

**[Printed letter addressed to an unnamed Manager of the Royal Infirmary, Aberdeen, relating to the homœopathy controversy] / Arch. Reith.**

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39, UNION PLACE,  
ABERDEEN, 7th November, 1868.

SIR,

You will have received, as a Manager of the Royal Infirmary, a copy of the correspondence which has passed between me and my colleagues, Drs. Harvey and Smith, relative to my having introduced into that Institution some Homœopathic medicines, and used them in the treatment of patients under my care; also Report by Drs. Dyce and Kilgour on remit from the Monthly Committee of the Managers on the subject of the correspondence.

As a General Meeting of the Managers has been called for Tuesday first, the 10th instant, to dispose of the matter; and as I have no other opportunity of observation on the Report which so seriously affects me, I take the liberty of sending you a copy of a pamphlet, which I have just prepared, containing my views of Homœopathy, and the opinions entertained by many eminent physicians who do not entirely approve of it, that you may have an opportunity of judging how far it is consistent with the interests of the Institution to exclude from it the use of Homœopathic medicines, or to condemn the practice of Homœopathy by the medical officers when they shall consider it for the benefit of their patients to employ it.

Referring to the accompanying pamphlet, and its appendix by Dr. David Dyce Brown, I am warranted in making the following observations:—

1. The principle of Homœopathy *is* accepted by the Medical Profession as sound and rational treatment, as is more particularly shown by Dr. Dyce Brown's portion of the accompanying pamphlet. The vague statement, therefore, of Dr. Dyce and Dr. Kilgour, to the opposite effect, unaccompanied as it is by any definition of what they understand by the term Homœopathy

(about which much misconception prevails) must be taken with considerable reservation.

2. By its own admission, as evidenced by quotations from eminent authorities in the pamphlet, the Medical Profession has not yet agreed upon any kind of treatment which it considers so sound or so rational as to prevent the adoption of other methods which may commend themselves to the experience and judgment of individual practitioners.

3. The Profession is at present divided into numberless parties, each with its own theory and practice of medicine, and each advocating principles, on questions of life and death, of the most opposite character.

4. The Homœopathic law, and its application to practice though originally enveloped in much that was unsound and speculative, has obtained a wider recognition and many more *professional* adherents than any theory of medicine ever propounded, either separately, or as part of the principle—*contraria contrariis curantur*.

5. Homœopathy, as I understand it, is accepted by a much larger proportion of the public than is admitted by the Medical Profession. The amount of Homœopathy, good or bad, which is practised in Aberdeen, unknown to the Profession generally is almost incredible. A considerable proportion of the class which is dependent on the Infirmary for advice believe in the system, and are therefore entitled to be treated in accordance with their convictions. Subscribers to the Infirmary, also, who accept Homœopathy, have a right to expect that their dependents, and those whom they recommend, shall have an opportunity of being treated on principles which they approve.

6. The admission days of each of the Infirmary Physicians are well known to the public, so that patients, if they choose have the opportunity of selecting their own attendant. Patients from the country, coming indiscriminately, may, by simply expressing a wish to that effect, be placed under the care, or obtain the advice, of any medical officer in the Institution. This practice is continually in operation.

7. There is nothing to prevent a consultation or harmonic co-operation, when desired, but the simple arbitrary resolution

of medical men to discountenance Homœopathy. That any portion of the profession should decline to meet in consultation those of their brethren who are equally well educated with themselves, and who believe it for the benefit of their patients to use Homœopathic Medicines as part of their practice, is, to say the least, illiberal, and not evidently for the interests of humanity; and it will be for the serious consideration of the Managers, whether it is likely to promote the good of the Institution under their charge, which is professedly curative, to adopt any measure, which may be used as a precedent to prevent the medical or surgical officers from introducing any change or improvement which their experience may lead them to consider for the advantage of the patient. There are not a few esteemed medical men—in this quarter at least—who, though not believers in Homœopathy, have no hesitation in meeting its adherents on the same footing as others. It is well known to the Reporters, as Consulting Physicians, how difficult it is frequently to come to an agreement with reference to the treatment of an “obscure or dangerous” case, through the variety of opinions entertained by almost any two medical men who meet together, and they are aware of the mutual forbearance and courtesy which are often required in order to obtain agreement at all. (*See Pamphlet, page 9.*) The introduction of Homœopathy as an additional opinion cannot certainly make matters worse. Harmonious co-operation has not always prevailed in public Infirmaries.

The charge of Homœopathy made against me is exceedingly vague and indefinite. As a large portion of the profession now believe in, and accept, more or less, the Homœopathic law, I cannot conceive, and I say so honestly, on what grounds the protest of my colleagues is based. You will see from the correspondence that, in the midst of the confusing ideas respecting Homœopathy, and in a matter of so much personal moment to me, I have insisted on an explanation of the particular views held by them of Homœopathy, but they have declined any such explanation. I feel confident, however, that you will bear me out in the reasonableness of my request, that it may be seen how far we differ, and how far my practice may be within the boundary of recognised Homœopathy. This might have been ascer-

tained even by the Reporters, had they communicated with me, as they might have done, before pronouncing an abstract condemnation of Homœopathy. My therapeutic views were read before the Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society on three different occasions; and for the papers I received the thanks of the Society, one of my protesting colleagues being present, and acquiescing therein. The same papers were subsequently published in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, one of the recognised organs of medical opinion, and they have now been for a considerable time in the hands of the Profession, without one word of challenge on the ground of heterodoxy. On the contrary, they have elicited letters of commendation from several Allopathic physicians of no mean standing, and with whom I had no previous personal acquaintance. To these published views I adhere. They are evidently acknowledged as equivalent to the Homœopathic law of similars; but, seeing that the Profession has not protested against them, my colleagues need not have considered themselves compelled to bring them forward as they have done, with a view to their condemnation, without having, at any rate, first challenged them through the Medical Press—the legitimate channel for discussing such a subject.

Leaving the matter with confidence in the hands of the Managers,

I am,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

ARCH. REITH.