a method are increasing perplexity, rank error, or total disbelief in the powers of medicine, we must acknowledge the incapacity of Young Physic to be of any use,—except in the way of a pioneer.

“ *Ars longa, vita brevis, observatio fallax :*” how, then, can any man, in the short term of his life, discover for himself what remedies are certainly useful in the all but infinite variety of diseases he has to treat ? Suppose even that he has the advantage of a large hospital, is it possible for him to make experiments in such a way as to arrive at certain knowledge ? The Young Physic school, which prides itself upon its philosophy, recommends the use of the numerical method, that, by noting down the result of each medicine in each form of disease, we may at length arrive at positive data to direct us in future cases. Let us inquire what philosophers of established reputation think of this plan.

M. Comte scouts with the same severity as Dr. Forbes, all ontological speculations, and founds his system on the ascertainment of positive phenomena alone, leaving the mystics to pry into the cause of these phenomena. He has, moreover, a profound respect for mathematical science, places it as the first and fundamental science in his scheme of human knowledge, and is most anxious to carry the numerical spirit as far into general science as it will legitimately go. He would apply the method of numerical notation to every department of human knowledge, where it could be of any avail. Surely if any philosopher of note is likely to countenance Young Physic’s brave attempt to reform medicine by introducing into it the accuracy of arithmetic, it must be M. Auguste Comte. His opinion is given in the following words :—

“ *Indeed, the spirit of calculation tends in our day to introduce itself into this study, (Physiology) especially into that part of it relating to medical questions, by a much less direct method, under a much more specious form, and with infinitely*

more modest pretensions. I wish to speak of that pretended application of it which is called the statistics of medicine, from which many savans (e. g., Young Physic) expect wonders, and which, from its very nature, can lead only to profound and direct degradation of the medical art, (reduced by it to a blind enumeration.) Such a method, if we may be allowed to call it by the name of method at all, cannot, in reality, be any thing else than absolute empiricism, disguised under the frivolous garb of mathematics. Pushed to its extreme logical consequences, it will tend to make all rational medication radically disappear from medicine, by conducting the practitioner to make chance trials of certain therapeutic measures, for the purpose of noting down with minute precision the numerical results of their application. It is evident, on principle, that the continual variations to which all organism is subjected, are necessarily even more pronounced in a pathological, than in a normal state, as a result of which, the cases must be even less exactly similar, whence results the manifest impossibility of making a judicious comparison between two curative methods derived from data furnished by statistical tables alone, independent of some sound medical theory. No doubt some direct experimentation, restrained under proper limits, might be of great importance to medicine as well as to physiology, but it is precisely under the strict condition that it shall never be simply empirical, but that it shall always attach itself either in its institution or in its interpretation to an entire system of corresponding positive doctrines. (A l'ensemble systematique des doctrines positives correspondantes.) Notwithstanding the imposing aspect of the forms of exactness, it would be difficult to conceive of an opinion in therapeutics more superficial and more uncertain than that which rests solely on the easy computation of fatal and favourable cases, to say nothing of the pernicious practical consequences of such a manner of proceeding, where one could not beforehand exclude any kind of attempt.

“ It is really deplorable that geometricians have sometimes honoured with some kind of encouragement, such a profoundly irrational aberration, by making vain and puerile efforts to determine, by their illusory theory of chances, the number of cases

sufficient to make these statistical results legitimate."—(Cours de Philosophie positive par M. Auguste Comte. Tome 3me. p.p. 418, 420.)

We must again remind Young Physic that M. Comte is one of the first of living mathematicians, and one who, more than any other philosopher, insists upon the prolongation of the mathematical method as far forward into the more special and complex sciences as it can be made to go.

