

W Z
310
N987e
1853





A N

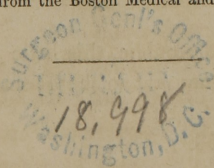
ESSAY

ON SOME OF THE

PRINCIPLES OF MEDICAL DELUSION.

BY J. H. NUTTING, M.D.

Re-printed from the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.



BOSTON :

DAVID CLAPP, PRINTER.....184 WASHINGTON STREET.

1853.

WZ

310

N987e

1853

THE PRINCIPLES OF MEDICAL DELUSION.

THE subject of the following Essay was suggested by a venerated father in the ministry, accompanied by an invitation to lecture upon it before a Lyceum over which he presided. The invitation and the subject were both accepted. The lecture thus prepared, was subsequently delivered before another Lyceum; and with some additions and necessary alterations, is now submitted to the public, in accordance with the wishes of several esteemed friends of the author, members of both the clerical and medical professions. This must be his apology for entering a field already ably occupied by men of riper years and greater ability. Nor would this have been deemed sufficient reason for alluding to the essays already before the public, had they not thought it might conduce in some degree to open the eyes of the public in regard to the true character of Medical Science, and of the varied forms of Quackery.

The author has not aimed at originality, but has freely used whatever came to hand. In particular he would acknowledge his use of the valuable essay on Homœopathy; by Dr. Hooker, so far as it seemed best adapted to expressing the absurdities of that system; while the standard homœopathic writers have been freely consulted in support of the views of it advanced by him.

Trusting to the candor of the public, this little essay is submitted to it, with the sincere hope that it may aid in the dissemination of Truth.

STAFFORD SPA, JULY 1, 1853.

THE PRINCIPLES OF MEDICAL DELUSION.

NOTHING, except Religion, has had so many delusions connected with it as Medicine. Alike remedial in their nature, no sooner had man "brought death into the world and all our woe," than they began their mission of good to man. Religion aimed at healing the moral maladies of man. Nor could he, though in rebellion against his Maker, throw off all religion. Its elements were implanted in his nature; and driven by a sense of guilt and impending danger, he has devised a thousand schemes for the redemption of his soul. Nothing has been too costly, nothing too cruel, nothing too revolting, nothing too senseless and absurd, for men to rush into. Witness the costly structures of Hindooism; the horrid orgies of the Mexican priests; the senseless mummeries of Buddhism; the penances of the Romish church, and the wild ravings of fanatical sects! Ignorance, wilful blindness, and the corruption of the heart, have all lent their power to delude. "And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, He gave them over to believe a lie." Nor can one survey the religious history of the race, without doubting whether man is possessed of reason, or whether he is not "more foolish than the brutes that perish." But the infinite value of the soul has not been jeopardized by being left to the vain imagination of man. Infinite Benevolence has not only left some sparks of celestial wisdom glittering amid the rubbish of the human soul, but has even condescended to concentrate the full radiance of that wisdom on man's path; and if he be now deluded, it will be through wilful perverseness and guilt. There is an unerring standard to which all religious theories may be brought, and delusion stamped on each that differs from that. Nor with that stamp upon them, can their advocates challenge for them either the respect or consideration of any.

Nor has the same Benevolence left the maladies of the body uncared for. "The tree whose leaf is for the healing of the nations," abounds

in various forms throughout the globe. "There is balm in Gilead, and a physician there." But the balm must be sought with diligence, and the teachings of the physician studied with the greatest care. There are the elements of the true medical system, implanted in the physical nature, as are those of the moral in the soul. But the former, unlike the latter, have no concentration of divine light thrown upon them. It is left for human reason to follow up the hints of Nature; to take the oracular responses of the Physician, scattered like those of the Sybil, and combine them into one harmonious whole.

The possibility of doing this, coupled with the strong desire to ward off physical suffering, has made physicians in every age. But there has been no standard of medical truth, except the ambiguous teachings of Nature, and few have been able, even to a limited extent, to read these aright. Hence the best physicians have been constantly deluding themselves and their patients. While they elucidated much of truth, they mingled with it much of error. Hence the firmly-established medical theories of one age, have in the next been neglected, or shown to be false. The physician for whom his contemporaries have decreed an apotheosis, has been hurled from his preëminence by his successors.

Medicine must ever be limited in its powers. It cannot raise the dead, nor prevent entirely the accession of disease, nor confer the boon of earthly immortality. But these are what men most desire. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life," was declared in regard to the man of Uz; and acting under this passionate desire for life, the multitude have ever despised the modest pretensions of true medical science, while they have been loud in their applause of the arrogant assumptions of quackery. "The elixir of life" was the great desideratum, and quackery was ever ready to assert its possession of the invaluable boon. Hippocrates, and Galen, and Avicenna, no mean names, labored hard, by patient research and observation, to lay firmly the foundations of medical science. Nor without success, for many of their principles still stand as monuments of their labor, and the correctness of their judgment. But Paracelsus, the prince of quacks, could burn their works in the market place, and the multitude applauded the act. He, too, had the secret of immortality; yet he died miserably at an early age, with a bottle of his elixir in his pocket.

The history of medicine, I had almost said, was a history of delusion. The wrecks of systems lie scattered all along its course, and often these systems formed a part of what was then regarded as true medical science. But while system after system has been wrecked, the truths which form-

ed their nucleus have been increasing in number and importance, from age to age. False systems and theories have enveloped them in their mists ; but when increasing light has scattered these mists, the truths have remained. Unlike the thousand systems of quackery, which, when destroyed, leave no trace behind, this increasing centre of truth has come down from age to age, conferring blessings on all within its influence. And now this stream of truth has become a mighty river. Anatomy has shown the minute structure of nearly every tissue ; and physiology, aided by the microscope, has unveiled the functions of almost every organ ; while hygiene has pointed out the laws of health, and pathology the laws of disease, with the unnumbered changes effected in the living body by its invisible but potent foes ; and a rational system of therapeutics has taken the place of the absurdities formerly practised. Those old-time men were men of no mean powers, but they lacked all the appliances of modern art. Nor is it any disparagement to medical science that there has been so much of error mingled with it. With what science has this not been the case ? Yet with all its errors, there has been truth enough mingled to preserve it through a long series of ages. System after system of quackery, on the other hand, has arisen, and even while boastingly predicting the destruction of the old system, have themselves been forgotten ; and though system after system now make the same boast, they are yet but of a day, and, like their predecessors, will be remembered only with contempt.

It is true, Medicine is yet imperfect, nor are all its professors perfect even in the knowledge which it affords. But if we compare the medical science and practice of the present day, with that of the time of our Saviour, or even with that of a century ago, we shall see that it has made wonderful advances. And its progress will be still more wonderful ; but it will be limited in its powers, and will still be, as it has been, an object of contempt to the unthinking. The man writhing on the bed of pain will give it no credit unless it cause that pain at once to cease. The friends of the deceased will upbraid it, because it kept him not back from the grave, never reflecting that man has “ a time to die.” Quackery, with its brazen tongue, will still proclaim its boasted powers, and the multitude will fall down and adore, while the modest voice of true science will be unheard. They would indulge each appetite and passion, and yet escape the penalty. Science reiterates, “ The soul that sinneth it shall die.” Quackery asserts, “ Ye shall not surely die ; indulge your appetites and passions, here is a balm for every evil that indulgence brings. Have your practices brought sickness on you ? I can restore

to health. Is youth fading? I have a panacea for your ills. Is death claiming you as his victim? I can unlock his grasp, and send you back to life. Ye shall not surely die." The unthinking multitude will receive these arrogant assumptions as the oracles of truth.

In surveying the medical history of the past, we hardly know which to wonder at most, the effrontery and boldness of quackery, or the credulity and perseverance of patients. It matters not that, like the woman in scripture, they have expended all their living and suffered many things of the physicians, nor been healed of any; they are just as ready to swallow each new pill, and drink each new potion, which the boldness of quackery may invent; till, however against their wills, they find out the truth of the old Greek epigram—"Death is the physician that cures," and sink into his embrace.

The sources of medical delusions are similar, however these may differ in form. To write the history of all medical delusions, would be a task too great for one man, and even if it were done, one might say, with the evangelist, "I suppose the world could not contain the books that would be written." It will therefore be more to the purpose to trace out the sources of medical delusions, giving the history of such as best illustrate the mode in which they arise. This will be my object, nor will it grieve me to expose quackery, whether under the garb of ignorance, or covering its shame with the fair parchments of medical colleges.

