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REMARKS ON THE PRESENT ASPECT OF MEDICINE.*

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To those who have watched the progress of medicine for the last few years, and who have noticed the first dawn and gradual development of that revulsion from heroic treatment, to a modified system of expectant medicine, it is impossible not to perceive that the great apostle of the Natural History of Disease is the talented author of the pamphlet entitled "Homœopathy, Allopathy, and Young Physic"; and in a review of the present state of medicine, it would be impossible to avoid tracing the germs of the present transition stage, and noticing in detail the structure of this brochure.

In the perusal of this pamphlet, two things especially fastened upon the memory—first, the course of argument which had been adopted in favour of homœopathy in order to prove that its assumed cures were the restorations of nature, not of art; that they were at least equal to the ordinary cures of medicine; and, therefore, that the latter might fairly be presumed to be also the cures of nature, (since things which are equal to the same are equal to one another,) until from further information, and the establishment of a natural history of disease, we might be enabled to say what proportion of recoveries would always take place from her unassisted efforts; and secondly, the reason why the public had been asked to sit in judgment upon these matters,—why the weak points of the profession had been exposed to their unhallowed gaze,—and why they had been invited to contemplate the small degree of reliance which could be placed on their medical guides, or on the influence of their medicines. A few words on each of these points, before proceeding to the main body of the question, and before inviting the profession to envisage and to study what appears to be the chief defects in their mental constitution.

It is cheering to find that our author is not a believer in homœopathy; and yet, with this avowed disbelief in its results, it is difficult to understand the sheltering lenity of expression which is everywhere reserved for the system, or the reason why its assumed effects have been so prominently employed as a foil to set off the poverty of genuine practical medicine,—to show that their results are equal,—and that homœopathy, with all its follies, is at

least as good as ordinary medical treatment, and that both are indebted for their success to the unobserved powers of nature. It is impossible to understand this without supposing that the author set out upon his avocation with a fixed determination to expose the weak points of medicine, and conceived that the readiest method of doing so would be by a sort of implied parallel between the effects of homœopathy and allopathy, and by the throes of their respective systems to usher in the birth of his favoured offspring, "Young Physic," he should at once be apprehensive that a result thus originating in predilection, should be given to the world with strong marks of paternity, and bearing upon its early manifestations many of the constitutional predispositions with which it might be pretended to be endowed.

Thus setting off from a wrong starting place, not simply upon an inquiry after truth, but rather to establish the dogma that the good results of medicine were in reality the propitious actings of nature; it is easy to understand how favourable to such an hypothesis would be the establishment of such similar results from the inert medicinal, but stringent regimenal, processes of homœopathy, as from the effects of ordinary medical treatment. How then is this attempted to be established? By speaking favourably of Hahnemann and his doctrine, and of the ingenuity and completeness of his system, as a system, and by an appeal to the results of recorded cases. Now, with regard to the former, whose works are all before me at this moment, no one can doubt that he was a man of considerable mind, and that he has woven together a system of unquestioned *uniformity*. But, nevertheless, it is a system which wants the *unity* of truth, because it originated in prejudice, and is merely the clever development of a prejudice. Thus, for instance, it is stated that the first idea of the principle *similia similibus curantur*, arose in Hahnemann's mind from his taking a considerable quantity of bark when in a state of perfect health, and being afterwards attacked by symptoms resembling ague. Now, what are the real facts of this case? The explanation of *science* and *common sense*, and the testimony of an unprejudiced observer are simply this:—that when perfectly well, he took a large quantity of a nauseous medicine, and either from disgust at the remedy, or from the stomach being disordered by so inappropriate a visitant, he became the subject of constitutional irritation, shivering, and subsequent fever! Nothing can be a more

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natural sequence; yet this germinates in his mind the idea that *similia similibus curantur*. It is obvious that no sound reasoning could have developed this idea—for no cure was produced—but on the contrary, morbid action; and therefore the idea must have arisen from the previously known fact that bark was a *remedy* for ague, associated with the accident of its having been followed by constitutional disturbance in himself, when the medicine had been taken into a healthy stomach. Thus originating in the most illogical and unphilosophical manner, the prejudice is created, and subsequent experiments are merely the development of this prejudice, which at once becomes a favourite idea from its novelty and singularity. The rest is easy:—a man of talent soon finds his prejudices confirmed, and dresses up results so as to deceive himself and others with a semblance of truth. Taking up this origin of the doctrine, it will be entitled to no other sympathy than that of any ordinary prejudice.

