

MISCELLANEOUS.

Homœopathy in Australia.

[The champions of Homœopathy in Melbourne have been called on to stand up for the good cause, and a very pretty quarrel has lately been carried on in print between the partisans of the opposing schools. We have not space, nor would it interest our readers to report here the whole of the controversy; but we may make a few extracts to show how very like our opponents at the antipodes are to those nearer us; and how well our homœopathic friends at the other side of the world can hold their own against the attacks of their foes. The first document we shall present is a leader from the *Argus*, the most influential paper in Melbourne.]

It will be very readily understood that we should not make the *Australian Medical Journal* a subject of criticism in these columns without some weighty and imperative reason. The periodical in question is not a very ambitious one, but, except on one or two occasions, it has evinced every sign of being conducted with sobriety and good taste. To the profession itself it should serve a very useful purpose. Though the local field for medical skill is necessarily a confined one, and the chances of medical fame are proportionally few, an intelligent medium of professional intercommunication can scarcely be without a beneficial influence. Beyond its own circle such an organ can have no interest, except on those rare occasions when it courts public attention by the discussion of subjects that are co-extensive with the public welfare. Such an occasion, it seems to us, is now offered by a paper in the current number, entitled "Homœopathy in High Places." An extract will explain the circumstances which gave rise to it:—

"The following letter which we have received from a gentleman holding a distinguished position in the profession at Sydney, speaks for itself:—

"I send you a copy of the *Empire* newspaper, to draw your attention to an appointment that has been made by our Government, unknown before in any part of Her Majesty's dominions,

viz., that of a practitioner of Homœopathy to the important position of visiting medical officer to the Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum; and, further, the ordinary visitors (this being an extra appointment) have never taken any notice of it in the way of remonstrance, or otherwise. Now, sir, I think it but right that such an indignity cast upon the profession should be freely commented upon by the medical press; and as we possess no medical periodical in this colony, I take the liberty of drawing your attention to the circumstance, in the hope you will give us a little of your mind on this subject in your next issue. I have ascertained that the appointment has been made. I may also inform you that our present Minister for Lands, although not a medical man, got his living by this homœopathic system, before his present elevation. Our leading journal, the *Sydney Morning Herald* is so tainted with this system, that they refused insertion of a letter on the subject, since published in the *Empire*. The name of the person appointed is Dr. Brereton, the Turkish-bath man."

The writer of the paper, upon this, comments to the following effect:

"While, however, it is impossible not to be conscious of the most unqualified disgust at witnessing this flagrant defiance of propriety, it is certainly proper to ask what course the other medical visitors of the Tarban Creek Asylum propose to adopt. Dr. Douglas, Dr. Boyd, and Mr. Alloway have deservedly enjoyed the esteem and confidence of their professional brethren for many years, and, in order to maintain this regard, there seems to be no course open to them save that of immediately resigning their appointments. Their doing so would be the most dignified mode of indicating their own sense of the affront that has been offered them, and it would very fitly represent the general feeling entertained by the profession on the subject of the monstrous imposture, which, singularly enough, finds its most powerful advocates among the educated and otherwise intelligent.

"We shall be glad to hear that this course has been adopted. It is needless to assure the three gentlemen who have been so pointedly insulted, that the sympathy of the profession in Victoria is entirely theirs, and that the prompt response it is their obvious duty to make, will be hailed by the most cordial and unanimous approval. The increasing social influence of the medical profession throughout Australia demands that it should pronounce

decisively and unhesitatingly when the common rights are invaded or its status is attempted to be injured. The apostacy of homœopathy is so exceptional that it would be an easy thing to bring pressure to bear upon *any government that dared* to defy the opinion and outrage the feelings of its faithful disciples of medicine, and we trust there will be no hesitation in making this power strongly felt and promptly acknowledged."

And here we consider that the interposition of the public press is called for. What has happened in New South Wales may happen in Victoria. When a government has *dared*, it is high time to inquire into the nature of the abuse which has provoked the threat. The inquiry may possibly expose the insignificance both of the abuse and the threat; but in the abstract that is no reason for superseding the investigation.

