

A proposal for the settlement of the homoeopathic controversy / by J.F. Paisley.

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A PROPOSAL

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FOR THE

SETTLEMENT OF THE HOMŒOPATHIC CONTROVERSY.

BY

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EDINBURGH:

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ATTORNEY OF THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY

J. P. ROBERTSON

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I HAVE observed in the "Edinburgh News" of the 17th inst., a very suitable proposal for the Settlement of the Homœopathic Controversy, by a Correspondent who subscribes himself A. F. P. The idea so entirely coincides with my own thoughts on the subject, that I am very desirous of expressing my approbation thus publicly and heartily, by seconding the proposition—"That an Infirmary be forthwith established for the purposes of testing the truth of Homœopathy;" and perhaps it would not be deemed obtrusive if I state a few reasons why such an Institution should be organized, not only for proving the truth or falsehood of the Homœopathic system, but for eliciting evidence in favour of other therapeutical agents connected with what may be termed *the Reformed practice of Medicine*.

The subject of Homœopathy has now occupied public attention in a controversial point of view for some years past, and, as far as I am justified in concluding from the present attitude of the respective disputants, more unlikely than ever to join in amicable issue. Disunion among brethren must, under every circumstance, occasion painful feelings to those who desire the prevalence of peace and concord, but especially so when the contending parties have an equal claim to integrity of purpose. And I am assured that on both sides of this controversy we have men arrayed, equally zealous for truth, and hostile to error,—to say nothing of the professional intelligence and attainments displayed in their respective arguments and contributions to science and literature.

Then why is it, it may be asked, they are not led to the

same conclusions on a subject so easily apprehended and tenaciously held as truth by many? The necessary limits of this Letter precludes the possibility of exhibiting the difficulties on every point, I must, therefore, select one as having especial reference to the purport of this communication, and perhaps it may be best accomplished by an illustration.

For seven long years I spared no invective (consistent with professional or gentlemanly dignity) to condemn what I at that time conscientiously believed to be a dangerous delusion; intelligent friends or acquaintances of almost every station in life, (and for whose testimony I had the utmost respect on other matters,) used every persuasion to induce me to adopt it (Homœopathy.) In vain did they represent that it was utterly unbecoming a reformer in medicine to reject a new discovery without proving it; but an incredulous shake of the head was the civilest response generally received in return for their eloquent pleading. It seemed utterly opposed to *common sense*, and that was to my mind sufficient justification for resistance.

At length an esteemed friend (a clergyman of the Church of England) placed in my hands "A Concise View of the System of Homœopathy," (written, I believe, by Dr. Luther, *a descendant of the great reformer*, and published by the Dublin Homœopathic Association,) which I had scarcely perused midway, when I was convinced of the truth of its *principles*, (a concession made by many of its opponents in common with myself;) but when I reached the *practical conclusions* arrived at by its talented and honourable discoverer and his fellow-labourers—the infinitesimal dilutions—scepticism was in a moment rampant! I laid down the book in disgust, or rather contempt, declaring to a friend in the room, that it was utterly inconsistent with *common sense*, and that Homœopathists were the most credulous of dupes. I was

moreover highly indignant at being induced to squander so much valuable time in reading the work. In the midst of my indignation, the promise made to my friend to give it attentive consideration obliged me to finish the book, and in so doing I was led to think it *just possible* that there *might* be some power in the mineral and vegetable *poisons*;—the *statistical evidence had also considerable weight with me*. I therefore resolved, when the first opportunity occurred, to submit it to the test; this soon offered, and the results were most satisfactory. The very first case was so conclusive, terminating as it did, after three weeks' treatment, in *complete restoration* to health, (although the disease was of more than two years' standing.) Thus I had every encouragement to proceed in my investigations, which eventually more than realized my largest thoughts, proving to demonstration not only the power of animal, vegetable, and mineral poisons, in minutest subdivision on the animal economy, but also many substances hitherto deemed medicinally innocuous! How, with such evidence, could I fail to be as confirmed a believer in the *potency of those medicinal atoms* as I was originally in the Homœopathic *principles*? I am moreover persuaded, that as long as human thought and action are allowed freedom of exercise, this most maligned, but nevertheless truthful system of medicine, must ever wrest from the ranks of its opponents an increasingly numerous succession of earnest and talented disciples, willing for a season, or, it may be, for life, to endure the reproach of friends, and to sacrifice emolument, professional distinction, and worldly reputation for *truth* and its dissemination.