The extraordinary fact of all, is that our author reasons upon these developments, and allows them all the force of facts, and of “evidence in favour of any other medical doctrine, theoretical or practical.” That which constitutes this fact so extraordinary, is that he had so recently denied to the evidence of far greater names than Hahnemann and his disciples, the inferences drawn from a similar appeal to the evidence of facts, and held them as valueless, only as it should seem, because they are more rational,—more consonant with nature and truth,—more scientific,—more unsophisticated, but woven together with less subtlety and prejudice. The fact is one which leads to the inference that the object of the writer is the advocacy of peculiar views, and not the application of the same rigid tests for sifting the character of evidence,—and the same denial of facts,—and the same impugning the character of observers, in all the aberrations of professional intellect; and the absence of this impartiality throws doubt upon all his subsequent reasonings and conclusions. I cannot institute a comparison between the relative claims to attention of homœopathy and allopathy; it would lead me too far from my immediate object, and I must be contented to make a few passing observations upon the pamphlet, and thus developing my views as to what is specially required in the present crisis of our science.

But I may not omit to inquire *why* are the public invited to study this subject? Why are they tempted by alluring newspaper advertisements, and a catch-title, to dive into these hidden things? Why are family secrets, and family defects, and family failings, and family shortcomings and misdoings, exposed to the vulgar gaze? Why are our errors, and infirmities, and weaknesses, allowed to pass the bounds of family kindness, and exposed to the unkindness of that world which is never famed for its sympathy with medical men, so long as it enjoys the blessing of health? And why are the ignorant summoned upon a special jury on a cause in which they possess no means of arriving at a correct judgment? It would be invidious to attempt answering these questions: various solutions of the difficulty present themselves, and it is not improbable that the correct one might be fixed upon

without much hazard of going wrong. We shall not attempt the solutions, but we shall infer, and we are well assured we shall carry with us the opinion of the wise and good, that this appeal was a grievous error in judgment—an error which cannot be re-called, and which is so grievous as at once to throw a doubt over the soundness of that judgment to which such a practical error did not at once present itself as an evil most sedulously to be avoided.

If, then, we begin the investigation of our author's observations, with the conviction that they originated in prejudice,—that they have been supported by literary unfairness,—and have been marked by want of judgment, we shall have diligently to guard our own minds from the agency of prejudice against many truths which he may have forcibly enunciated; for he *has* spoken some very good and wholesome truths, though they are so disfigured by the garb with which they have been invested, as to be very difficult of recognition.

As to the fact of homœopathy having had many professors and many disciples, this is not surprising where so much selfish interest has been so largely awakened on both sides. The love of novelty is always attractive, and the vanity of being able to administer globules to oneself, and one's friends, is so enchanting, that we can feel no wonder at the multitude of disciples, and should only be astonished that they have been so comparatively few, especially when the escape from swallowing medicine, and paying for it too, is superadded to the former powerful motives. In addition to all this, the real relief which is occasioned to a patient devoured by *ennui*, in being compelled to adhere to a very strict regimen, is quite enough to account for its numerous followers, and also for the good it has effected in that multitude of miseries which have only been produced by eating and drinking too much, and having too little occupation. Then, with regard to its professors, we doubt not that many of them have honestly imbibed the views of the originator of homœopathy,—and that they have sincerely persuaded themselves into its usefulness,—and have seen evidence in its support,—and have been blind to opposing facts,—and have unconsciously arrived at their conclusions through a multitude of grievous sophistications. But there are other young men, who have had their way to make in the world,—who possessed no very definite or present prospect of success,—and who have seen their easy way clearly into competence, through the royal vista of homœopathy,—who have been only too happy to lay aside the days and nights of toil and research required for ordinary practice,—and to throw off its cares and responsibilities,—and to revel in the luxurious indolence of homœopathic apathy. On either side, whether as physician or patient, there has been no torturing sacrifice to make,—no disagreeables to encounter,—while the beautiful light of hope, without an effort, has irradiated the uncertain gloom of futurity.

