



Wells (P)

SKEPTICISM.

by O. P. Wells

It was well said, of late, that "skepticalism is more a matter of feeling than judgment." In nothing is this more true than in the skepticism sometimes cherished and expressed in regard to the higher dynamizations of our remedies. Such declarations as "I do not believe in them at all;" "I have no confidence in them whatever," &c., are often heard, and sometimes even from those who claim to be Homœopathic physicians. From what does this want of confidence originate? In their failure to cure the sick with these dynamizations, when they have been selected with careful observance of the directions of the Organon, and proper discrimination of differences and analogies in the effects of drugs? Not at all; "I have never tried them," has been the almost invariable reply of physicians to this question, and "I have never seen them tried," the laity. Is skepticism in such cases a matter of judgment? Does it belong to either conscience or intellect? Look at the cases of Gross, Stapf, Bœninghausen, Tietz, and others. Have such cures ever been realized from the use of other means? Have these skeptics had greater success from the means in which they have confidence? If so, is it too much to ask of them to report that success with the same clearness and frankness which characterize the individuals named. The best means of curing the sick is what is wanted. It is confidently believed by those who have tried the high potencies that they are in the highest rank of the best means. The success which followed their use with the sick produced this conviction; and when this success is reported, and this conviction declared, both are met with—what?—calm attention and investigation? No. "I have no confidence!" Truly an easy way to dispose of an important matter. But in what is the want of confidence? In the men who have thus cured and published? No. But in the means by which they cured, and which these skeptics have never tried.

The following case is one of many which have produced a deep sense of the value of high potencies as remedial means. A lady had ulcers, scabs, and fissures in the right nostril, especially at the angles, for the last three years. The best skill of the old school was employed to heal the sores, without the slightest effect. She then applied to one of our most intelligent Homœopaths, who treated the case with the ordinary attenuations, high and low, with no better success. When my

attention was called to the case, I found the extremity of the nose red, somewhat swollen, and the right nostril half filled with dry, hard, ragged, adherent scabs, of a light straw color; deep cracks at both angles of the nostril; excoriating pain, especially when touched. The patient had had repeated attacks of erysipelas of the face and scalp; with this exception her health was good. She had not taken medicine the last six months. I gave Sulph., Calc. carb., Nit. acid, Ant. crud., Graph., Phos., Sepia, at proper intervals, and in attenuations high and low, with no better result than before. I gave up the case as incurable.

About six months after I abandoned the case, I received the third part of the first volume of Stapf's *Neues Archiv*, containing Dr. Gross' "Latest Experience in Homœopathic Practice," i. e. with the highest dynamizations. He declared he cured by them promptly and permanently, cases which were either only palliated by the ordinary attenuations, or wholly unaffected by them.

Why then might not the right remedy, thus attenuated, cure the case I had abandoned? I saw the patient, and stated the success which had followed the use of these attenuations, and proposed another trial and with the high potencies, the nature of which was explained to her. As she had not attained that exalted degree of wisdom which compels to doubt truth and withhold "confidence" in it till every body else has found it out, she assented at once to the trial.

It will be remembered, she had already taken several medicines. The second was substituted for the first, not because there had been a change of symptoms calling for a change of remedy, but because the first had produced absolutely no change; and the second gave place to the third for the same reason, and no one of them affected the case in the slightest degree. It was neither better nor worse. I had no doubt in the beginning that sulphur was the remedy, and, in that belief, I gave it in the 30th and 3d attenuations, dry and dissolved; I repeated at short intervals, and waited weeks for a reaction I never saw, and then I gave grain doses of the 3d trituration 5-100: but all with no perceptible effect.

After the lapse of six months, I examined the case, and sulphur still appearing to be indicated, as before, I gave one globule of the 1530th attenuation, and now, for the first time, there was a sensi-

ble effect from the dose. It grew worse through the next five days, after which it began to improve and continued to grow better till the expiration of about six weeks, when it came to a pause. The dose was repeated, *i. e.* one globule of the 1530th. The same aggravation, with subsequent amendment, followed as before. But the healing made little if any progress beyond that which resulted from the first dose. This repetition was a mistake in practice which I had not then learned. When improvement ceased after the second dose, she got sepia, one globule 1530th, which completed the cure.

Let us look at this case for a moment. It was of several years standing; and during three years had exhibited no disposition to spontaneous cure. It had been treated Allopathically without effect. After the second trial there were at least six months before the high potency was administered, to which it did respond; and during these six months there was no change of so much importance as to attract the attention of the patient. But immediately on taking the single globule, which it may be remarked was laid dry on the tongue, the case grew worse, and continued to grow worse for five days. Why? I ask, was the sudden aggravation? Why should it take a start just then, such as it had never taken before? And why should it take just such a start? It looks so exactly like what I have so many times seen after the exhibition of *specific* remedies in other cases, that it would be difficult for me to divest myself of the conviction that the aggravation was one of the effects of that globule.