I believe that a large majority of the present staff of Homœopathic Physicians had also *facts*, neither few nor equivocal, (consistent with my own experience,) presented them, before they reposed perfect confidence in the remedial potency of the infinitesimal doses.

All therefore whose judgments are satisfied as to the truth of Homœopathic medicine, and its peculiar administration, are imperatively called upon to furnish the opponents of their system with a large collection of facts, which can be seen as well as heard ; but as this city contains only seven Homœopathic Physicians, and two Chemists, it is not reasonable to suppose that the Invalids, or their immediate families, embraced in the practice of the one, or custom of the other, could undertake to organize and maintain an Institution in all its necessary branches, sufficient to furnish the required evidence. We therefore invite the co-operation of all who are willing to make a little sacrifice for the propagation of truth.

To make, however, the projected Institution thoroughly effective, all that is truth in medicine should be embraced ; for whilst contending for the Homœopathic principles and practice, I am not of opinion that it constitutes a perfect system of medicine, calculated to cure or relieve every curable or relievable disease ; neither do I believe its most ardent disciples, or experienced practitioners, would affirm this ! I believe it has its proper sphere, in which it will accomplish *as a means*, what no other system of medicine can do ; but it has its limits, and beyond this it were folly to press this or any other human means.

We are therefore under the necessity of combining another most effective, and almost equally persecuted system, I mean Hydropathy, so-called—the external and internal application of pure water, with particular adaptations of time and temperature. I believe this has an equal, if not superior claim as a therapeutic agent. It, however, has its proper sphere, and will accomplish *as a means*, what nothing else (humanly speaking) can do ; and, moreover, if I were obliged to retain the exclusive administration of any one remedial agent, I would have no hesitation in deciding for

the latter. I stop not here to give the especial reasons,—but it has, too, its appointed limits;—in combination with the former system, it is true, they are often wonderful in their curative effects; but even thus combined, I have found, in common with others, certain Allopathic appliances of considerable advantage,—I refer particularly to the manifold forms of counter irritants.

And now that so many of us have recourse to, and value these strictly Allopathic remedies, thus adopting their principle in our practice, must we decline holding fellowship with the name, simply because the distinguished founders of these respective systems of medicine spurned them as unnecessary? It cannot be that we should condescend to such a prejudice!

The Reformed practice of Medicine, therefore, I understand to be a combination of HYDROPATHY, HOMŒOPATHY, and ALLOPATHY, *and whatever exists now, or may in future time arise, capable of giving relief to, or curing, the almost innumerable ills that sinful flesh is heir to, with the least possible damage to mind, or the human material.* This is the only definition I can give of, or limitation ascribe to, orthodox medicine. One Physician may excel as a Homœopathist, another as a Hydropathist, but whoever would arrive at dispensing the largest amount of relief to suffering humanity, must be prepared to cull truth from every quarter, whether it be from the accomplished erudition of a Hahnemann, or the peasant mind of a humble Priestnitz!

Let us therefore have suitable establishments for the sick poor; and I may with humble confidence affirm that satisfactory results will be exhibited, (with the blessing of Almighty God,) unparalleled in the annals of medicine! The Institution I plead for, however, must be on a comparatively large scale; a place for the limited reception of the sick would be utterly abortive as respects the object in view,

for only by a large display of facts will the matter be decided, the sceptic convinced, and the learner taught.

And surely, when we contemplate the numerous and costly monuments which adorn this classic city, the works of individual or collective philanthropy or patriotism, we are warranted in indulging a strong hope that becoming efforts will be made to meet this urgent necessity, by voluntary subscriptions from every quarter.

Humanity demands this of your hands, for if what we affirm be true, the saving of life will be very considerable, to say nothing of the timely relief afforded to hitherto protracted suffering.

Besides, efforts have been lately made to carry the intelligence of this city back to the dark bondage of centuries long since passed. Let liberal contributions from the lovers of truth and lawful liberty be the response of honest indignation, and a reproof becoming the dignity of a free people, and most beneficial to the erring ones, will thereby be administered.