And, at the outset, we would have it distinctly understood that we are not pleading the cause of any particular school of medicine, or any particular set of practitioners. We do not profess to hold the balance between rival systems; and for our purpose it is not necessary that we should. In our position as public critics we are strictly neutrals—neither heterodox nor orthodox, neither homœopaths nor allopaths. The controversy between the globule and the pill will go on in spite of anything we could say to allay it. All we would ask is, that while it does go on, while the question is still in its controversial stage, it should be conducted on both sides in a spirit of fairness and liberality.

And, after, all, what is the outrage that, even in perspective, has stirred the revolutionary bile of our reviewer to talk the language of treason and threat?—the appointment of a qualified medical man to office, who happens to be the disciple of a school that "singular enough, finds its most powerful advocates among the educated and otherwise intelligent." Qualifications for patronage under a colonial government, it is true, have never been otherwise than of the most anomalous and eccentric character, but this is the first time to our knowledge that it has been laid down as a rule of conduct to a colonial government that "education and intelligence" are disqualifying. The principle is somewhat at variance with the eternal fitness of things, but it must be acknowledged to explain many an otherwise inexplicable phenomena. Perhaps a more auspicious moment might have been chosen for its enunciation than that in which "the increasing social influence

of the medical profession throughout Australia" is insisted upon. But to return to the point in discussion. Is "the apostacy of homœopathy so exceptional" that the appointment of "a homœopathic practitioner to the important position of visiting medical officer to the Tarban Lunatic Asylum" becomes a matter for serious remonstrance in the interest of the public as well as that of the profession? We should be sorry indeed to prejudice a controversy, but it is our business and duty, where it affects the general interests of the public, to add such comment as may bring it to a speedy and satisfactory issue. The thing to be demonstrated, then, is, is homœopathy fatal to the safety of the community—in other words, is homœopathy an unsafe system of medicine? This question, we willingly confess at once, we are not prepared to answer from any qualitative or quantitative analysis of any homœopathic medicament. That must be left to the chemists. As rational men, but non-scientific, we must be content to accept the testimony of experience to ground our judgment on. And here we are forced to acknowledge that such experience is not in favour of the "monstrous imposture" theory. Letting alone the evidence advanced by its detractors that "this monstrous imposture, singularly enough, finds its most powerful advocates among the educated and otherwise intelligent," there is large and abundant proof forcing itself on the attention that homœopathy has, at all events, claims, if not to respect, at least to that indulgence which is usually granted to every branch of science devoted to the benefit of mankind, to the relief of its physical sufferings, and the amelioration of its dependent moral distempers. Homœopathy appears to possess all those credentials which Bacon tells us a system to be scientific must have. Like Old Medicine, it has its schools and its professors, numbers its hospitals and asylums, can show its organised body of faith, and its organised formulæ of practice. It has, too—and this we are forced to own is a paramount testimony in its favour—the test of success to adduce in its support. It can point to statistics which tell in unmistakable language that it has at least fulfilled its mission on earth, and healed the sick. Apparently courting investigation, it can point to illustrious names in science of every department, who have investigated it, and believed. All this, though it by no means confirms the truth, as it is called, of homœopathy, is yet very strong *primâ facie* evidence that it is not what is meant by a "monstrous imposture." When it is

taken into consideration, in addition to all this, that its merits have won their own way, have won consent, in spite of its apparent anomalies—that the adoption or rejection of its tenets was purely a matter of free-will, of individual taste or individual temperament, it must be acknowledged that it cannot be altogether a thing of demerit. Mankind do not choose their doctors as they choose their tailors, from a comparatively idle preference for which they can give no reason based on conviction. They adopt this medicine and reject that, generally, because the adoption or rejection is a question of vital interest to them, which they are called upon to decide with a view to the gravest consequences. A matter of life or death is not a question of æsthetics, and we may be pretty sure that the selection of this or that system is not a mere whim. In the very nature of things, then, we are forced to own that the success of homœopathy, where it has attained it, is *bonâ fide*, and that it has attained success, because upon trial it has merited it.