But at the expiration of this time the inflamed surface began to be less sensitive to touch; was less painful; the fissures and ulcers began to heal; the scabs became less adherent, then smaller, and finally fell off, leaving a surface somewhat red, slightly painful to the touch, and showing one small crack at the posterior angle of the nostril. What induced this change? I know it has been said by a highly distinguished professor in one of our universities, that "such cures are to be ascribed to any other cause rather than the doses given, because no other cause can be so improbable." It is sufficient to reply, that it is not a question of probability, but of fact. Did the globule first aggravate and then alleviate the case? Is this a fact? Not, is it probable? That may be true—which in our present state of knowledge and opinions, may be highly improbable; and probabilities may prove false. And here it is conceived is the foundation of much of the skepticism in this matter. It is *improbable*, and therefore it does not receive that investigation which would prove it true or false. That

its truth or falsehood is capable of *proof* is most confidently asserted. That it is the duty of such men as this professor to enter on this proof, is as confidently believed. Who made him or his friends the judge of the probability or improbability of that of which he and they know positively nothing? What if it be improbable, *a priori*, that attenuated drugs should have power to cure important and inveterate diseases; there are multitudes who have ascertained the fact that they do so cure, by positive experiments, hundreds and thousands of times repeated; and the discovery is met with the quiet suggestion of improbability. Is this right? Is it manly? Is there not *guilt* here? It has not only been ascertained by positive and careful—aye, most careful experiment, that these attenuations have power to cure; but it has been proved that they have exceeding great power—greater than has yet been found in any other substances, however applied. And is there not *guilt* in a skepticism which rejects so important a discovery, unexamined—untried?

Our whole land is filled with half-living, moving, ghastly witnesses of the imperfection and inadequacy of the means in ordinary use to cure the sufferings of our race. And now, when thousands of men, as competent to investigate and testify as those who reject facts without a look, ascertain by protracted, careful observation, that a more certain, safe, and powerful means of cure does exist, and when they bring it to light, and present it to the world, why, in the face of their testimony—in the face of suffering mortality—and in the face too of the destruction of life which has followed in their own path, where they have made their best efforts, these men cry, "it is *improbable*!" And this, though it is more than enough, is not all; nor is it the worst. The men who have been willing to give their lives to toil, care, and painful watching, and painful experiments, to bring out this truth, and perfect the knowledge of it, have been held up by those who would not so much as touch it with one of their fingers, to the *ridicule* of the world they sought to bless—represented as fanatics—impostors—visionaries, and even as *insane*. And why? Because they had discovered a *truth*. I ask again, in all this self-complacent skepticism, and this malevolent aspersion,—is there not deep guilt?

The fact that highly attenuated drugs have power to cure disease is capable of *proof*. Any competent man may know it if he will. He is not to suppose that the evidence of this will force itself into his mind against his will or without his consent. Knowledge of any subject is not obtained so, and in the knowledge of this

there is nothing to render it an exception. In the same way that he gathers the evidence of any truth let him seek the proofs of this. Let him be assured the investigation cannot be properly entered on without some knowledge of the *Materia Medica*, which contains a record of the positive effects of drugs on the body in health. Let him take a case of disease with well marked symptoms, gather *all* those symptoms according to the directions of the *Organon*—commit these symptoms, thus obtained, to writing, in so clear a manner that any intelligent man in the profession can understand them, then compare them with the effects of drugs recorded in our *Materia Medica*, and select that medicament which has been ascertained to produce symptoms *most like* those he has recorded, give the attenuated drug, and after waiting a proper time, if *no effect follows*, let him make a record of the fact. Let him repeat observations in this manner, and if he obtains no results, when he has made a sufficient number to prove the truth or falsehood of any other important matter, and these all show no effect from the doses, let him publish the facts he has observed, and he can thus bring legitimate disgrace on such doses and those who advocate them. By indulgence in “want of confidence,” resting content upon supposed “improbabilities,” and resort to invective and ridicule he will merely bring disgrace on himself.

I have said the truth or falsehood of the power of attenuated drugs to cure disease admits of proof. I go farther, and say *it has been proved*, abundantly proved. The method of this proof has been pointed out, and it is believed there is no other. In this very way, those who truly represent the doctrines of Hahnemann have settled the fact for themselves. In accordance with the directions of the *Organon* more or less strict, they have gone into the investigation, and the results have convinced their minds, beyond doubt, that these potentized remedies constitute the great means of cure, which more than any others are worthy of our confidence at the bed-side of the sick. They have not derived this conviction from the *ipse dixit* of any man; they have *proved* the fact for themselves. All the experiments of even any one individual, of course, cannot be given to the world, their number forbids. But some of these can, and here is one. It is from a paper by Dr. Gross, in the *Neues Archiv.*, Ites band, 3tes hft. p. 73.