In the pamphlet before us, we have a succinct and very learned sketch of the origin of homœopathy, and of the development of its doctrines as arising from the idea first conceived in the mind of Hahnemann, that “*similia similibus curantur*.” It will be remembered

that this idea arose in the first place as a prejudice, produced in a highly imaginative mind; and it is not surprising, that possessed of this clue, in all future investigations, he and his enthusiastic followers should discover analogous results in future experiments on the effect of various medicines upon themselves and others. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that once imbued with a prejudice, to reason against its influence is unavailing; and that all its future agencies in this particular direction will be largely characterized by the *idée mère* in which they originated. Aided therefore by this prejudice,—by brilliant imagination,—and by the enthusiasm attaching to the promulgation of a new doctrine, they investigated the influence of certain medicines, and counting for days and weeks together, all the sensations, real and fancied, of themselves and others, attributed all these sensations to the influence of medicine,—assumed that they arose from the mode of its exhibition,—and pronounced this attribution and these assumptions to be the result of experience!

This, then, is all that can be fairly alleged in favour of homœopathy: its origin is in prejudice,—its development in error; above all other systems it possesses the deep, the indelible plague spot of *post hoc, propter hoc*, and has no other foundation for its conclusions. That it is startling from its novelty,—that it is inviting from its simplicity,—that it is agreeable from the boon it holds out to indolence, and from the facility with which it is practised,—and that it possesses a degree of cohesion in its several parts which invests it with the appearance of solidity, is freely admitted; but that these attributes should confer a title to its favourable reception cannot be admitted; that they should even give the privilege of comparison with rational treatment must be denied; and we must enter a serious protest against all deductions drawn from comparisons so instituted.

It is perfectly true that “vain declamations must cease in the presence of an experience that *cannot err*.” But what then is that *experience*? This word is frequently misemployed to express the apparent results of an experiment, but in reality the latter has no claim to be affiliated with the former; it is only the repetition of a *post hoc propter hoc* series, and before it can be possibly dignified with the title of experience, it must be a rational and expected result from rational and adequate means. The experience therefore which Hahnemann claims as the basis of his doctrine, must be shown to be rationally coincident with the expected results from certain adequate remedies, or it is perfectly valueless. In order to be true, it cannot be independent of theoretical explanation; dismiss the latter, and it forms the grossest empiricism. How this reasoning bears upon the question of infinitesimal doses is obvious, but we have no space to enter upon these irrational attenuations; all we wish to shew is, that a doctrine originating in prejudice, unsupported by rational theory, and appealing only to the *post hoc propter hoc* ground of support, is not entitled to be put forward as in its effects, parallel to, and equally successful with, ordinary medical treatment. It is perfectly true that

Dr. Forbes disbelieves the results of homœopathy, and considers them to depend upon *nature's agencies*, but he has exhausted much talent, and many pages, upon a development of its doctrines; he has favourably invited the attention of the public to those doctrines, and has invested them with an equal claim to attention as ordinary medicine, because he believes that in both cases the success depends upon nature's agency, and not upon the remedies exhibited. He is then very sceptical as to the efficacy of medicine, and as such he has had many prototypes. Happy indeed is it, that professional scepticism does not invalidate professional truth, and does not detract one atom from the great truths of nature,—viz., that certain remedies possess certain powers to produce certain effects, and that if we do not secure those effects, it is not the fault of the remedy, but of its misapplication.