It is somewhat difficult to define clearly a medical delusion. So easily are truth and error mingled on this subject, and so difficult is it for even the best physician to determine what is due to his treatment, and what is due to the recuperative powers of nature, that many things have been admitted as legitimate medical knowledge, which the researches of after times have shown to be false. The discovery of the circulation of the blood, overturned a multitude of theories and conclusions which had before stood as truths; and so with each succeeding discovery. Nor is it certain that many things in our present medical system, will not one day give place to more correct views. Not but that many principles are established beyond a doubt. Thus the principles of inflammation had been established by the experience and observation of many physicians; and of late the microscope has shown, to the eye, the truth of the conclusions at which they had arrived. So with many other principles. These being strictly conformable to the operations of Nature, may be considered as established. But there are many others, resting only on probable evidence, which future investigation may show to be false.

The sources of medical delusions are many, and each delusion usually springs from several of them. The first source I shall notice, is in the *Nature of Medical Reasoning*.

This must, of course, rest on observation, or, as it is commonly termed, experience. But it cannot be properly termed experience, since this applies rather to what affects the subject of it, than to what one person observes in another. One person may observe the effects of grief in another, while he experiences nothing of the kind. Nor will he by any means have as clear an apprehension of its nature and effects, as though he had himself felt it. The same difference exists between what is usually termed medical experience, and true experience. Medical experience is, then, but an observation of the visible effects of the disease or remedy which the patient experiences. The uncultivated mind can form little idea of the grief it may behold in the person of cultivation and refinement. A cultivated mind alone can properly observe these effects. The value, then, of medical experience will depend entirely on the capacity of the observer. It can have no value above that of ordinary observation; nor is it worthy of the credence given to the observation of physical phenomena, since the physician is obliged, in a great measure, to depend on the sensations of the patient, as described by him; and any one at all conversant with disease, knows how often the sensations are perverted, and how often effects are considered as having taken place, which a further examination shows had no existence but in the imagination of the patient. A very extensive experience may therefore afford no correct basis for medical reasoning. On the contrary, the more extensive an incorrect experience or observation in medicine may be, the more incorrect will be the reasoning and practice founded upon it.

In addition to this, the connection between cause and effect is for the most part concealed. In ordinary phenomena, although we cannot explain how or why one act stands in the relation of cause to another, yet we know, from the obvious results, that they are thus related. Why the impulse of one body on another should cause the latter to move, is beyond our power to explain. We know that the impulse is the physical cause of the motion, since it is the uniform consequence of an impulse, and no other known cause can possibly come in to produce this effect. But in medical experience, or observation, it is not so. We administer a drug, and a certain result follows; yet we can only say "*vel post hoc, vel propter hoc.*" Either it took place after it, or on account of it. We can effect no changes by merely therapeutic means,

which Nature may not under favorable circumstances effect alone. And we know that the same changes are often effected independently of medical interference. Hence we cannot, in any given case, say with certainty that a given change is the result of our interference. Nor does it render it *certain*, even if we have often administered the same medicine with the same result. Nature, in one case, may have effected the change, and in another it may have been the result of our interference. Other causes, even, may have come in to effect the change, of which we know nothing. Still, if the same results follow upon a repetition of the medicine under similar circumstances, we are at liberty to consider the change as probably the effect of the administration of the medicine. In some cases it may even amount to a certainty; as when, in an acute inflammation, a copious depletion reduces it at once. But this class of cases is comparatively small. For the most part, the results of medical treatment are spread over a considerable period of time. Nature, in these cases, has time to effect great changes. The medicine is given, and may, it is true, stand as the cause of the changes, or it may, with the Peruvian proverb, but have amused the patient, while Nature has performed the cure. The delusions arising from this source will be considered more at length hereafter.

Another fruitful source of medical delusions, is found in the *Difficulty of determining the Exact Nature of the Disease*. This is rather a branch of the difficulty arising from the nature of Medical Reasoning, than a distinct source.

There are, besides death, many diseases which no art can cure. When these have taken hold on man, his days are numbered. Science and art may indeed assuage the pang, and smooth the descent to the grave, but the deadly arrow has been fixed too deeply to be withdrawn. When once Hercules had put on the poisoned robe of the faithless Dejanira, the poison went through the very bones, nor could his celestial origin avert the fatal result. Nor is it for the disgrace of the medical art, that these are beyond her skill. Death hath universal power over mortals; and, though science hath disarmed many of his ministers of their potency, he will doubtless possess some over which art will have no control, till Death shall have yielded up his power to Him that is mightier than he.

The difficulty of determining these diseases, has been a fruitful source of delusion. In their external character, they for the most part resemble affections readily amenable to medical art. The skilful physician perceives the difference; and while he loses his patient, feels that he has

done what he could, but had met his superior in power. Not so the mass. Undisciplined in mind, they perceive only the resemblance; and hence, when another case occurs *resembling* this, but differing in its essential character, and which recovers, they are loud in their condemnation of the first physician, and vociferous in their praises of him who has cured a patient "just like that."

Cancer is a disease of this kind. It is what physicians call a heterologous growth; that is, a series of cells, unlike those of the healthy tissue, is produced among the healthy tissues, and these multiply till the frightful results of this terrible disease take place; and these cells are always the same. In its early stages, especially, it resembles, in its external characters, a simple non-malignant tumor. The microscope, however, shows the cancer cells; and the experience of the world has thus far shown, that when once these peculiar cells are produced in a part, nothing but the entire abscision of the part will check them; and that, even then, in a majority of cases, the germs of these cells will be found so widely disseminated in the blood, that they will speedily spring up, and form new growths like the first. The skilful physician perceives this character in a tumor, and pronounces it hopeless without an operation, and doubtful with it. In another, resembling this in external appearance, he fails to find these cells, and it recovers. No noise is made about it, for no great cure has been performed, nor is true science either noisy or brazen tongued. But the *cancer doctor* comes, with loud boasts of skill, and finding a simple non-malignant tumor, he will not, or cannot, see it to be such, and if the tumor disappears while he is giving his syrups, he has done what the regular physicians could not—cured a cancer! And the multitude applaud him for his skill. There was no cancer in the case, but his own insufferable ignorance and arrogance, surpassing in malignancy the fatal disease he pretends to have cured.

Another source of delusion is found in the *Impossibility of determining accurately on the Results of Treatment.*

We have thus, in addition to the difficulties in the way of correct medical reasoning, no means by which we can arrive at certain conclusions as to the treatment founded upon it. Nor have we any means of comparing the results of quack treatment, with that of the scientific physician, so that the mass can see the difference. In law, if a pettifogger venture into court, no sooner does he commence his plea, than the bar and bench perceive his ignorance. But in medicine, no pleas are made. There is no public exhibition of talents or learning. Nor are there any statistics showing the relative mortality under the different

treatment, or the relative number of cures : and by these I mean, not *escapes*, nor simple recoveries, for the latter will take place in a majority of all cases of disease if not interfered with ; but cases in which the power of the disease has been broken, and convalescence hastened by the treatment. Could such statistics be secured, they would place the different systems on their true merits. But this is impossible in the present state of things.

Not only have we no means of bringing quackery to this test, but, as Dr. Rush has remarked, "there are no greater liars in the world than quacks, except their patients." They will misrepresent, either from ignorance or on purpose, both the nature and treatment of their cases. No dependence can be placed on their reports, as every physician can testify. Every tumor or sore is a cancer. The last and favorable stage of lung fever is consumption, because the patients cough and raise. If they can fix on no other disease, the *liver* is full of ulcers, or more than half wasted away.* If in any of these cases, the patient recovers, as often they cannot well help doing, then they have cured these several diseases, and the report of it is trumpeted abroad by the patient and his friends ; for every patient wishes it understood that he was the sickest person that ever survived.

A fourth source of medical delusions is found in the *Influence of the Imagination*.

The power of this faculty over certain persons is well known. Its perverted influence in highly nervous persons, is especially evident in respect to disease and its treatment. Reason, judgment, and the will even, are often completely under its control. The power of motion is lost, the voice gone, the whole system prostrated, and the mind apparently ruined. The loss of muscular power depends partly on an inability to will, and partly on actual debility induced by the perverted influence of the imagination. The former of these has, however, the greater power, since if the exercise of the will can be secured, the mus-

* The author was called, last year, to see a hypochondriacal woman, affected with prolapsus uteri, and chronic irritation of the liver. She had been attended by two Thomsonians. The following conversation ensued between us at one visit :—" Doctor, don't you think my liver is terribly affected ?" " No, indeed, why do you ask that ?" " Why Dr. P. told me he thought it was more than half wasted away, and Dr. C. said it was full of ulcers the year before." " Humph !" " Could I live if it was rotted away so ?" " Could you live, if your head were half rotted off ?" " Why no, but he said it was a common thing for the liver to rot away, and that if there was a piece left as large as a hen's egg, it would grow again. He said he had as lief his liver would rot away so, as not." " So had I, that *his* would." The woman finally got as well as the hypochondria would let her. The same " Dr. P." used to give cod liver oil in the last stage of lung fever, because, he said, they had the consumption.

cular power is usually instantly regained. It is in cases of this kind that quacks accomplish their wonderful cures, by which the lame leap and walk, and those who have not spoken aloud for weeks, regain all at once the full power of their voices. Examples of this kind are, unfortunately, too numerous to need reciting.