There can be no greater contrast than that presented by Dr. Forbes, as a destroyer, and as a builder. Nothing can be clearer, more precise, more acute than his objections to the systems or practice of others; but when he makes his own system known, he becomes vague and obscure in the extreme, and falls into declamation about the medical profession being "grand and glorious in its essence, aims, and aspirations!" Wearied, it would seem, with the work of demolition, he sinks into the state described by Horace, when he says, "*Auditis? an me ludit amabilis insania?*" and in the dim perspective he sees the future progeny of Young Physic flit past like Banquo's shadowy race, but cannot catch or paint their lineaments.

The system which is thus faintly suggested in the article of Dr. Forbes is more fully expounded by Dr. A. Combe in his letter "On the Observation of Nature in the Treatment of Disease." This letter is very remarkable for its candour and high moral tone. It contains also much truth, and shows that the writer, to some extent, perceives the real cause of the backward state of medicine when he says that, "notwithstanding the ardour and success with which facts are sought for, yet, inasmuch as the ultimate facts remain unknown, the others lead to no useful result." If by ultimate fact, Dr. Combe means the largest possible generalization, and this is the only idea that a disciple of Bacon can attach to the phrase, then we entirely agree with him, but we look upon the homœopathic principle as being that ultimate fact which he seeks. Although to a certain extent Dr. Combe feels the necessities of medicine, and truly says it is by the ascertainment of an ultimate fact, that is, a general law, that we can advance our science, yet the means by which he strives to reach the point of vantage

are as vague as his general conception of what it would be, when gained, is just and exalted.

The system which Dr. Combe expounds is founded on a radical error in philosophy. His view is this:—If we observe the progress of disease, we shall find that it runs a determinate course; it has its origin, its growth, and its decline; in these it obeys certain fixed laws given to it by the Creator. It is for man to learn these laws—to interpret these laws, but not to interfere with them. Nature alone cures, not man. It is presumptuous in man to usurp the prerogative of nature, and attempt to improve upon her efforts. Man is the interpreter, not the master of nature. Such seems the general drift of his opinions, which, lest we misstate them, we shall give in his own words:—“The grand object of medicine is to preserve and restore the healthy action of all the different organs and functions of the human body, so as to ensure their efficiency, and fit the individual for the successful discharge of the duties devolving upon him as a created being and a member of society. Here, then, the first step to be taken is obviously to become acquainted with the mechanism of the body, the structure of its constituent organs, the conditions or laws under which these act, the purposes which they respectively serve in the animal economy, and the relations in which they stand to each other, and to the external agents by which man is surrounded and acted upon from the moment of conception down to his latest breath. In other words, the first step towards rational principles of cure must consist in a knowledge of the laws of the healthy functions. The second ought to be the observation of the manner in which the various disturbing causes act upon the different functions, and the kind, course, duration, and termination, of the morbid action which they produce. Having investigated these points, we become qualified to inquire, in the next place, what circumstances will best favour the intentions of Nature. and remove the obstacles which may have arisen to impede or thwart her efforts. To succeed in these aims, or even to make a rational attempt at succeeding, we must be profoundly impressed, or, I may say, saturated, with the great principle or truth, that all the ope-

rations and actions of the living body, whether healthy or morbid, take place according to fixed and discoverable laws, and that God has left nothing to chance. With this grand fact before us, it becomes palpably evident that we can do nothing rational in the way of either prevention or cure, except in so far as we act in accordance with those laws. Many medical men have, however, a very different impression from this. A good physician will always seek to be, and never aim at being more than, Bacon's 'servant and interpreter of Nature.' A greater than he created man, and ordained the laws of his being, and no surer road can be found than that traced by the hand of his Creator. Overlooking this truth, and viewing disease as an entity, ungoverned by any definite laws, and not destined to run through any definite course, many medical men talk as familiarly of their 'curing' and 'arresting disease' as if they had an absolute control over the whole animal functions, and could alter their laws of action at pleasure. To my mind, no clearer proof of presumption and philosophic ignorance can be found than this usurpation of the prerogatives of Deity; and its results are often very unsatisfactory."