The homœopathist advises, in acute disease, that the instinctive desires of the patient should be gratified in regard to food, drink, &c. Now, reasoning upon this subject, we should not be disposed to admit that the monitions of the nerves of any given organ, when perverted by acute malady, would be such, as in all probability to induce the sensorium to make choice of proper articles for food and drink. It very generally indeed happens, that this perversion induces a loathing of food, and this is excellent; but the thirst occasioned is frequently intense, and the choice of articles to allay this thirst is, in the great majority of instances, erroneous. Such is the fact. Take for instance a case of gastritis; the thirst is intense; and will the instinctive choice of fluids to allay this thirst, among the poorer classes, fall upon gum water, or barley water, or some such simple beverage?—will it not rather rest with intense desire upon wine, beer, or spirits and water? Let experience decide the question, and it must decide in favour of the fact, that alcoholic fluids will be sought for, and if so, not even an homœopathist would say, in gastritis, gratify the instinctive desire for wine.

Again, we are told, that seven-eighths of all chronic maladies are dependant upon constitutional itch,—that nature cannot possibly cure these maladies,—and that even homœopathy would fail, unless they were treated *anti-psorically*. It would be a waste of words and of time to attempt to show the fallacy of what the common sense of mankind must denounce as untrue, but it is based upon the same ground with all the other doctrines of this heresy,—viz., the *post hoc propter hoc* argument. The chronic malady is assumed to arise from psora,—it gets well under anti-psoric treatment, and therefore the thing is proven.* Of course unprejudiced

* It would seem that absurdity in this direction,—that is, absurdity directed by the *ad rem* object, has not yet reached its culminating point, since a new candidate for public favour, attended by its professors, its converts, its patients, and its cures, has just arisen also in Germany, in the doctrine of *Isopathy*, by which the disease of any organ is to be cured medicinally through the employment of the analogous organ of some healthy animal,—as for instance, stomach malady is to be cured by the patient being fed on the stomach of some healthy animal; and should this be extremely disagreeable to the patient, it is proposed by the originator of the doctrine, Dr. Hermann, to make tinctures from the said healthy organ, and thus to exhibit its concentrated essence.

professional men will not receive these dogmas, or attend to them, and all we wish to show is, the injustice of placing such irrational views by the side of rational medicine, and claiming for each the same value; for the value of each must be tested by its curative agency, and in both instances this is stated to be the same, and to consist in the simple efforts of nature.

It cannot fail forcibly to strike the mind of the reflective reader, that Dr. Forbes admits the claim of the doctrines of homœopathy to be founded "on grounds even superior to reason, viz.,—experience and experiment." Now it does astonish us, that our author should dignify blindfold prejudiced experiment, as a source of knowledge superior to reason, and that he should have dissociated the results of *experience from reason*, as if in such cases the one could be obtained without the other,—without reasoning upon the results of experiment, and grounding upon these, rational experience, or theory. To such a centrifugal influence from philosophy do great minds yield, when under the unperceived control of some favourite object,—some mentally cherished hypothesis.

The question of *regimen* presents itself for a few words of discussion. We are fully prepared to admit the importance of regimen generally in the cure of disease; and also that the success of homœopathy is dependent on the strictness of its regimenal rules, and its influence upon the nervous system of the patient. But in what respect does regimen differ from medicinal attention? Is not its object the same? Is it less irksome to the patient? Is it quicker and more certain in its agency? Are its sequences more effectual in the removal of disease and the restoration of health? Is it not notoriously the fact, that disorder is removed more certainly, more speedily, more efficaciously, by a combination of appropriate diet and medicine, rather than by medicine alone, or by regimen alone? If the prescriber be sufficiently skilled to select an appropriate diet, so will he be equally skilled to choose medicines appropriate to the prevailing indications.