The Funds thus raised should be expended in the renting and furnishing of five separate and commodious buildings.

The *first* should be a Fever Hospital, a detached building if possible, well ventilated, and provided with suitable grounds for the convalescent to exercise in. I believe the reformed practice of medicine would possess very decided advantages over the old system in the treatment of this disease, curtailing its duration, limiting the spread of infection, economical in its application, and at the same time pre-eminently favourable to the future morals of the discharged convalescent, as wine and other intoxicating liquors are seldom administered, and *never in considerable quantities*, thus removing in great measure the temptations at present encountered; being credibly informed that numbers, on their discharge from the hospitals of the old school of medicine,

speedily resort to the spirit shops, where a downward course of crime and debauchery is now for the first time entered upon, leaving their restoration to bodily health a question of very equivocal import! This branch of the Institution should have an especial claim on the advocates of temperance.

The *second* should be an Infirmary for chronic and acute diseases, *not infectious*. I would hope that two-thirds of the exploits of modern Surgery would be dispensed with by this provision; and if *prevention* be allowed on all hands to be better than cure, surely the saving of a member is infinitely preferable than its removal; and, moreover, the subjects of diseases hitherto requiring surgical aid would not only have their members preserved, but the recurrence of these diseases prevented (humanly speaking) in a large majority of cases.

The *third* should be a Lying-in or Maternity Hospital, and for the treatment of diseases peculiar to females. The latter consideration is one of vital moment, for of late years the practice and operations of the French schools of medicine have found their way into this city and other parts of the United Kingdom, a circumstance to be exceedingly deplored, as it must be at all times most deeply humiliating to the invalid in whom moral delicacy is in any degree present. I would sanguinely hope that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, these degrading, and sometimes dangerous, operations would be unneeded. The combined systems of Hydro-*pathy* and Homœopathy having singular efficacy in these peculiar diseases, and also sterility, even when the former are pronounced by some Pathologists to be of a malignant character.

The *fourth* should be for Cholera, or such like pestilential disease—but in the absence of such, might be used for the infectious diseases of infants and children. A great boon would be thus conferred on the heads of poor families, who are often deepened in misery by the neglect of their employment when necessarily engaged in close attendance upon

their sick offspring. The unwholesome, often pestilential, atmosphere in the confined dwellings of the poor, cannot fail to exercise a prejudicial influence on the constitution of the young convalescent, when everything tending to invigorate should be in active operation.

The *fifth* should be for the apparently incurable, as these form a large class of the afflicted sick, which we must not exclude from our medical ministrations, although it would not be consistent with wisdom or humanity to mingle them with the curable; and I believe even here the superiority of the practice I contend for would be strikingly manifest. Not only would these advantages, and others that I cannot now find time to name, accrue to the poor, but the students of medicine—the physicians in embryo—now or in future time attending the medical schools of the city, would (so far as they are disposed to observe and learn with unprejudiced minds) carry to their appointed fields of professional labour medical truths pre-eminently calculated to benefit both rich and poor,—thus rendering their future career, above all past experience, happy, prosperous, and useful.

But notwithstanding all the efforts we may and should employ to enlighten the present race of medical practitioners, we must not be too sanguine as to results, all past experience demonstrating that comparatively few men, after forty years of age, have a willing mind or attentive ear to learn. Pride, vanity, selfishness, indolence, or not unfrequently pecuniary necessity, chain them as to a log, till their persons vanish from the busy scenes and contests of this life. But if we are, by this projected scheme, instrumental in obtaining a larger measure of practical humanity, truth, and peace, by ministering to the needs of the suffering, teaching the advancing race of medical practitioners valuable facts hitherto despised, and terminating the present unseemly controversy, we have neither suffered or laboured in vain.

I do not express myself in these pages as a mere enthusiast, but from a deliberate conviction deduced from long observation, *twenty-four* years having now elapsed since I entered upon the practical study of my profession.

Fourteen of those have been laboriously devoted to the old system of Allopathy, at home, at sea, and abroad, *ten* to Hydropathy, *two* of these to Homœopathy. During this period I have had abundant opportunities of making observations on the private and public practice of many intelligent physicians, some the most eminent of their day, and I must with a good conscience declare that their *isolated* "*opathys*" were far from satisfactory.