The great error contained in this view consists in confounding the so-called laws of Nature with the laws of a moral Creator. The tap-root of the false school of philosophy to which Dr. Combe seems to belong, and which has recently been fully expounded in many popular works, is confounding the real obligation of man to obey the moral laws of his Creator with his assumed submission to the laws of the creation. The so-called laws of the creation have no existence out of the mind of man. They are but the summary expressions of his knowledge; they are but the ultimate facts or laws he has arrived at. "Ultimate laws," says Mr. Mill, "are observed uniformities of Nature which cannot be resolved into more general laws."—(Mill's Logic, Vol. II, p. 3.) All that they express, in any case, is the constant relation of certain facts to certain other facts. This is all that gravitation expresses. Because gravitation is a law of Nature, would any sane man argue that therefore it ought not to be interfered with? What is the whole active life of

man, but a struggle with this great law of Nature? What is death but a sinking under it—becoming obedient to it—being let down, pulled down, we might say, in submission to this grand natural law? It cannot, then, be argued that because a process occurs in obedience to a law of physiology or pathology, that on that ground alone we ought not to interfere with it. It must be shown that it would be inexpedient to the patient if we did. This, which is the only real point at issue between us and the Naturalists, Dr. Combe does not attempt to touch. He shows, indeed, that in certain cases it is very hazardous to use the ordinary depleting measures; but he does not even attempt to show that there are not, or may not be, means which are innocuous, yet potently beneficial. He does not show that there may not be a science of therapeutics, or curing; but he implies, from the position he at first assumes, that there cannot.

Miserable as are the conclusions Dr. Combe arrives at, we believe they are the logical consequences of working out Dr. Forbes' system; and for this reason we attach much value to his letter, independently altogether of the high and generous tone which pervades it, and which gives great weight to its influence over others. If ever Medicine suffer utter degradation, it will be brought about by means of this new school. The leaders of the profession are engendering a scepticism in Medicine which, unless counteracted, will blight it to the core. Practitioners of physic will become divided into two classes,—the one believing nothing, but yet acting as if they did, and giving the countenance of their high talents and acquirements to the rankest hypocrisy; the other class believing any thing or every thing, but having no substantial grounds for their belief: cold, cultivated sceptics will be the aristocracy, and ignorant but energetic dupes of their own credulity the democracy, of this noble and glorious profession. No wonder that one of Dr. Forbes' correspondents exclaims, "What more melancholy fact can be presented to the mere prescriber, when he first enters upon the duties of his benevolent profession with the enthusiasm of unsoured philanthropy, than the continual assurance of the Nestors of the profession, that the greater our experience the more posi-

tive our conviction that we can *do* nothing? And it only proves the immense force of habit that, with such convictions, we do not see men quit a profession which, under such circumstances, requires a constant exercise of hypocrisy and a constant sacrifice of principle." There are examples of physicians being so conscientious as to make the sacrifice, and one of these is Hahnemann.

While the great majority of those who have expressed their opinions on the state and prospects of medicine agree in the main with Drs. Forbes and Combe, yet a few avow their dislike at being thus consigned to the negative pole of usefulness. The best exponent of the views of this class seems to be Dr. Bartlett, who says, "the seat, the character, and the tendencies of the disease being known, the next thing to be done is to find out the best means of preventing, modifying, and of curing it." To do this he goes on to say, "we must know the effects and influences which all substances and agencies in nature are capable of producing upon it, and this we can know only by direct observation of the effects themselves." That is, we may suppose medicine improved by a system of experimentation with individual drugs upon individual diseases. This is what another writer likewise proposes. Let us again apply to some philosopher of acknowledged reputation, to ascertain what may be expected from such experiments when not conducted in the light of some previous theory.