We apprehend that in general terms it may be laid down, as essential objects in the treatment of disorder, to relieve and repress inordinate action,—to correct morbid action, and to sustain enfeebled power. We will admit that there are two ways in which these indications may be carried out,—indirectly and slowly by attention to regimen—directly and quickly by combining medicine with dietetic regulations. We may be in the infancy of medicine, and undoubtedly we have much of ignorance to deplore; but we do know, that the agency of certain medicines is to produce certain effects—effects upon which we may assuredly calculate, if the medicines have been judiciously prescribed. Equally, however, we are, in the infancy of organic chemistry, and of that knowledge, which would enable us to define with certainty, what alterations in the solids and fluids would inevitably follow the adoption of such a prescribed regimen. Our knowledge of the influence of each being equal, why are we to abjure, the safe, certain, speedy influence of medicine, in favour of the equally safe, less certain, and less speedy influence of diet? Not surely, because medicine has been injudiciously prescribed! This want of judgment

would operate against both; grand mistakes have been made,—oppression has been treated for feebleness, and the most inappropriate medicine and diet have been directed; but that mistakes have been made, that injudicious treatment has been adopted, that medicine has been wrongfully administered, that the most improper diet has been enjoined, is no reason why medicine is mischievous and diet useless, though it is a grand reason why further inquiries should be made into the operation of both classes of remedies. In order to be useful, regimen must be essentially medicine; and to assert that regimen is required for the cure of disease, is still further to assert that medicine is also required, because equally safe, and a more speedy and certain remedial agent.

We have left for a special reply, one of the above inquiries, viz., is the regimenal plan less irksome to the patient? As a general rule, we decidedly answer in the negative. There are a few persons who will be cured,—not by their altered diet, but by the attention they are constrained to give to such and such regimenal rules; but these are few, and form exceptions to the general rule, that it is less irksome to patients to take medicine than to be everlastingly thinking about their diet and regimen,—their peculiar breakfast—their baths,—their exercise, &c., &c. The greatest difficulty in practice is to regulate the diet and regimenal attentions of patients, the very things on which they are the most inclined to transgress, and which give them the greatest amount of disgust. Why then are we to abjure the powerful aid of medicine, and substitute for it the feeble influence of diet, which in acute disease might be weeks or even months in effecting an impression upon malady which has run its unheeded course in a few hours or days; and which in chronic malady is inert, and leaves the disease to advance more rapidly than can possibly be overtaken by its slow and measured steps? Regimen and medicine are both useful things; but they should never change places. Medicine possesses the great attribute of altering the conditions of the system,—and regimen is a powerful auxiliary, but should always be held as subsidiary.

We quite agree with Dr. Forbes, that we have no "*unequivocal* evidence to prove that medicine administered homœopathically, and in homœopathic doses, has a *positive* power of curing diseases," but we cannot fail to express our surprise at the wavering state of mind which is exhibited, even by this quotation. There is, it seems, evidence, but it is only not *unequivocal*; there is proof, but it is only not *positive*, in favour of this assertion; thus being almost in the same position with theoretical medicine in general, and then passing on to the assertion, that the evidence in favour of homœopathy is precisely the same in character, though, perhaps, not the same in *amount*, as that adduced by the defenders of allopathy. But surely Dr. Forbes must have been aware that evidence of precisely the same character, though not of the same amount, may be adduced in favour of many great remedies,—of charms, and of magnetism, all of which he would repudiate, and consider it as "*unwise and unphilosophical*," to entertain and enquire

into, though they were "matters immediately and nearly concerning human health, human happiness, and human life." We can but feel astonishment that infant homœopathy should be so gently dealt with, while aged practical medicine is laden with all the errors and infirmities, and ignorance, and thoughtlessness of many of its professors. We do think that it would have been far kinder in Dr. Forbes, had he endeavoured to treat the disorders of his brethren allopathically, and not exposed them to the cruel gaze and scorn of mankind.