My humble testimony on this point stands not alone, however; for a London physician of distinction declared, that "if the world was without the physician, surgeon, or man-midwife, the mortal termination of disease would be considerably decreased."

And within the walls of our own University a certain professor uttered in the last year these memorable words:—

"Of all the medical sciences, (therapeutics,) it is the most unsettled and unsatisfactory in its present state, and the least advanced in its progress."

I am now, in common with other members of the Faculty, happily privileged to speak a very different language respecting these matters; for since I entered upon the public practice of the reformed system of medicine, I have had to treat such diseases, acute and chronic, as are commonly submitted to other members of the profession, and with what results may be best understood when I state, that during *seven years'* considerable practice in England, *only five patients died*, and of these *three* were unable to follow the prescribed treatment at the most critical periods of their illness for want of proper sick-nurses; so that whilst I number them with those I lost, I think it probable (humanly speaking) that, with such attendance as they required, the results

would have been otherwise; and during the fifteen months that I have been resident in this neighbourhood, only one died—a case of pulmonary consumption, with diseased stomach of about three years' standing; and it may be a startling fact to state, that in no single instance have I abstracted blood for general or local inflammation or congestion; the organs engaged, however vital in their nature, yielded (under God's blessing) to the modern method of treatment.

Indeed, I consider the abstraction of blood, under any circumstances, not only an unnecessary operation, but a decided relic of a barbarous age in medicine. "It is the life"—and surely the diseased action is encroachment enough on one side, without receiving violence from ignorant hands on the other!

In like manner, with respect to aperients and purgatives, I consider their administration not only a gratuitous act on the part of the physician, but seriously calculated to retard convalescence, if they prove not directly injurious to the delicate organs submitted to their violent operation. Many acute and chronic diseases of indescribable torture have their origin in this ignorant officiousness of the practitioners of the old school.

Their errors and contrast with the practice of orthodox or modern medicine, may be thus simply illustrated:—

The human body suffering under general or local inflammation may not be inaptly compared to the boiler of a locomotive engine in a state of high congestion by steam, for the reduction of which one of five alternatives is necessary.

The subsidence of the furnace heat, and the slow operation of the cold external air; or, the sudden and violent rupture of its weakest part: these are what may be considered the two natural terminations—such as would occur in the absence of the engineer.

But if a person ignorant of the provision made for the discharge of the expansive element, and of the quantity of

steam required to propel the engine along its appointed course, were now consulted, he would in all probability instantly and violently pierce the walls of a steam chamber, and so facilitate its escape,—utterly discarding a moment's reflection, in his alarm for the consequences. He would thus entirely liberate the motive power, or, it might be, an attempt would be made to arrest the discharge by a clumsy application to the vent, easily removed by an accidental touch when the energy of the machine was most needed.

Not so the true engineer—the qualified care-taker. Knowing the provision made for these accidental derangements, he would immediately have recourse to the wisely-appointed valve, and only permit as much of the element to escape as would secure the safety of the engine, at the same time reserving enough for the purposes of locomotion.

But if, on attempting to put the valve into action, he discovered that something interfered with its due movement, ingenuity would at once suggest the immediate reduction of the fire and condensation of the steam by suitable means.

If, however, the latter scheme were impracticable, for various reasons, and a philosopher of superior theoretical and practical knowledge were at hand, provided with suitable implements or ingredients for the decomposition of the water, would he not, with exquisite adaptation of material, instantly commence reducing the superfluous steam into its constituent elements, and so, by his knowledge and skill, deliver the machine from the impending catastrophe?

Precisely analogous is the condition of the human body during the prevalence of high inflammatory action, and are also the means employed, naturally or artificially, for the reduction of the dangerous state of tension.

The gradual subsidence of the diseased action may take place by the operation of certain external causes, or the internal healing powers of nature. On the other hand, the inflammatory stage may rapidly pass on to gangrene, rup-

ture of attenuated parts, and death: these, the two common and natural terminations corresponding with those of the steam-engine,—the condensation of the steam, in consequence of the reduction of the fire and the influence of the cold atmospheric air; or the violent explosion, utterly destructive.