“Herr V. B.—, near 40 years of age, of strongly marked phthisical habit, had frequently suffered from affections of the trachea, became ill in consequence of a severe cold. His physician, [Allopath] pronounced the case a tracheal catarrh, and

treated him accordingly, till his condition became so much worse that the doctor declared him in a rapid consumption, and that he could not live eight days longer. The doctor was dismissed, and Gross called in his stead. The patient lived in an adjoining town, and at so great a distance that he could not be seen daily, and the cure was attempted only on condition that a neighbouring Allopath, a friend of Gross, should see the patient daily, and report his condition faithfully. The case was undertaken and conducted through the Allopath, who declared the case had become so bad that treatment was useless. Notwithstanding Gross remarks, “I began with good courage, having confidence in the high potences.” He found the following symptoms:

“Tickling in the throat, and incessant cough, mornings and forenoons, with thin, yellow, profuse, tasteless expectoration; the spittoon was more than filled in the course of the day. Talking excited cough at all times. The patient was compelled to sit stooping forward, to breathe with greater freedom. Pulse more than 100 in the minute. Urine dark coloured and hot, bowels entirely constipated; appetite null; tongue coated white; copious nocturnal perspirations. The patient had stannum 200. On the fourth day the expectoration had diminished one half, but the perspiration had increased. The feces evacuated by a water enema were slimy, green, and offensive. The tickling in the throat was considerable, and the cough exceedingly annoying. China 200. The sixth day the patient coughed less in the morning, the expectoration was still farther diminished, and had become difficult so as at times to produce vomiting of masses of tenacious mucus. The tongue had become cleaned, although he had daily paroxysms of ague and fever; in the morning chill; heat through the whole afternoon, and slight sweating at night, all with but little thirst. Calcarea carbonica 200, after which the tickling in the throat increased at night, with cough and copious sweating, but on the following morning there was a slight and last appearance of the fever. Stool healthy, appetite good. Expectoration saltish. All the symptoms evidently improved, till the tenth day, when he had violent pain in a hollow tooth, which seemed too long. He could endure nothing warm in the mouth, was uncommonly excitable, and I had great reason to dread a relapse of the chest affection, if this pain were not checked. I gave him Chamomilla 200, which was followed by abscess in the gums and loss of the pain. On the thirteenth day I found the cough insignificant, no fever, pulse natural, strength improved, sleep good, tongue still coated, although

he had appetite, and constipation. He took Bryonia alb. 200, after which the tongue became clean, and the bowels regular, appetite good. The eighteenth day I saw the patient again, when he had recovered, with the exception of a slight loose short cough in the morning, which determined me to give him again Calcarea carb. 400, after which he had no medicine, and all symptoms of his disease disappeared."

This case was examined by two Allopaths, and both declared it fatal, and yet five remedies, (including that which cured the pain in the tooth,) given in six doses, cured the case in eighteen days. Now let that man who talks of "want of confidence," or of "improbabilities," or that other man, who insinuates "insufficiency in emergencies" look at this case, at its progress through the cure, and then let them point to the means more worthy of confidence, or better adapted to such an emergency. Look at the effects which followed each dose. Can any doubt be thrown over them? Look at the result. Is there any thing equivocal in it? Where were the cough, expectoration, dyspnoea, anorexia, and sweating, at the expiration of the eighteen days? Now cases of supposed rapid consumption may have recovered when left to themselves, it is admitted, but a case with such symptoms as would lead any intelligent physician to the conclusion that life could not last longer than *eight days*, never yet *perfectly cured itself in eighteen*. Let the man who has studied the effects of drugs on the healthy body, note how the symptoms in the case, characteristically *like* those of the remedy, disappeared after each dose. The expectoration after the Stannum; the sweating after the China; the fever and morning cough after the Calcarea carb., the gastric symptoms after Bryonia. Let him look at these facts in the light of the great law, "*like cures like*," and let him tell, if he can, why these very symptoms, and *no others*, should so vanish after the dose! Let him explain it on any other hypothesis than that of a cure. Let the man who

regards Allopathic means as the great engines by which alone the dangers of extreme cases are to be removed, remember that in the face of all these the patient's march to the grave was direct; and so had had he become under their administration that, in the judgment of his physician, the life he could not preserve was limited to the brief space of eight days, and yet this disease is removed, and this life saved—by what! By means in which one wants "*confidence*," and of which the other insinuates "*insufficiency*!" To some this may appear a dignified reserve of judgment, or of superior acuteness of discernment, but to my mind it is no less than rank folly. It is not sufficient to say that "*one case proves nothing*." It is contended this one case properly viewed *does prove much*. It proves as clearly as any one observation of any fact can prove any thing on any subject, that the potentized doses given possessed power to cure, and that this power *did cure* where Allopathic means had failed, and Allopathic judgment was without hope. This cure has been adduced merely to show that *potentized drugs have power to cure*. We are told continually that they are equivalent to nothing at all, and that the cures alleged to have been effected by them are so many delusions. The case is given to meet this assertion, and prove it false. Alone it is conceived to be adequate to this. But it is by no means alone. It stands in the midst of thousands of similar facts, the number of which every true Homœopath has helped, and is helping, to swell, till, it is contended, their number and force are sufficient to prove the superiority of the means employed, to the exclusion of all others. The only explanation of the fact that they have not produced this conviction wherever a knowledge of them has gone, and the only ground of fear that they will not force this conviction wherever a knowledge of them shall come, is found in the declaration with which we started—"*Skepticism is more a matter of feeling than of judgment*."

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