Another example of the power of this faculty, is found in the production of various sensations of pain, which are readily dissipated by affecting the imagination. To the patient, these pains are for the time real, but the manner in which they are dissipated shows they could not depend on any physical lesion. It is in cases of this kind, that the bread-pill treatment becomes effectual; and if I mistake not, its aristocratic offspring, Homœopathy, reaps its fairest laurels among the same.

Again, the imagination, aided by a soothing effect on the nervous system, has the power of removing some real pain. These pains, which are termed *nervous*, are the ones most easily affected, and perhaps the only ones which can be removed by this means. The influence of simply soothing movements upon the head, in case of nervous headache, is well known. The effect is often heightened, if the imagination be affected at the same time. Thus Perkins persuaded his patients that they were cured by electric currents excited by the brass and steel rods with which his manipulations were performed. It was at length discovered, that pine rods could be substituted with equal effect, if the patient did not know it. So popular did this delusion become, that in this State, clergymen, including Pres. Dwight; lawyers, and judges, certified in the most confident manner to its efficacy. In England it was still more popular. The nobility embraced it, an infirmary was established in which it alone was used, and more than five thousand cures were reported within a short time after it was opened. And among these, were the whole list of acute diseases. Its advocates predicted, in the most confident manner, that within twenty years the old drugging and bleeding system of practice would be entirely abandoned. But a fifth of that period had hardly elapsed, before the delusion was exposed, and Perkins, with his tractors and infirmary, ceased to be spoken of but with contempt. Does not the early history of this tractor treatment bear some resemblance to that of the favorite *pathies* of the present day? Nor do I doubt that the latter part of its history will have a still closer resemblance to the latter part of theirs.

Another source of delusion is found in the *Ignorance of the mass as to the proper Power of Medicine and Physicians.*

In the administration of medicine, the object is to assist nature to

throw off disease. Nor can it be otherwise than pernicious, when given for any other purpose. A man's recovery, therefore, is not rendered certain in proportion to the amount of drugs taken. Yet this is the sentiment of many; and the physician is often obliged to give something, when he knows nothing is needed, in order to satisfy the patient's wish to take. Well is it for the patient if he gives only the homœopathic globule, or its equivalent, the bread pill. A man gets up in the morning, and feels languid and dull. He may have been living in constant violation of the laws of health, and begins to feel the effects of it. His first question is, what shall I take? not, as it should be, what change in my habits of life will remove the evil? It is TAKE, TAKE. As repentance is most irksome to the moral transgressor; so is physical reformation to him who breaks the laws of health: and as the one would give "the fruit of his loins for the sin of his soul;" so to the other no drug is too nauseous, no application too painful, if by their use he can avoid the necessity of reforming his habits. But as in the former case, all these devices for the redemption of the soul, but add to its guilt, and sink it deeper in perdition; so this dosing with drugs but adds to the physical derangement, and sinks the man deeper in physical perdition. And as it matters not with the moral transgressor, that the experience of thousands has proved the utter futility of such devices; so with the physical transgressor, it matters not that thousands have been filled to surfeiting with nauseous drugs, and without relief. Such is the utter folly of both, that they pursue the same beaten track, rather than reform—closing their eyes and ears to all the evidence against them from within—nay, smothering the voice of reason and conscience within.

Their error consists in ascribing to drugs a power they do not possess. They take it for granted that they have not only the power to renovate the system, but to counteract the influence of their pernicious habits. Yet any one may see that nature is fully as much assisted in following the hints she gives, in a change of habits, as by filling the system with drugs, which at best are but a necessary evil. I say an evil, for all drugs, except iron and a few others, which constitute important parts of the system, must act as poisons, if they act at all. Emetics, whether ipecac. or lobelia, act simply from their poisonous qualities. The same is true of the whole list of medicines. But as, in the moral world, one evil is made to counteract the effects of another; so in medicine, the effects of a poison are made to counteract the effects of a disease. But whether any article is a poison, depends wholly on the relation which it bears to the system. Thus any drug, which in a healthy state disturbs, in

any degree, the healthy performance of any function, is so far a poison. But in an altered state of the system, these very substances may contribute to the restoration of a healthy action, and thus lose their poisonous qualities. On the other hand, beef-steak, by no means a poison in a healthy state, becomes, in a diseased state, a poison of great power.

In an acute disease, a prompt medical interference may be demanded. But in a majority of cases, more dependence is to be placed on the recuperative powers of nature, than on the direct influence of drugs. In such cases, if nature be not too much encumbered by wrong habits, she will in time effect a cure. Nor will drugs alone suffice to accomplish it. A general derangement of the system has taken place, and considerable time must elapse before it can become regulated. And we may here see how quackery gains applause in these cases. During the first part of the time, a regular physician is usually employed. He may assist nature, but fails of a cure, as the time for that has not yet arrived. He is therefore dismissed, and some of the irregular practitioners are employed—perhaps several of them, before the cure is complete. The patient gets a full supply of pills, syrups, bitters, and *promises* in abundance. The latter establish the superiority of these over the regular physician, for *he* never promised. Faith is strong, and they wait patiently a great while, and at length are well. It is “*post hoc*,” but they and their doctor reckon it “*propter hoc*”; and the superiority of the quack, or quack medicine they took *last*, is fully established.

It is this idea which has emptied box after box of Brandreth’s, and Moffat’s, and Morrison’s, and a thousand others’ pills, down the gaping throats of real or imaginary patients. The cases in which the promised cures failed, are never inquired for; but the single cases of recovery after taking these, like the prizes in a lottery, fill every eye.

I have dwelt thus fully on this source of delusion, because it seems an important one. And there is another which gives rise to much delusion in connection with this; and that is, *The Inordinate Desire of Life*.

“Ere hope, sensation fails.”

Men dread the passage to another world, and shrink from it with alarm. Nor are they ever ready for it. Hence, if attacked with fatal disease, they snatch at straws. In their extremity they cherish the hope that a medicine may be found, which shall disarm the king of terrors, and give them back to life. It matters not that science knows no such drug; nor that thousands, like themselves, have searched with anxious eye through the whole list, and died without it. Such a drug they know

must exist, and they pursue it with the utmost pertinacity, taking box after box, and bottle after bottle, of all the thousands of nostrums which the ingenuity and cupidity of crafty men can invent. This *may* cure, and that *may* cure, and they try all. So, too, doctor after doctor is called, each time taking one more ignorant than the one before. The regular physician, finding no room for hope, gives no promise of recovery, and is discarded for one who will. He, failing to cure, is dismissed for one more ignorant still; for each promises more confidently, in proportion to his ignorance, and they feed delusive hope on these promises, although they know them to be "empty as the wind." At length, having tried the whole round of ignorance, death lays them in their resting place. They have expended their means for that which could do them no good, and have helped feed the whole army of rapacious quacks, ever ready to feed on the extremities of such as these.

Another source of medical delusion is found in the *Utter Ignorance of even educated men, of the Nature and Extent of Medical Knowledge.*

It seems taken for granted, that there are no fixed principles in medicine; that disease, and the action of remedies, are all hap-hazard—the one coming when it may chance to, or, when God, by a miraculous intervention, sends it; and that the action of remedies is equally without law. On such notions as these, they found their idea of medical science. This, also, they consider as a mixture of luck and chance, having in it no fixed principles, and being what one may acquire in a month, as well as in a life time. If you are successful in practice, they will say that you are *lucky* or *fortunate* in not losing your patients. But there is no *luck* nor *fortune* about it. You do not go to your patients and pour down their throats whatever you may happen to, and trust fortune for the result. Having made yourself master of what knowledge is to be attained, you investigate your case, till you find the exact nature of the disease, and then you select that remedial agent which your own observation, or that of others, has shown best adapted to remove the disease. If you are successful, it is because you have done this. But here is no *luck*. The whole matter is as much the result of fixed laws, as any other result of a physical cause. The all-wise Governor of the Universe has not left disease out from his general plan. Certain causes, acting upon the human system under certain circumstances, will invariably produce disease. Certain remedies, under certain conditions, will invariably assist nature to throw off disease. There is no luck in this. The truly successful physician is he who ascertains these laws, and acts in accordance with them. The really *unsuccessful* phy-

sician is he, who proceeds in ignorance, or in disregard of these laws. A truly successful physician is no more lucky than a successful machinist. Nor is an unsuccessful one any more *unlucky*. And by success, I mean not the acquisition of noisy applause, or sudden wealth. These follow the ignorant and knavish quack, more readily than the scientific and honest physician. The physician's knowledge does not consist in knowing that this drug is good for this symptom or disease, and that for that. He has rules for his art, but principles for his science; and without a fair knowledge of these, he is no physician at all. But to know these, he must first know the structure and functions of the system in health. Then he must know the nature of disease, and what abnormal conditions it will produce in the various organs; what effect it will have on the vital functions, and what lesions will give rise to the complex and multiform manifestations of disease. Then he must know the nature and effect of his remedial agents, and how to select that one, or that course of medical treatment or regimen, which will best secure the remedial effect required. Without a good degree of this knowledge, no man ought to presume to administer as a physician. Nor can one attain it without time and labor. A *physician* cannot spring up in a night, like Jonah's gourd. A *quack* may; but the fruit he will bear, will be apples of Sodom and clusters of Gomorrah. No man needs careful study more than the physician, and no man must more carefully employ his judgment and reason than he.

