WHAT OUR ASSOCIATION MIGHT DO.

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It is impossible for the most superficial reader of the works given to the world during the last ten years by such men as Budd, Paget, Hughes Bennett, West, Jenner, and Walshe, to avoid the gratifying conclusion that a great change for the better has taken place in the mode of dealing with medical inquiries. The day of medical hero-worship is gone by. Opinions are valued only in proportion to the facts on which they rest. The facts themselves are jealously scrutinised. What Professor A. B. *thinks*, is replaced by what Professor A. B. *has proved*. What *may be*, is neglected for *what is*. There is more of scientific candour than formerly. Working men in science are not afraid to avow their ignorance on given points, and seek not to cloak it in a cloud of verbiage. A metaphysical style of stating a fact is no longer mistaken for an explanation of it. Facts alone are allowed to dogmatise. The generalisation of facts is more cautious, and in the same degree more trustworthy than of yore.

In all this there is much of hope. In proportion as medicine is rendered more exact, in proportion as we can make use of physical aids in our practical investigations, and furnish physical proof of morbid action, and of the effects of treatment, will mystery disappear, scientific attainments receive their due, and quackery lessen. To percussion, the stethoscope, the tape, the spirometer, the chest-measurer, the balance, the test-tube, and the speculum, our obligations are great. These, however, are but the means. The spirit to use them is owing to the general change in philosophical investigation which has taken place in all branches of science. Nature is everywhere asked to interpret herself. Man having too long tried without her aid in vain. Content with bepraising the inductive method and its Great Introducer, we have too generally "known the right, and yet the wrong pursued." How far Nature will reply to judicious questioning, the results obtained by Faraday in physics, and by Louis and Jenner in medicine, sufficiently attest.

Let the reader refer to any statements made by these men. They bear on their very face the impress of truth and honesty. Let him then seek amongst writers on any variety of quackery for statements in like manner obviously and self-evidently true and honest. The search will be vain. The counterfeit coin has not the ring of the true metal. Even the most credulous non-medical reader of a homœopathic work, for example, can feel no intuitive conviction that what he reads is true. Hardihood of assertion may deceive him into thinking that the statements may be true, and that their writer may himself believe them. But he can see no proof of it, nor feel any decided conviction. He reads

such statements as this—"Let it ever be remembered, *purging is poisoning*," (Epps on Homœopathy, 5th Edn., p. 116,) and remembers how salutary the poisoning of a black draught, or of a visit to Cheltenham, has sometimes proved. And such "facts" as this:—

"A patient of mine, (Epps *loquitur*), the Baron de Bode, was attacked with a severe illness in the year 1842. He was evidently in great danger. Among his symptoms was one of a feeling of a bruised condition of the chest, affecting his breathing, producing severe pain on taking a full breath, and attended with excessive prostration. I inquired anxiously whether he had received any wound, having been a general during the continental wars, and engaged in many battles. He said no; but on reflecting, remembered the following circumstance:—As he was sitting on horseback, watching the movements of the army engaged in battle, with his aid-de-camp at his side, a cannon ball passed above his horse's head and before his breast, and taking the aide-de-camp in its course, made, to use the Baron's own expression, "a complete rag-fair of him," cleaving his body asunder. The Baron experienced a shock, and his horse was so affected that he shivered, so to speak, as to go upon his knees. The excitement of battle banished all the rest, and he had not thought of the circumstance until I had thus brought the event back to his memory. I forthwith ordered arnica internally, and an arnica poultice externally, and the change was so rapid as to convert to homœopathy a most intelligent (!) friend of the Baron's, who had been watching the case with intense anxiety; the more so, because having no faith in homœopathy, he had the greatest fears on behalf of his friend." (*Ibid.* p. 207.)

Can we wonder that amongst the entire number of homœopaths in Great Britain there is but one who, before his seduction, had given to the profession any evidence of being a correct observer, and not one who had proved himself to be a judicious and trustworthy reasoner—not one who possessed, to any extent, the confidence of the profession? What single addition to the facts of science (leaving, for the sake of the argument, therapeutics out of the question) has any one of the homœopaths made? We know of none. New modes of dealing with our patients, as well as of prescribing, they have shown us; but that, like the rest, only in matters of lucre, not of science. A certain northern homœopathist, for instance, is said to be Ambidexter in the use of his weapons; being ready to treat a patient either homœopathically or according to the precepts of rational medicine, at the pleasure of the applicant. He, no doubt, feelingly appreciates the advice—

"Reni;
Ecce, si possis, sed quocunque modo, rem."