But should a physician of the old school of medicine (Allopathy) be consulted, he would forthwith either plunge a lancet into some life-conveying vessel—"for the blood is the life"—or he would so reduce, by the leech, purge, blister, or emetic, that unless the vital force were of no common standard, the patient must sink below the possibility of resuscitation, or, as with living material, chronic disease, tedious suffering or danger, may result from these ignorant (although well-meant) appliances.

And it not unfrequently happens that the ligature with which the bleeding vessel is secured may be wilfully or accidentally removed, and hemorrhage, issuing in death, may ensue,—a calamity that once befel a patient of the author's when a practitioner of the old system.

Here again have we the analogy continued, the practice of the Allopathic physician being identical with the clumsy and ignorant device of the first operator on the engine.

But if one rightly informed as to the wise and natural provision for the general or local congestion of the human system be consulted, he would at once proceed to put the proper safety-valve (the pores of the skin) into action, allowing free perspiration, proportionate to the strength of his patient to prevail, till the suffering, or it may be impending danger, is removed, cautiously controlling the vascular excitement consequent on such a state by a constant or periodical application of pure water, internal and external, of a proper temperature, at the same time retaining a sufficiency of the vital power to carry on the various functions of being.

Sometimes, however, cases are met with where the safety-

valves (the pores of the skin) are not in acting condition, through nervous influence, and as this is essential for the success of the former method of treatment, recourse should be had to the first clumsy operation for relief or deliverance from danger, were it not for the great discovery of Hahnemann, whereby we are enabled to decompose as it were the danger-causing element ; for who with any practical experience has not witnessed the marvellous subsidence of alarming disease, when a rightly chosen Homœopathic remedy has been administered? Indeed I have no hesitation in pronouncing this system of medicine to be the result of the highest state of intelligent reasoning; and just in proportion as we are acquainted with the particular features of the disease—the totality of the symptoms, and the pathogenetic characters of the decomposing material—the properties of the medicinal agent or Homœopathic remedy—are we to expect a successful issue.

Here we have the intelligent philosopher bringing his laborious researches to bear on the sufferings and danger of the human locomotive, oftentimes with happiest results. But “there is nothing perfect under the sun;” and so it is with our philosophers’ discoveries ; as in the case of the locomotive engine, great impurity of the water would hinder its perfect decomposition, so might a previously administered course of ordinary drug medication prevent the due operation of the Homœopathic remedy—if it remained in any considerable quantity, (as is sometimes observed with invalids undergoing a course of water treatment,) nothing remains in such a case but to employ the counter-irritants of the Allopathic school in combination with certain local applications of the water treatment ; and I have no hesitation in saying, the results of this modified treatment will prove infinitely superior to the heroic practices of the old system, as I have frequently observed.

And now, if I have satisfactorily proved the merits or de-

merits of the hitherto rival systems of medicine by the above simple illustration, it will be seen that *pure* Allopathy can lay no claim to a scientific basis, or rational system of medicine, being rather a sort of hap-hazard dealing, in periods of fearful extremity, with *sharp-edged tools*, in hands, too, utterly ignorant of the injuries they inflict.

Hydrotherapy, or the water treatment of disease, as you may perceive, simply aids the natural endeavours in expelling what is superfluous in, or it may be, poisonous to, the system, and in a large majority of instances needs no other *human means*.

Homœopathy is, however, more *strictly medicinal* in both its application and action, and will doubtless cure and relieve, without the aid of any other system, in equal numbers with water treatment; but they are so admirably adapted to harmonize in their healing operations, that I have no doubt, in a little season, all who desire to be wise, and unrivalled in practical medicine, will amalgamate them with what *is really true* in the old system—Allopathy; and my sincere desire is that this may be speedily accomplished, for the sake of truth, peace, and concord.

Let us all, therefore, medical and non-medical, friends and opponents, put our hands and hearts—our whole energy, into this good work, and the results will be decisive. If we have not uttered truth, or have been deceived by an unaccountable “delusion,” the sooner our “knavery” or “folly” be exposed the better.

But if what I have expressed in the foregoing pages be truth, we will have no reason to regret the approach we shall have made towards each other for its elicitation and maintenance. It will prove a happy and profitable re-union; and the people of this city will then take an honourable position in the opinion of all who revere, and desire the propagation of
TRUTH.