But the class to whom we refer, are wiser than all the physicians of learning—"yea, than seven men that can render a reason." Is a man sick? they have a remedy for every symptom, and these are generally infallible: but if they are not, then they have enough in number to make up what they lack in power, and the patient must take the whole, because they *may* do him good, at least some of them. But of all forms of quackery, deliver us from this luck-and-chance, hap-hazard form. Thomsonism, and homœopathy, and hydropathy, and the whole class like them, have a "method in their madness." They admit some principles, and their position may be found. But this luck-and-chance quackery has no method in it, no truth at its foundation, and no consistency with itself.

It is these false notions, which make medical grannies of both sexes. It is this which starts the benevolent lady with her pills, or her syrups, or her homœopathic globules, on her round of visits to the sick, often leading her to set aside the prescription of the regular physician and foist hers in its place, to the great detriment of the patient. It is this which

makes natural-born doctors, and root doctors, and seventh-son doctors, “*et id omne genus.*” It is this which makes the *weaker* of our clergy interfere with the prescriptions of the physicians, that makes them eloquent in praise of the absurdities of homœopathy, or ready, like Behe-moth, “to draw up a river into their mouth” in their zeal for hydropathy; or affixes their names to the thousands of quack medicines, certifying to their efficacy in statements which a school boy in physiology would laugh at for the utter ignorance they displayed, and involving medical theories too absurd for any man to conceive, except him, who having a smattering of theology, therefore concludes himself a master of all the intricacies of medical science.* To the clergyman in his sacred capacity, I look with the most profound respect; but to the clergyman as a medical quack, with the most unmixed contempt. Such men are ready to prescribe at once, when a skilful physician would hesitate long.

“Fools madly rush, where angels fear to tread.”

But it by no means follows, that because they know something of the-ology, they know anything of medicine; nor because they have a box of pills, or can make a syrup, that they are competent to treat disease; nor even if they have heard of a medicine which is reputed to have cured a given disease, that they are under obligation to force it into the throat of every sick man they may see. These seem driven by a sort of necessity to interfere with the treatment of the sick, and not a few patients have lost their lives by this foolish interference.

Another source of quackery and delusion is found in the *Mystery*, in which regular physicians, even, have chosen to enshroud the whole subject of medicine. The time is hardly past, when the doctor could tell his patient, as Meg Merrilies told the honest Domine Sampson, when she offered him her devil’s broth, and he hesitated to drink it, “Gape, sinner! and swallow.” He gave no reasons, and explained none of the

* The value of certificates to the efficacy of patent medicines, even when honestly given, may be estimated from a circumstance which occurred while the author was in the office of the late Dr. A. G. Welch, of Lee, Mass. A farmer, of general intelligence and acknowledged probity, came to the office, from the town of Tyringham, where Dr. W. had formerly practised, and asked if he could give him some more of the pills, such as he gave him in 1814. Dr. W. had no recollection of giving him any, but remembered being in attendance on his family for the spotted fever. “Well,” said the man, “I was sick then, and you gave me some pills which cured me right up, and have kept me well ever since!” This was in 1848. The man would have sworn to that statement of the efficacy of some common cathartic pills!

In 1850, I saw a published certificate, by a young lady, of a complete cure of consumption by a Dr. Fitch, of New York. Four months after it was given, I acted as a pall-bearer to assist in laying her in the grave—a victim to that fell destroyer. She was the last of eight of his patients whom he had cured, or promised to cure, that I had seen laid in the grave within a year!

phenomena of disease. The whole process of cure was, both to the patient and his friends, buried in darkness. That pertained to the physician alone. As in necromancy and the black art, with which medicine is always associated among savage and half-civilized tribes, none but the initiated could know its secrets. A grave look of profound wisdom, with full wig and cane, and barbarous Latin prescriptions, completed the doctor. By this means he often doubtless gained a reputation for almost superhuman skill, but it was quack reputation, and quacks were not slow to avail themselves of it.

The common people, however, would have their *theories*. Having no knowledge on which to base them, they were often of the most fanciful character. They were ready to believe anything, which promised to give them an insight into the mysteries of medicine, of life, disease and death. Crafty men were ready to take advantage of this, and though ignorant as the mass, contrived, by loud-sounding words, to involve them in greater darkness than before, and yet persuade them they knew it all. In consequence, quackery flourished, while the regular physician was neglected. But a change has taken place for the better. The Young Physic, as Dr. Forbes styles it, discards the cloak of mystery. Anatomy and physiology are now popular studies. In some States, even, free provision is made for dissection, and the student is no longer obliged to steal away in the darkness to his work; nor as he goes to the bedside of his patient, does he feel that his stolen knowledge must be kept locked in the recesses of his own bosom. It is now deemed the business of the physician to enlighten the mass, on the laws of health, and the structure and functions of their physical system. It is to this change, that I look with strongest hope for the overthrow of quackery, whether in or out of the regular profession; and for the establishment of correct views among the mass of people.

DELUSIONS ARISING FROM THESE SOURCES.

I have thus pointed out some of the sources of delusion. There are many more which might be mentioned, but space forbids. I shall therefore pass to consider some of the delusions arising from them.

We have, as a result of false medical reasoning, a thousand inert or positively injurious drugs, each of which is deemed a panacea, because in a few cases they have been given and the patient has recovered. It was so in the famous cure for hydrophobia, which the State of New York purchased of one Couch for a large sum. The remedy was a compound

of not only inert substances, but of some whose use was absurd. Thus, as the disease was caused by the bite of a dog, the bones of a dog were added to the compound, probably on the maxim, that "the hair of the dog would cure the bite." The only active ingredient in it was the acetate of copper, which, now that it is known, is reckoned by no means as infallible, either as a preventive or cure. It has been "*post hoc*," but they have concluded it "*propter hoc*." We have seen the end of a thousand cures for consumption. The physician prescribes phosphate of lime now, on the same ground his fathers did Berkelèy's Tar Water, and hardly with better effect. The homœopath gives his globules, and with them a correct regimen, and the patient recovers. The patient concludes, and perhaps the doctor also, that the globules effected the cure; while, in fact, they only amused the patient and nature performed the cure. The globules, of course, had no other effect, as we shall see.

Another evil resulting from this, is found in the undue value set upon experience, and by this is commonly understood the length of time a man has been in the profession, rather than his thorough and successful acquaintance with disease. But individual experience, unless corrected by a candid and thorough comparison with the experience of others, can be of little value. Besides, individual experience may be wrong, and then the longer it has been continued the worse it becomes. Hence it is, that routinist practitioners bring the profession so much into contempt with the thinking portion of the community. Nor is a *small share* of the blame for the prevalence of quackery, justly due to those members of the profession who trust so much to their experience, and neglect a thorough study of the principles of medical science and practice.

But while an extensive experimental knowledge of disease is not to be undervalued, I can readily conceive that a man of limited observation of disease, shall yet, by a thorough acquaintance with the observations and practice of others, have really a better and wider experience of disease, than one who has spent a whole lifetime in practice. He makes the experience of others his own; and when this is based on a thorough acquaintance with the sciences that lie at the foundation of the medical art, he becomes far less liable to make errors in diagnosis, or practice even, than many whose heads have grown grey in the use of their individual experience.

The difficulty of determining the exact nature of a disease, is a prolific source of error. It is *like* such a disease, say the mass, and therefore it is such a disease. But the educated physician judges of a disease, rather by its differences, than its resemblances, and his superiority

consists largely in this. Hysteria assumes the form of almost every disease, and the mass pronounce it these in turn. But if it assumes the form of pleurisy, as it often does, and the use of ether or assafœtida cause it to pass off, it by no means follows that these drugs will cure pleurisy. Yet thousands of our popular remedies, and some even in the profession, rest on no better evidence than this. The popularity of the "tractors," and homœopathy, and hydropathy, and a thousand others whose names are found only on the list of past delusions, arose in part at least from this source.