Our author appears to rely much upon the reports of certain hospitals with regard to homœopathic treatment. We must confess our want of reliance upon statistical tables at any time; we are well aware that by a little clever tact in this confection, and by arranging one disease under the name of another, and by first taking up a prejudiced opinion, which the tables are to support by their results, statistical tables may be made to speak anything, and therefore must be considered more in the light of an exponent of the opinions of the investigator, than as a sure record of facts, and can only be valued in this scale. And if so, their value will be very small, when we consider the tendency of the human mind to imbibe prejudice, and its love of success, and its strong selfish desire to support its own views, that however much we may feel inclined to allow the principle that every system must be judged by its practical efficiency, we cannot admit the still further conclusion that statistical tables are an exponent of that efficiency. We do not therefore consider them "as substantiating the momentous fact, that all our ordinary curable diseases are cured in a fair proportion under the homœopathic method of treatment." Upon this subject we must ask for a great deal more of evidence upon a point which is perfectly incomprehensible to all our ordinary notices and knowledge of nature's operations, and which, as such, demands an amount of proof far exceeding that of any ordinary fact, and in the absence of this extraordinary proof we must assume that all these results have proceeded upon the *post hoc propter hoc* principle, upon which we shall now proceed to make a few remarks.

This principle which appears common to both systems, is, however, the only one in which there seems to be community, and we freely admit that it is a mode of reasoning far too common in our profession, and in the world. At the same time, we are not altogether to disregard even this method of argumentation, for we must recollect that such *may* be the fact; that it is only by the accumulation of *apparent* sequences that we are led to calculate on the return of similar effects from similar causes, and that it is only by finding this expectation generally realized that we acquire what is called experience. We say generally, for there will be always in operation, causes disturbing these expected agencies, and it is our business to ascertain these causes, in order that we may know the sources of failure. The ordinary source of failure exists in the injudicious or erroneous application of the remedy; and he will be the best practitioner who is most accurately acquainted with these disturbing agencies, and who, therefore, best knows how to obviate and avoid them. We quite

believe in the folly of employing a novel remedy for some important malady, and because the patient has recovered, loudly proclaiming that he has been saved by the agency of the said remedy. But if this remedy shall have been repeatedly exhibited under similar circumstances, very many times, in different places, and by a great variety of individuals, and identical effects shall have been produced, making all due allowance for the modifications induced by peculiarity of constitution, those modifications being always according to the constitutional expectancy, then we should say that the number of *post hoc* phenomena would enable us to profit by the facts, and with the aid of reason and experience, to pronounce that these are also, so far as we can see, *propter hoc*; and at any rate we are justified in expecting similar results from a like practice. And should we be disappointed in this expectation, we have no right philosophically to infer that our first reasoning was erroneous, but only that there has been some defective link in the chain, which has escaped our observation; and that we have actually prescribed the remedy, under circumstances, not suited for its administration. The error has consisted not in the defective power of the remedy,—not in its want of adaptation to peculiar forms of morbid action, but in our having omitted to weigh well some complication, the influence of which we have estimated too lightly, or it has been altogether concealed from our sight. There are a great variety of phenomena which we are justified in expecting, but for the recurrence of which we have no other reasonable ground for expectancy than that they have always followed similar attendant circumstances; and there can be no just reason why we may not adopt the same methods in medicine, provided that we give a sufficient time for the development of ample experience.

(To be continued.)

SHORT NOTES OF THE OPINIONS AND PRACTICE OF THE LATE JOHN PEARSON, ESQ., F.R.S., ON SYPHILITIC DISEASE.*

By W. S. OKE, M.D., Physician to the Royal South Hants Infirmary.

Lues in Children.—Children are often seen affected with syphilis from different causes:—

1st. By the application of the virus to a part devoid of cuticle—an excoriated lip may take it from a diseased nipple.

2dly. From attempts made to have connection with them.

3dly. From the mother being affected with the disease.

When a child is affected with lues, the symptoms are not different to those in adults. It is not uncommon to find chancres and gonorrhœa in young females from the attempts of some brutal men who have entertained the vulgar and absurd notion that connection with virgins gets rid of the disease.

* Continued from page 204.