It most fortunately happens, that the very case in point is used as an illustration by Mr. J. Stuart Mill, in his work upon Logic. That highest modern authority upon the subject writes thus:—"Let the subject of inquiry be the conditions of health and disease in the human body, or, for greater simplicity, the conditions of recovery from a given disease; and in order to limit the question still more, let it be confined, in the first instance, to this one inquiry,—Is, or is not, a particular drug, Mercury, for example, a remedy for that disease? * * * When we devise an experiment to ascertain the effects of a given agent, there are certain precautions which we never, if we can help it, omit. In the first place, we introduce the agent into the midst of a set of

circumstances which we have exactly ascertained. It need hardly be remarked how far this condition is from being realized in any case connected with the phenomena of life; how far we are from knowing what are all the circumstances which pre-exist in any instance in which Mercury is administered to a living being. This difficulty, however, though insuperable in most cases, may not be so in all; there are sometimes (though I should think never in physiology) concurrences of many causes in which we yet know accurately what the causes are. But when we have got clear of this obstacle we encounter another still more serious. In other cases, when we intend to try an experiment, we do not reckon it enough that there be no circumstances in the case the presence of which is unknown to us, we require also that none of the circumstances which we do know of shall have effects susceptible of being confounded with those of the agent whose properties we wish to study; we take the utmost pains to exclude all causes capable of composition with the given cause; or if forced to let in any such causes, we take care to make them such that we can compute and allow for their influence, so that the effect of the given cause may, after the subduction of those other effects, be apparent as a residual phenomena. These precautions are inapplicable to such cases as we are now considering. * * * *Any thing like a scientific use of the method of experiment in these complicated cases is therefore out of the question. We can, in the most favourable cases, only discover, by a succession of trials, that a certain cause is very often followed by a certain effect.*"—Mill's Logic, Vol. I, p. 529.) We find, then, that logic as unceremoniously discards the experimental method proposed by Dr. Bartlett as philosophy condemned the statistical method sanctioned by Dr. Forbes. Indeed, the two methods are very nearly allied, the one almost involving the other; and if they both be abandoned, and if young physicians be not content with being the mere spectators of disease and superintenders of the diet and ventilation, and revolt at the idea of hospitals for the cure of the sick being nothing but museums for the study of morbid natural history, and registries of mortality, to what side are they to turn for escape

from the alternatives presented to them? How shall they be followers of nature and yet energetic? How shall they know all that is to be known, and not be sceptical; and do all that is to be done, and not be dangerous?

If the simple observation of the natural course of disease; if the application of the numerical method to all recorded cures; if experiments with various medicines upon various diseases, are each and all fallacious modes for the improvement of Medicine, what conceivable method yet remains by which it may be raised from its present uncertainty to become amenable to known laws, by which it may be worked? The answer to this we have already anticipated, at the commencement of our article. The accumulation and complexity of facts in Medicine rendering the inductive process inapplicable, it is absolutely necessary, for the regeneration of the science, that some successful hypothesis be made which shall express the law of relation between the curative and some other discoverable property of a given drug, by which we may know beforehand what we are to select in a given case of disease. There has been but one such attempt in Medicine, (for we need not stop to show that the old Galenic maxim, "*Contraria contrariis opponantur*," is not such an hypothesis, involving, as it does, the previous ascertainment of conditions as impossible to recognise as they are incapable of being tested;) that is, *that medicines tend to cure diseases similar to those they tend to produce*.* This is a perfect hypothesis for the circumstances; because it embraces all the circumstances coming within the range of medication, and it is possible to establish the truth or falseness of it by experiment. How vain and ignorant it is of those who profess themselves philosophic practitioners, to reject this proposition, and to stigmatize the practice thence flowing, on the ground of its being at the first hypothetical, is shown from the fact that all complex sciences have become perfect by means of some successful hypothesis. What was Kepler's law of planetary motion, which has introduced such accuracy

* We believe this is the most accurate way of stating the law of Homœopathy, and it would obviate many objections if this mode of expressing it were generally adopted.

into astronomy that the accession of a new member to our system can now be infallibly predicted, but an hypothesis verified by calculation? What was Dalton's atomic theory, which has given such systematic beauty to chemistry, but an hypothesis verified by calculation? What was Torricelli's grand discovery of the pressure of the atmosphere, which introduced a new era in physics, but an hypothesis verified by an experiment? It is the same with Hahnemann's great law of Medicine—it is an hypothesis proved true by its results.