A well-educated physician knows the extreme difficulty of determining the disease, in many cases. He knows the close resemblance of one disease to another, and that none but a well-disciplined mind can distinguish between them. When, therefore, men ignorant of the distinctive characters of disease, and of undisciplined minds, as those termed quacks usually are, give reports of cases, and wonderful cures, the educated physician cannot rationally receive their testimony, nor ought he to be judged unfair or prejudiced if he do not. In the judgment of the latter lies the safety of the common people, and it would be well for them to heed it.

The errors arising from the difficulty of determining on the results of treatment, have already been alluded to, in connection with those arising from the nature of medical reasoning. But these errors are greatly increased by a disregard of the fact, that few of our diseases tend to death. This is true of a large portion of them, not excepting even consumption. Many cases of this, even, recover, though few are *cured*. Hence, it by no means follows, if a patient does not die, that therefore he is cured. Most of our acute diseases tend ultimately to recovery, though the system often succumbs to the violence of the attack; or if it survives that, may be worn out by the irritation excited by it. Still more do fevers tend to recovery; so much so, that a medical writer quaintly remarks, "I don't like fever curers." They will get well, and the accidents accompanying them may be cured, but the fever itself is not often cured. In such cases the honest doctor will say, with one of old, "I cured him, but God healed him"; or, what is equivalent, I took care of him, and Nature effected the cure.

THE MODE OF REASONING RESPECTING THE SUCCESS OF QUACKS.

It may be proper here to consider the mode of reasoning commonly employed respecting the success of quacks.

If a scientific man proposes to perform any wonderful experiment on acknowledged scientific principles, the process is carefully watched, and any failure is at once noticed. It is assumed he has no right to fail; and if he does so, it is marked as the exception. But if a quack proposes to accomplish any similar result by means of some mysterious or unknown power, there is so far a tacit admission of an expectation that he will fail, that if he do not, it is marked as the uncommon exception. Hence in the former case, the successful experiments are forgotten as things of course, while the failure is long remembered. In the latter case, the failures are forgotten as things expected, while the single instance of real or apparent success is the theme of every tongue. A regular physician may treat a hundred cases of dysentery with success, and it will be hardly noticed. But if he lose a few, the whole quackish class are in an excitement. Yet if a quack fail to lose a few, though he may have lost scores, no one knows that he ever had any cases but those that recovered. Let a juggler announce that he will perform wonderful feats by sleight of hand, and all will judge accurately enough of his performance. Were he to fail, he would hardly possess craft enough to save his reputation. But let it be announced that he will perform his tricks through some supernatural agency, or some new and wonderful operations of magnetism, and few will be in a condition to judge correctly of his performance. So intent are they on seeing something wonderful, that they will not see the common-place failures; and hence if he fail, all he has to do is to ascribe it to some freak of the spirit, or some disturbance of the magnetic currents. No one will detect the fraud, for every mind is filled with the idea of witnessing some marvellous thing, and to gratify this desire they are content to be humbugged. This species of reasoning is common to quackery in medicine, science, religion, and in short in everything.

There is one point further, connected with this part of the subject, on which a few words may not be improper; and that is, the practical estimation in which physicians and medicine are held.

Let a physician oppose a quack or quackery, and the reply from a large class is, "Your craft is in danger, and therefore, like Demetrius of old, you cry, 'Great is Diana.'" This reply contains a barefaced imputation of baseness in the physician. He is charged with having

no regard but for his own selfish interests. But the character of the profession has not been such as to expose them to such a charge. Next to the accredited messengers of the gospel, have they contributed to the good of the race, exclusively of their professional labors. Nowhere are more eminent examples of piety to be found, than among them. In no other profession have so many sacrificed their lives and health for the good of the race. Others might preach on the duty of ministering to the sick, poor, degraded and destitute; but for them has it been reserved, in a preëminent degree, to practise that divine command. Further, as a class, the regular physicians have ever been in advance of public sentiment on all questions of health and medical reform.

But this reply involves another principle, which quite as nearly concerns the honor of the profession. On a question of law, a lawyer's opinion is the ultimatum, and it is conclusive in proportion as he has thoroughly studied law. The same is true in every other profession and business. It is supposed, in these cases, that those who have made a particular branch of knowledge their study, are the only competent judges in what pertains to that. But in respect to medicine, this principle is denied. The fact that a physician has spent years in patient study, with a large class gives his opinion no claim to consideration. The opinion of any quack, who but yesterday left the care of his stables and his horses, is esteemed above it. Any man, even, of this class, holds himself fully competent to decide a question of this kind, in opposition to the opinion of the physician. But scientific physicians are the only men competent to decide on medical theories and practice, and questions of health and disease. And the experience of the world thus far has fully proved it. Few *improvements* have been made by quacks; and those innovations which have been claimed as such, and been opposed by the regular physicians, have in the end proved not only worthless, but merely schemes for defrauding the sick and ignorant. Quackery, unless for a display, has no ear for the cry of suffering, till it has first been awakened by the ringing of the precious metals. To the regular physician, the poor are ever present, and their cry is heard. But it matters not that these things are so; that thousands of lives are sacrificed to the ignorance of quackery, and millions of money squandered for medicines which are productive only of injury; nor that men of the highest character for intellectual and moral worth, have not only found abundant evidence of the truth of the principles of the regular system, but have devoted a lifetime of earnest labor to the elucidation and confirmation of them: an ignorant peasant, and an idle dreamer of

Germany, a visionary of Sweden, and an illiterate quack of our own country, have brought out systems, not only physiologically absurd, but contrary to the commonest dictates of ordinary intelligence, which have been received as, of infinitely more value than this. That Thomsonism should have become popular, is not strange, for it exactly suited the pride of ignorance found in the lower classes of society. But it was not to be expected, that a system of medicine, resting on such a basis of observation, experiment and reasoning, by a series of men in successive ages, preëminent alike for their honesty of purpose, and superior mental endowments, should be rejected, and that, too, by liberally-educated men, for such fantastic dreams as those of Hahnemann and Priessnitz, which rest on the observation of but few men, if even they have so much of foundation, and those not such as would be trusted in the ordinary affairs of life. With the same propriety with which a clergyman sneers at the regular system of medicine and defends any of the mushroom systems of the present day, may the physician sneer at orthodox theology, and defend spiritual communications, and Mormonism, or the foolish rantings of Jack Davis. He who denies the evidence on which the regular system of medicine rests, denies the evidence on which all truth must rest. He who adopts homœopathy, adopts it on the same evidence on which another adopts Mormonism, and he adopts it with the same evidence against him. Medical science rests on a broad induction of facts, so varied in their mode, and the persons and circumstances of the observers, as almost to prevent the possibility of error. The system has grown up from the facts, and not before the facts were observed. In natural religion, the moral facts of the universe are first observed, and the system deduced from them. It differs in this from all false systems of religion, for in these the system is first formed, and the facts warped to suit it. The regular system differs from quackery in the same respect. For what facts did Hahnemann observe before he formed his system? or Priessnitz, or Thomson, or Perkins? Each formed his system first, and then tried to warp facts to match it. But each has failed to accomplish this, and hence the advocates of the several systems have modified their theories, while they have retained the name. What Thomsonian follows the principles of Thomson; or homœopath, of Hahnemann? All these have stolen from the regular system all that gives stability to theirs; just as the false systems of religion of the present day, steal from the Bible all the truth they contain. A knowledge of the origin of the quack systems, would be sufficient to convince any rational person of their falsity, without a particular know-

ledge of their doctrines or results. Besides, the principles of medical science have the accumulated testimony of ages in their favor; while not one of the quack systems of the present day, has *even existed* for half a century, much less received any great amount of testimony in its favor. The history of the present quack systems is so far the history of a host of others, which are now known only as things that were. Resting on the same basis as these, claiming the same powers, and having the same early history, it needs no prophet's ken to foresee for them a similar end.

Another favorite idea with many, is, that medicine is wholly unnecessary, if not poisonous. "Doctors kill about as many as they cure," is a common remark with them. It will be found that those making this remark have usually a much better acquaintance with the practice of ignorant quacks, or of the least educated in the profession, than with that of those thoroughly educated, and that they and their families are usually healthy. Sickly people too often place an undue dependence on medicine, and these, even, when sickness and death menace are ready enough to use the physician's skill and resources.