We have dealt unfairly with true medicine, by suffering it to be designated allopathy. Allopathy and homœopathy,—each is a "pathy." How are the public to decide that the latter is anything meaner than one of the many medical doctrines on which differences of opinion are, and were more formerly than at present, entertained? Why should we disgrace medi-

cise by giving it a designation merely antithetical to homœopathy, as if the two were parallel but different? As well might we christen our science afresh in special contra-distinction to chrono-thermalism, hygiëism, mesmerism, or Parr's pillism. We ought not to speak of homœopathy as being medicine in any sense. We ought not to forget, if the novelty-seeking part of the public sometimes do, that rational medicine comprises the use of all the means for the treatment of disease which experience has sanctioned,—whether by administering large, moderate, or very minute doses, or no doses at all; by helping the disease on in its normal course (*similia similibus*), or by opposing its tendencies and progress (*contraria contrariis*);—by leaving it alone and watching (*expectant treatment*), or by supporting the powers of life whilst the disease runs its natural course;—by depletion or transfusion;—by heat or cold;—outward applications or internal remedies;—by exercise or quiescence, excitement or repose, strong measures or mild;—by remedies which chime in with a theory, or with no theory;—in a word, medicine comprehends the useful application of *all* the truths, whatever their nature or bearing upon theory, which the experience of all-time has established to be serviceable in the treatment of disease. Truth, wherever it is found, if it relates to healing, belongs to it. With homœopathy it has, and can have, no connexion whatever. Let the term "allopathy," then, be disused. If medicine stand in need of a special name to distinguish it from its spurious competitors, let it be spoken of as rational medicine, or eclectic medicine, or be styled by any name that shall not place it, in sound even, on the same level with the most subtle, extensive, and Hydra-headed species of charlatanism that ever existed.

As a fashionable flag, under which a practitioner may prescribe anything or nothing, provided he avoid effects too marked and immediate,—under which he may gain the credit due to nature, whether unaided or secretly aided by medicines in appreciable doses, without appearing to the patient to be responsible for future chronic disease originating in neglected active disorder, homœopathy will probably outlast many of the other forms of quackery. In all impostures upon the public, the greatest ever succeeds the best. But truth must, in the order of things, eventually prevail; indeed, in innumerable instances the duped have already seen the fallacy which misled them. And equally certain is the converse, that nothing but truth can ultimately maintain its ground. Consider how few of our own legitimate works on medicine have lived, or are destined to live, in comparison with the legion forgotten, or to be forgotten. The ephemeral book is a book more of opinions than facts. It may be true, but it contains not the proof of its truth. The book to live contains minute facts honestly observed, which once proved are true for ever.

We want more facts still, and fewer mere opinions; as much true theory as may be, so long as it is sufficiently substantiated by facts, and less of unsupported speculation. Even for the mere advancement of our profession, and with it of ourselves, above competition

with quackery, truth must be our polar star. There is but one mode of attaining it,—by work. And do we not work; and have we not worked? Does any other profession work so hard for its daily bread? Does any other profession present so many energetic labourers, striving by night and day, for years unknown it may be, to gain an honourable scientific position? Is it not work for one labourer, for sixteen years, to note down constantly minute observations in auscultation, in order to distinguish physical signs as they are in nature, from physical signs as they have existed in the imagination? Is it not work for another to spend from four to eight hours a day, barring the time of certain illness from contracting fever, in minutely examining and noting down cases of continued fever, in order to decide, once for all, what are the facts concerning it, as it at present exists? Or, whether is it the easier—we will not ask, whether is it the more lucrative—to advertise capabilities as an aurist, or to dissect and examine minutely fifteen hundred organs of hearing, to distinguish the facts from the guesses concerning the pathology of the internal ear? Truly, no other profession furnishes so many individual hard workers.

The first thing which every member of the Association might do is, to avoid desecrating his noble science by the use of a false and undignified nickname.

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We publish at a further page a letter from Dr. ROBERTSON, late Assistant-Surgeon to the Military Lunatic Asylum at Yarmouth, which touches upon a subject of considerable importance to the interests of Military Medical Officers. We may be thought to take a very strange position, and shall doubtless earn for ourselves the indignation of every Martinet; but nevertheless, do not shrink from stating our opinion, that it would be far more conducive to the welfare of the service, if medical promotion were made to depend upon merit, and not mere seniority. The adherence of the present custom must, in the nature of things, be detrimental to the professional character of the Army Surgeon, as it leads him to be content with mediocrity of acquirements, for the plain reason, that the greatest superiority in knowledge, does not one whit advance his prospects; that, in fact, the most incompetent persons may, as opportunity offers, be, as a matter of course, placed over the head of the most talented and industrious officer if a few years his junior. This is the gravamen of Dr. ROBERTSON's charge against