Had Dr. Forbes and his followers been alive to the necessity of such a discovery, had they perceived that *it was not a Bacon, but a Newton, that Medicine stood in need of*, they would have formed a very different estimate of the grandeur of Homœopathy; they would not have harped with puerile pertinacity upon the assertion that Hahnemann was mistaken in supposing that the symptoms of ague he felt stood in relation of cause and effect to the doses of Cinchona bark he had previously taken. They would have perceived that it was of very little consequence what gave rise in the mind of Hahnemann to an hypothesis which, if substantiated, would make Medicine ever afterwards a deductive science, and not an empirical one; and they would have directed all their energies to ascertain whether this hypothesis be true or false; for if true, it must for ever change the whole character of their art.

There were three possible ways open for disproving the truth of Homœopathy: First, by showing that it was opposed to some already established natural law; Second, by showing that the facts on which it rested its claims for belief were either false or too few; Third, that when tried as a guide in practice, it led to failure.

The first way was never attempted. No one has yet ventured to assert, that the proposition that a medicine tends to cure diseases similar to those it tends to excite, is radically opposed to any general fact. Nay, were this the place for it, it would not be difficult to demonstrate, that this primary law of Homœopathy presents many striking and interesting analogies with some of the most important doctrines that have recently been advanced by the greatest writers in the various fields of physics, ethics, and psychology.

Neither Dr. Forbes, nor any of his school, have devoted themselves to the task of undertaking the second way, and showing that there is not a marked similarity between the curative and noxious effects of very many drugs. Nay, Dr. Forbes himself admits, in these words, that there is such a resemblance. "Indeed, it is supported by several strong analogies, afforded both by pathology and (allopathic) therapeutics."

The only other way which remained was to show, that where this law had been applied for the cure of diseases, it had entirely failed to effect its object. How far our opponents have succeeded in this, we leave those to determine who have carefully and critically studied Professor Henderson's letter to Dr. Forbes, as well as the evidence from which his arguments are drawn.

Hitherto we have contemplated Homœopathy as an abstract scientific truth, "won from the void and formless infinite," by the genius of its discoverer; a truth which would remain the same, although disease were to disappear, and there were no occasion for its application to human affairs; and we have considered the reason why the value of this truth has not been appreciated by the foremost men in our profession. But between such an abstraction and the requirements of daily life, there lies the province of art. The truth might be revealed, but might remain for ever unprofitable to us, if we were not instructed in the mode of its application. Art is to science what action is to thought. The discovery of the law of Homœopathy made medicine as a science perfect; it required another discovery before an element of perfection was imparted to medicine as an art. Discoveries in art are of a wholly different kind from those in science. They are simply empirical rules obtained from observations or experiment, and proved true by experience. They never can have the same absolute value as fundamental scientific principles, nor are they susceptible of the same amount of proof. The rules of art occupy, as it were, a middle point between science and its application. They rest upon a surface of fluctuating observations, and they derive their coherence and stability from a source different from that

of their origin. That source is the abstract scientific truth to which they are united. In estimating the value of these rules of art, it is necessary always to keep in view this their double connexion; and it would be as unfair to judge of them, separated from their connexion with the scientific principles which gives them support, as it would be to insist upon a child living in its mother's womb after the umbilical cord had been divided. This is the injustice which has been practised upon the rule of art connected with the science of Homœopathy;—the rule that medicines when administered in accordance with the principle "*similia similibus*," should be given in minute quantities. If the proposition had been advanced that medicines, in doses infinitely minuter than had even hitherto been imagined, were capable of curing diseases, as a simple fact of observation, it might fairly have been met with the ridicule that has assailed it. But when advanced under the protection of a more general proposition, it ought to have been always viewed as related to that general fact; and in that light, whether it be true or false, it ceases to be ridiculous.