Of this class there are several species. There are those who have never been sick, and who, by virtue of a good constitution, are able to indulge their appetites to a considerable degree, and are yet free from disease. These are the *free-thinkers* of medicine. They have an equal contempt for physicians, medicine, and the laws of health. But it is evident that few can belong to this species; and that their independence of doctors and medicine is due solely to the accident of a good constitution.

Another species are great theorists. They believe in the perfectibility of man's physical system, just as a corresponding class in morals believe in the perfectibility of his moral nature. They lose sight of the grand facts, that man's body contains in it the seeds of disease and death, even from the earliest development of the germ; that the powers of life are enfeebled by this hereditary taint, and that often they will succumb to the onset of disease, long before the three score years and ten are reached; and that, although correct habits of life may much better enable the system to bear up against the combined influences of hereditary predisposition to disease within, and noxious elements without, yet these onsets are often so sudden and severe, that, unassisted, the powers of nature give way, and the body sinks into the grave. That a strict adherence to the laws of health is of the utmost importance, none will deny. But what are the laws of health? Are they a code of laws,

drawn up by the hand of Infinite Wisdom? or are they the imperfect results of human inquiry? Hence what are now denominated the laws of health, by further research may be greatly modified. Nor is there such an invariable condition of our physical systems, that any fixed laws could be applied to all. That the Italian Cornaro attained a great age as the consequence of his abstemious life, proves nothing for another; for thousands have been equally abstemious, without the same result. The same abstemiousness may even shorten the life of one whose constitution, from its native weakness, needed stimulants. Many may be found who have passed the four score years, and even reached the fifth, who have no more thought of the laws of health than of those which bind the planets in their order. The general laws of health must be modified to suit individual cases. Much less can a special code be formed which shall suit every one. Those laws of health of which we hear so much, are usually the whims of individuals, who adopt them, and before they have stood the test of a half score of years proclaim their boasted success to the world, and ensure long life to all who follow them. Were they to wait till they had celebrated their hundredth birth day in consequence of following their theories, we should lose all this sage council upon the laws of health, and the perfectibility of man's physical nature. Not but that sickness might often be avoided by a strict compliance with the laws of our physical systems; but while man remains a tenant of the flesh, some remedy for sickness will be demanded. Medicine has fully sustained itself as an agent capable of lessening human suffering and preventing the fatal effects of disease. While, therefore, a compliance with the laws of health, not the whims of theorists, should be enjoined, a careful and proper dependence on remedial means ought not to be disregarded.

Another class, closely allied to the preceding, adopt the notion that every man may be his own doctor. Of these, some have seldom, if ever, been sick. The slight disturbances of health which have occurred to them, have been readily relieved by simple domestic remedies, or by abstinence, or by the unaided efforts of nature. Hence, adopting the common fallacy, that a man's experience furnishes him not only with the best information, but with nearly all that can be obtained, they conclude they have felt nearly all the sickness men usually feel, and that as they have recovered without help, all others can. But we may apply the verse of Dr. Young, on the power of sickness to convince atheists of their error, with equal propriety to these. "A fever reasons better than a Clarke" to the atheist, or a Galen to one holding this idea.

Others of this class have an innate quackery. They aspire to be universal geniuses, and are ready for anything. Law, politics and religion, the workshop or the sickroom, are equally the fields in which to display their prowess. It is a great thing to treat disease successfully, but they can do it as well without study and training, as the physician with. Hence they are the greater men. Such are sometimes sick, and wo to the luckless physician who attends them. They soon discover that the physician knows nothing about their case, and dismiss him, or set aside his medicine and prescribe for themselves. Then the field is open to exhibit their own skill. The doctor can do no good, and they set about effecting their own cure. At length they recover, and are then fully competent to treat their own sickness, and unfortunately think they are prepared to treat that of others.

Another portion of this class, and these are the most reprehensible, are physicians, either in the regular profession, or in some of the outside systems. They have entered on the profession either for gain, or distinction, and find that in the regular course, neither can be secured without a patient and faithful performance of the duties of the profession. But they have neither the ability nor the patience to acquire it in this way. A shorter passage must be found, and none more convenient offers than that common resort of quacks, to persuade the mass that they can initiate them at once into all the secrets of medicine, and give them all the skill and power the physician has acquired by years of toil. They ride into popularity on this, but are always careful to secure good fees for the information thus communicated.

Of this idea, no further refutation is necessary than to call attention to the remarks already made on the difficulties in the way of a correct treatment of disease, and the wide field of knowledge necessary to be explored before one can meet these successfully.

POPULAR SYSTEMS OF MEDICAL QUACKERY.

In quackery, as in philosophy, we have Materialism, and Immaterialism. The former of these belongs to a class of men, who have a smattering of knowledge, yet little discipline of mind. They are above the lowest class in society—for these usually employ the regular physician, asking few questions about theories and systems. They do not, however, rise to the formation of abstract ideas. Sensations are their chief ground of credence, nor can they comprehend the relation of cause and effect, unless they can see the physical cause standing in close relation to the effect.

For this class of minds, we have two systems, Thomsonism and Hydropathy. In each of these a visible and efficient agent is made to stand as the antecedent of the effect required. Little account is made of the "*vis medicatrix naturæ*" in either system.

Of these, Thomsonism claims the prior notice. I shall not enter on its history further than to remark, that it has always found its advocates chiefly among the less educated. A thorough Thomsonian must have qualities something like these: superficial knowledge and real ignorance, self-conceit and credulity, a faculty for jumping at conclusions, and strong prejudices. Thomson himself possessed these qualities in a marked degree. His ignorance may be inferred, from his placing opium as a mineral, and salt as a vegetable, in his list of drugs; as well as from his attempt to reduce the science of therapeutics to a system of rules. In common with other quacks, symptoms were to him the whole of disease. Hence a knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology was of no use. Any one could learn the symptoms in a few weeks, so as to apply his rules, and thus the pride of ignorance was flattered. Had Thomson been a more learned man, he could not have formed so popular a system. For, having in his own mind the same elements composing the mind of this lower class, and influenced by the same prejudices, he could enter into their feelings and flatter their pride, while he secured his own praise.

His prejudices are seen in his constant denunciations of opium and mineral medicines. His want of mental discipline is seen in his dissatisfaction with any effects not tangible. Hence, lobelia became his favorite emetic, and cayenne and hot-drops his favorite stimulants, while the steam-box was ever ready to produce sensible external effects. And each of these had its place by rule. But the glory of Thomson is departed. The steam-box is obsolete; and though cayenne and lobelia hold their place, it is with divided sway. His name, even, is in disuse, and his motley offspring are now Eclectics or Botanics, and almost resent the appellation of Thomsonian as an insult.

Thomson's system, having been found utterly worthless, is laid aside. Minerals find their way into their practice, and in short they try, like all other quacks, so far as their ignorance will allow, to secure the advantages which flow from the regular system, while they retain the influence their quackery confers. It need not be considered a libel, if it be said, that as a class they are uneducated; for it was a principle of their system that education was not needed, and many an ambitious youth has vaulted from the stable to his gig, and from beside his bench to the

bedside of the patient, with hardly a passing compliment to books or study. There is, with them, as with others, no professional honesty; for while they flatter the popular prejudices against mineral medicines, the fact of their using them is notorious.

Hydropathy belongs to the same class as Thomsonism. Like that, it lays no claim to mysterious or supernatural forces. Its causes and effects are physical. Like those of the other system, its advocates condemn the regular profession, and, like each of the others, claim that the true system of medicine was concealed till Priessnitz brought it to light; and that they alone pursue the true method. Their system, like Thomsonism, consists of a central dogma and specific rules. Their fundamental dogma is, that water can cure all cases of disease that are curable; and that it can do no harm. But this rests on no better evidence than that of Thomson, that "heat is life." Nor are its claims any better supported than were those of the followers of Perkins or Hahnemann. The origin of the system is liable to the same objection, which I have shown to lie against all such systems, that it is formed from no induction of facts.

Priessnitz claims, and I believe receives from his ardent supporters, a degree of reverence which can hardly be accorded to any common man. And, indeed, if he has discovered the only true medical system, with only the education of a common peasant, and with no induction of facts, he is worthy of all the reverence which can be given to humanity. But what evidence have we that he has discovered such a system? Not that it prolonged his life, for he died, like Paracelsus, and Wesselhæft has lately gone. Nor does their success in curing those diseases which tend to death, furnish it. In the disorders incident to a sedentary life, or want of attention to the skin, or luxurious habits, a term at a "water-cure" is of great use. Fifteen or twenty dollars a week for board and treatment, is pretty sure to secure attention to directions; and free exercise in the air, with thorough cleansing of the skin, a moderate diet, with freedom from ordinary care, are sufficient for a cure. But, except the expense and the name of it, one could better have secured it with a gun or fishing-rod among our mountains.

From a personal acquaintance with a very popular *cure*, I am free to say that few physicians have healthier or more comfortable-looking patients than are to be seen there. In acute diseases, so far as that *cure* is concerned, the treatment has not been successful. Nor could it be rationally expected otherwise, when the physicians could in a post-mortem report, published over their own names, claim that the patient's heart was diseased, because "there was some fat about the base of it,

and the walls of the left ventricle were fully twice as thick as those of the right"; confounding a perfectly natural condition with fatty degeneration in the first case, and with hypertrophy in the last. Nor ought it to excite surprise that such an ignorance of anatomy and physiology should have appeared in the report; for Priessnitz claimed no knowledge of these, and Wesselhœft could not surpass his master.

The following statistics, taken from the *Glen-Haven Cure*, by Dr. Jas. C. Jackson, is not altogether without significance. The character of the patients, as given in that, exactly coincides with the results of my own observation.

Five hundred and eighty-nine patients reported; of these, *five hundred and forty-four* have been accustomed to *dose themselves with patent medicines*. 216 have been treated homœopathically; 226 by the Botanics and Eclectics; previously by water-cure, 97; by galvanism, 19; and by spiritual communicationists, 2. Of these, one had taken *one hundred and four* bottles of Townsend's Sarsaparilla, and 33 bottles of Vaughn's Lithontriptic Mixture. The others had taken, some of them, 25 boxes of Brandreth's Pills; Moffat's, &c., in proportion. How many were cured was not specified, though it is to be inferred all were. Hypertrophy of the heart, curvature of the spine, and tumors of the uterus, are reported as cured! Although Dr. J. informs us in the report that he is *somebody*, most persons, understanding the nature of these complaints, would quite as willingly credit him with an error in diagnosis, as with having cured such complaints. If the proportion of those accustomed to quack treatment at this Cure, be not greater than at others, it shows pretty conclusively to what class in the community hydropathy belongs.

Nor is it any argument in favor of this system, that converts are made to it from the regular profession. Few possessed of good judgment, a thorough knowledge of the principles of medicine, and a fair amount of practice in the regular way, can be found among these. The fact that clergymen go over to the Romish church, proves just as conclusively the superior excellence of that church, as these changes do that of hydropathy! Nor is the oft-repeated argument from the cures of any value, for Perkins's Tractors cured 5000 cases of every form of disease, in a few months. Nor was there ever a quack by whom cures were not claimed to be performed, and, as his advocates affirmed, *proved* to have been done. The regular profession can show more real cures, than all others can of both real and imaginary.

The free use of water in health, does not belong to hydropathy; and the use of it as a remedial agent had been long in use when Priessnitz

was born. All that can be claimed as the discovery of the sage of Graefenburg—for his principles and practice are hardly more regarded by his followers now, than are those of Galen by the regular profession—is the dogma, which even the limited experience of hydropathists has failed to establish, that water is sufficient for the cure of all diseases, and the assertion that all other remedies are worthless or pernicious, which the experience of ages expressly contradicts.

Of the immaterial class, Homœopathy is the system chiefly in vogue, and will therefore claim the chief attention. This, in common with Kinisopathy and Tractoropathy, claims to exert its power through a certain mysterious force; but whether this is of a spiritual nature, as Hahnemann stated, or of an electric character, as some of his followers contend, is not decided, for “who shall decide when [such] doctors disagree?” It is not my design to give a history of Homœopathy, or an exposition of all its absurdities. Any one curious to take an allopathic dose of these, is referred to an excellent *Essay on Homœopathy* by Dr. Worthington Hooker, of Yale College. It is a fair exposition of the system, and if a candid reading of that does not cure one of homœopathic tendencies, nothing but the globules will.

To make a thorough homœopath, a man needs considerable information, and great power of theorizing. His habits of observation, and his practical judgment, must be inferior; he must be credulous, easily prejudiced, and self-conceited, having implicit faith in his experience and reasoning, and a total ignorance of the power and influence of the imagination. Such were the qualities of Hahnemann’s mind, and his followers have nearly resembled him.

He was a man of learning, so far as extensive reading could make him one; and he was the prince of theorizers, as his works abundantly show. He observed no facts, and his want of correct practical judgment is seen through all his life. His credulity is evident, from the ridiculous absurdities adopted in his system, as well as from his implicit belief in mesmerism and clairvoyance. His self-conceit is clearly manifest, from his arrogant assumption of having discovered the only true system of medicine. His implicit faith in his own experience and reasoning, as well as his entire ignorance of the power and influence of his own imagination, and that of others, is clearly evident from a perusal of his writings, to any one not possessed of the same mental character. His innate disposition to cheat, will be further evident from his selling common borax at a Louis d’or an ounce, under pretence of its being a salt possessed of valuable properties, and lately discovered by himself.

It is enough for a rational man, to know the character of a founder of a system, and its mode of origin, to enable him to judge whether it be a true and valuable one. If a system of mathematics, claiming to differ from the one in use, and to be superior to it, be presented to me, and I know that the author of it was a man destitute of all mathematical habits, that he formed his system without studying the relations of quantities, and I find, on his first page, two and two make five, or that the sum of the parts exceeds the whole, I should only demonstrate my folly by a serious examination of the system. Nor if he should claim that he had solved the most abstruse mathematical problems by his system, would it impose any obligation to examine it. Yet he might demand it, with the same propriety with which homœopaths demand of us a thorough examination of their system, and even that we should test it by experience. But as successful experience even would not prove the truth of a system of mathematics based on errors, so will not this test avail for homœopathy, even if apparently successful.

Some clergymen, and many others also, seem fond of demanding for homœopathy such a test; and in return, the physician may with equal propriety demand of them a thorough examination of Mormonism, and even that they shall put it to the test of experience, with its spiritual *wifedom*, and all its other absurdities. But the clergyman replies, I am acquainted with the rules of theological reasoning, the laws of evidence, and the standard of truth; and if the character of the founder of the system, and its plan and basis, do not come up to these, I am competent to condemn it without that trouble. Sir, the physician retorts, I am acquainted with the laws of medical reasoning and evidence, and if a system contradict these on its face, I am competent to condemn it at once. And if I am bound to take your decision, you are bound to take mine.

But physicians have put this system fully and impartially to the test, though of course not in full homœopathic faith. But to require of a man faith in that of which he sees no evidence, is asking too much of rational men. Yet this is what the homœopaths demand, and it is in accordance with the course pursued by those who become homœopaths. First, they have implicit faith in it, and then have no difficulty in seeing evidence where nothing is to be seen. With such rational lack of faith in it, Bonnet and Andral, and other eminent physicians of France, have fully tested the homœopathic system and globules, paying the strictest attention to the rules of Hahnemann and others for their administration, and in no case was there the slightest effect produced. Homœopaths

themselves have fully tested it, and proved clearly, to all but themselves, that the system was false and the medicines powerless.

That great benefit results in many cases from the adoption of this system, no one doubts. A man under the influence of the delusion before mentioned, that, let him transgress the laws of health as he will, medicine has yet the power to counteract the bad results of his errors, will find homœopathy an advantage. For he will put his trust in medicine; but if his faith in drugs is coupled with a willingness to fulfil the conditions under which success is promised in homœopathy, while he will not obey the laws of health as dictated by science; by taking globules, he will be humbugged into an obedience to the laws of health, and will take the shadow of the name of a drug, powerless alike for good or ill. Here the man, making a fool of himself, is cured by being made a fool of—a good illustration of "*similia similibus curantur*"!

But in what does Hahnemann's theory consist? Like other founders of systems, he has a central dogma, "*similia similibus curantur*," and he affirms that this is the sole law of cure. His reasoning is, that those causes which in a state of health will produce given symptoms of sickness, will cure those symptoms if given when they have arisen spontaneously. This is the foundation of his system. But he adduces no facts in attestation of it, except the limited number which he pretends to have observed, and these no subsequent experimenter has been able to verify, unless he had beforehand adopted his system. He also affirms that no cure was ever effected, but under this law. Here he has the experience of the world against him, for no one would expose a severe burn to the fire to cure it, and every one knows that cures have been performed by counter-irritation. The mode of cure in the first case would be what is called antipathic, or by remedies of a soothing nature; and in the other, by allopathy, or by curing one disease by exciting another of more manageable character, and in a less dangerous place. The basis of his theory has, thus, not only no foundation in facts, but the facts are all against it.

He makes a great display of accuracy in the details of the "provings" of the various drugs; but it is in details which have no importance or bearing on the subject, and the recording of them proves only that the person so doing, was destitute of that discrimination of mind, and accurate judgment, without which no one is competent to record facts for others. The most trivial circumstances are recorded with all the care of the most important.