While, then, we charge Dr. Forbes with committing a fundamental error in philosophy, by not appreciating the necessity of some general hypothesis by which the science of medicine may be made deductive, we charge him and his followers with a second error in judging of a rule of art without taking into consideration the cognate scientific principle from which it derives half its force. This misapprehension of the proper point of view, on the part of all English writers, from which the system of giving small doses ought to be regarded, is the less excusable, since those who have adopted their side of the controversy in Germany, have admitted and given full prominence to the fact, that the dose must vary according to the principle by which the medicine is selected. "On the other hand, observes Dr. Jörg, medicines operate most powerfully upon the sick when the symptoms correspond with those of the disease. A very small quantity of medicinal arnica will produce a violent effect upon persons who have an irritable state of the œsophagus and stomach. Mercurial preparations have in very small doses given rise to pains and loose stools, when administered in an inflammatory state of the intestines.

Yet why," he exclaims, "should I occupy time by adducing more examples of a similar operation of medicines, since it is in the very nature of the thing that a medicine must produce a much greater effect when it is applied to a body already suffering under an affection similar to that which the medicine itself is capable of producing?"*

Another great error which the various writers upon the subject have fallen into, when treating of minute doses, is confounding the amount of force required to originate a series of changes in the animal system, and that which is required to modify those changes where already going on. It is, if we may so express it, applying to a question of dynamics, calculations derived from data afforded by statics. Contented as the disciples of Young Physic are with allowing morbid processes to proceed without any intervention, and simply supporting the powers of life, that the system may not sink under the continuance of the disease; and accustomed as they and all Allopathic physicians are to look upon therapeutic agents as operations beyond, or on the outside of the sphere of the actual morbid forces, (the derivative system of medicine,) they do not perceive that if it be possible to introduce a force within the actual sphere of diseased action, that force will be incalculably intensified in its operation by acting on other forces already in a state of preternatural and violent activity. A breath of air will deflect an arrow from its course, although shot from the bow of Hercules. We do not intend to dwell upon the point last mooted, partly because our space is exhausted, and partly because they have already been fully and ably handled by various writers. We would here recommend a recent popular work by Dr. Henry Madden,† which contains a very fair exposition of this part of the subject; we would also especially advise our readers carefully to peruse a review of Liebig's Chemistry, which appeared in 1845

* Materiellen zu einer künftigen heillmitellehre durch versuche der Arzneien an gesunden Menschen gewonnen und gesammelt von Dr. Johan C. G. Jörg, page 16.

† Dr. Madden's work would have more weight had he quoted the authorities from which his statements are derived. We found nothing new, and yet no references in the book.

in this journal; it contains much that is original, profound, and singularly appropriate.

Before we close this fragmentary and elliptical paper, the design of which has been rather to discover, if possible, and to indicate the chief sources of the errors of our opponents, and in this very search to point to the refutation of those errors, than to expose, by argument, the numerous fallacies which have marked their winding course throughout the controversy, we wish to do full justice to Dr. Forbes. We look upon him as the ablest exponent of the sceptical era in medicine. He expresses for the Medicine what others have done for the Philosophy of our period, which has been characterized as "an age of unbelief, and yet afraid of scepticism." By giving expression to prevailing scepticism in medicine, Dr. Forbes has rendered an immense benefit to the profession; *he has brought out and made curable the hitherto latent psora.* The element of faith which he would fain mingle with his confession of general unbelief is too foreign to the rest of the system to have any influence upon his disciples. The reform he has so powerfully advanced will soon become a revolution beyond his power to control. His influence for the future will be purely destructive. But destruction of the bad must precede construction of the good; and for having with great talent and boldness attacked and shaken a dynasty whose speedy termination is with certainty predicted by this revolt of its chief supporter, for having rendered this service, and opened the gate of scepticism for the admission of truth, we feel deeply indebted to him, and we have no doubt that his school will prove to many the halting-place between Old Physic and Homœopathy.