But how shall the effects of drugs on the healthy system be ascertain-

ed? These must of course be determined, before the drugs can be used in sickness. A man, as nearly healthy as possible, is selected as the subject of the "provings." He abstains from spices, fat meat, coffee, tea, beer, tooth preparations, perfumery of all kinds, old cheese, pork, geese, duck and young veal, a passion for gaming, reading of obscene books, &c., which are deemed by him medicinal, while tobacco and alcohol are not excluded. He now takes the decillionth of a grain of sulphur, for instance, and begins to note the effects. Every symptom, mental, moral and physical, for the next fifty days, is included under the effects of the sulphur. I shall give about a fifteenth part of the effects, as given in Jahr's Manual. Any one wishing for the "totality" of the symptoms, can find it by consulting that.

"Itching in the skin, worst at night, or in the morning in bed, frequently with a sense of soreness, or heat, or bleeding of the scratched part. Eruptions after vaccination; chronic eruptions with a burning itching; miliary eruptions, with a burning itching; scabies, with rash; yellow or liver-colored spots on the skin, moles, herpes, erysipelalous inflammation, with throbbing and stinging, tingling in the limbs, disposition to numbness; easily injured in lifting; twitching of the muscles, fainting fits and spasms, also hysterics; single jerks in the limbs when sitting or lying, epileptic paroxysms, with sensations as if a mouse were running over them; tremors of the limbs. The most complaints *originate only when at rest, and disappear by motion of the part affected or by walking.* Sadness and dejection; melancholy, with doubts about his soul's welfare; great inclination to weep, frequently alternating with laughing; inconsolableness, and reproaches of conscience about every action; attacks of anxiety in the evening; nocturnal fear of spectres, fearfulness and liability to be frightened; ill humor, restlessness and hastiness, caprice, moroseness, irritability and fretfulness, disinclination to labor."

I have thus given perhaps the fifteenth part of the "totality" of symptoms produced by the decillionth of a grain of sulphur. The rest includes caries of the bones, five fevers, and in short about all the diseases flesh is heir to. Doubts of one's soul's welfare, a disinclination to labor, five fevers, together with moroseness and ill humor enough to destroy all domestic comfort! Adieu to brimstone matches! The provings of nux vomica have given twelve hundred symptoms, and all the others in proportion. What a beautiful and concise system! No wonder a homœopathic doctor of my acquaintance was obliged to take his book to the bedside of his patient, and read off the symptoms, and ask

him if he didn't feel so and so. But he had just got into it, and had not learned it all.

I have only to add respecting Hahnemann's theory, that he states full *seven-eighths* of all chronic disease is the result of psora, vulgarly the itch. This, he affirms, it cost him twelve years' research to establish, and I presume twelve years labor more will be required to convince rational people of its truth.

Another grand feature of this system, is, the infinitesimal doses in which medicines are administered, and their mode of preparation. This is nowhere formally laid down by Hahnemann, nor the time of adopting it given, for his first provings were with allopathic doses. Nor does he specify in his provings, when he uses the infinitesimal or the allopathic dose. This, alone, would vitiate his results; for bark, or opium, in a full dose, would give results vastly different from the same in a dose of the decillionth of a grain. He has, however, introduced this part of his system into the notes, and what was thus incidentally dropped, as it were, now constitutes the distinctive part of the system. His mode of preparing vegetable medicines I shall quote after Hooker. He offers no facts in support of this wonderful discovery, but seems, as elsewhere, to have dreamed it, adopted it, and then reasoned of its accuracy from the imaginary effect produced. We have in this another proof of the total want of philosophical acumen and correct judgment of Hahnemann.

The description of his mode of preparing vegetable medicines, which is found in his *Materia Medica Pura*, vol. 1st, p. 96, is as follows :

“To attain the hundredth degree of potency, mix two drops of alcohol with two drops of the juice of the plant, and then mix this with 99 or 100 drops of alcohol by means of two strokes of the arm from above descending. By mixing in the same way one drop from this, with 100 drops of alcohol, you attain the ten thousandth degree of potency; and by mixing one drop of this dilution with another 100 drops of alcohol, you attain the millionth degree. This process of dynamization, or spiritualization, is continued through a series of thirty vials, up to the thirtieth solution. This thirtieth degree should always be used for homœopathic purposes.”

Now let us look at the arithmetic of this “spiritualization or dynamization,” and by these terms Hahnemann and his followers mean the communication of an immaterial or mysterious power to substances before inert or powerless in such quantities, by trituration and shaking, “so that silex, which from its insolubility is entirely inert, can by this process be so potentized, that a single grain of it would suffice to cure of cer-

head waters of the Mississippi, and let its currents and circling eddies diffuse it through all that noble stream. Let it flow down and mingle with the waters of the Gulf; then, taken by the Gulf-stream, and carried up to the coast of Labrador, and thence across to the coast of Norway, let it get a good orthodox shaking in the Maelstrom, and thence be diffused through all the waters of the globe. Will a single drop of this dilution do for a dose? Hahnemann says it is too strong!

Imagine, then, a hollow globe 8000 miles in diameter; fill it with alcohol, and add one drop of laudanum, which will produce no perceptible effect on an adult. Then make it revolve on its axis, as the earth does, till it is properly mixed and shaken, and a drop from this is too great a dose. Imagine, then, a globe so vast, that our earth, with the moon at its present distance from it, could be taken in and yet have room to perform its revolutions. Fill up this vast globe with alcohol, and add one drop of laudanum, and let it be diffused through all this mass, and a drop from it is still an overdose. Imagine, then, a globe whose diameter shall extend beyond the fixed stars, so that were one of these to be now placed on its further side it would be full three years before its light would strike our eyes. Fill this with alcohol, and add the laudanum as before; then take one drop, and "with it moisten 1000 globules, and give one of these for a dose; or if the patient be very susceptible, put one of these in a vial and let him smell of it." Such, says Hahnemann, are the doses he employs. I have not exaggerated, and any one may test the truth of my illustration by actual calculation.

But homœopaths do produce effects with their medicine! Certainly. More than one homœopathic case of medicine has been found to contain, in addition to the "high potencies," all the undiluted powerful preparations of the allopaths—strychnine and veratrine and morphine, and such like drugs, of which the allopathic dose is scarcely larger than a globule. They are there, and they are in the offices of the homœopaths, and when hard pressed they will acknowledge that in some cases they are obliged to use them, as is well known they have done camphor in cholera.

But do they tell their patients that they are dosing them with these most powerful drugs; or do they persuade them they are taking the mild homœopathic globules? Are they, then, honest, or are they not both quacks and knaves? This may appear harsh language, but it becomes the duty of the regular physicians, as conservators of the public health, not only to cure disease, but to expose the practices of those who would tamper with the public health. Nor should they hesitate to claim for themselves the competency to judge of every system and mode of practice.

But if the globulists confess the truth when they admit that in severe cases they are obliged to resort to allopathic remedies, and modes of practice, what becomes of the boasted superiority of their system? Good enough when nothing need be done, but good for nothing when danger is near!

Enough has been said on this system of quackery. Take the books of its founder, and of its advocates, and judge for yourselves. Weigh calmly the system, its origin, and its progress, without reference to the pretended cures it has wrought, and there will be little danger of error.

CONCLUSION.

But, finally, what are to be the effects of all these different "pathies" on the regular system? I answer, confidently, that they will benefit it. The system of medical science has come down through a long series of ages. Unnumbered systems have risen against it, but they have perished, and it has come forth from the contest with increased strength. So will these popular systems of to-day serve to purge out the quackery from it, to lop off its ill-defined and misty borders, and when they shall have passed away, it will stand firmer, and with more noble proportions than before. Already has hydropathy done much to break up a popular hydrophobia, which the influence of the regular profession could but slowly accomplish. Taking hold on the native quackery of the mind, it enforces the value of water as a hygienic application, which science unaided has labored almost in vain to accomplish. True, it goes to extremes; but the healthy reaction will take place, and truth will be embraced in its purity. So, too, homœopathy has taught, by the same means, what the regular physician could not enforce, that a man's recovery depended not alone on drugs. These systems, appealing to the innate quackery of men, have enforced truths which science had long taught, but which was rejected till gilded by quackery's cunning hand. But the truth will remain when the gilding shall have perished; and thus even these, its bitterest enemies, shall conduce to the up-building of the temple of truth.

A N

E S S A Y

ON SOME OF THE

PRINCIPLES OF MEDICAL DELUSION.

BY J. H. NUTTING, M.D.

Re-printed from the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

B O S T O N :

DAVID CLAPP, PRINTER.....184 WASHINGTON STREET.

1853.