Having assured ourselves of this much, we might, as far as public apprehension is concerned, fairly dismiss the case. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The eating has taken place, and the public is content to know that no evil consequences have followed.

We have, of course, nothing to concern us in the appointment of Dr. Brereton to the Sydney Hospital. He may be an eligible man for the post, or he may not. All that we undertook to show, in the cause of justice and logic, was, that it does not follow that he would be an eligible man if he were an allopathist, or that he must necessarily be ineligible, and therefore treated in a spirit of illiberality, because he is a homœopathist. Such a spirit, indeed, has generally pursued the progressists of society, and, to a certain extent and in a certain form, its exhibition is useful. A well-organised opposition to truth, moral or scientific, has invariably given it an impulse, and if the pretended truth was only error in disguise, it has invariably exposed it. At the same time, there is a principle which should control opposition, and regulate the demeanour of opponents.

That principle involves fairness and toleration, a willingness to hear argument, and to admit the value of proof. The violation of this principle, we are sorry to say, has been singularly characteristic of the opposition offered to homœopathy. As far as we can understand, the illiberality we refer to has originated not so much

out of personal antipathy to homœopathy in particular, as in an imperfect apprehension of the nature of medicine as a science. Medicine is after all purely an experimental science, and in that character is open to reform, and exposed to revolution. Having been the closest and most exclusive of the sciences, it is easy to see how its adherents should be slow to realise such a condition, and impatient of admitting its operation.

For the rest, this is not the first occasion that a homœopathist has occupied a post of public trust; and since there is nothing to prove in the abstract that homœopathy unfits a man for the discharge of his moral obligations to his neighbour or the public, there can be no objection, on public grounds at least, to any such appointment. Until such proofs could be offered, proofs of incapacity, moral or legal, any objections that could be made could only be urged in a factious spirit—in the old spirit, in fact, of persecution and conservatism—the spirit which imprisoned Galileo for his astronomy, vilified Jenner for his vaccination, and Harvey for his circulation, scouted Laennec for his stethoscope, laughed at Fulton for his steam-ship, and denounced the lightning-kite of Franklin. Hahnemann may or may not be a philosopher; but, on glancing at the fate of philosophers, the treatment he has received, we are bound to confess, is strong presumptive evidence in his favour.

This vigorous article drew forth the following meek question from a partisan of the allopathic school.

What is Homœopathy?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

Sir,—In your issue of this day you say, “In the very nature of things, then, we are forced to own that the success of homœopathy, where it has attained it, is *bond fide*, and that it has attained success because upon trial it has merited it.” Will you allow me to ask what is homœopathy? I have for some years vainly endeavoured to find an answer to this question.

Yours, &c.,

MEDICUS.

SOUTH YARRA; July 9th.

[“A monstrous imposture that, singularly enough, finds its most powerful advocates among the educated, and otherwise

intelligent.”—*Vide Australian Medical Journal*, July, 1864, p. 219].

To this simple query a number of replies succeeded; we shall present our readers with that of our old contributor, Dr. Madden, who, many of them are aware, having gone to Melbourne for his health, is now the leading homœopathic practitioner there.

Sir,—In your issue of to-day “*Medicus*,” of South Yarra, asks the above question, and adds, “I have for some years vainly endeavoured to find an answer to this question.” “*Medicus*” has certainly been most unfortunate in selecting his sources of information, or he would long ago have obtained a clear and distinct answer to his query. We who profess homœopathy make no secret either of our practice or our principles, and our accredited periodicals, more especially *The British Journal of Homœopathy* and *The North American Journal of Homœopathy*, have assiduously promulgated our doctrine during more than twenty years. It is a pity, however, that an inquirer who “has endeavoured for many years” to obtain an answer should be still kept in the dark, and I would therefore inform him that “homœopathy consists essentially in treating diseases by medicines capable of producing upon the healthy body symptoms resembling those of the disease to be cured.” When Hahnemann first enunciated his well-known formula, “*Similia similibus curantur*,” he said nothing about doses or diet, theories of disease, or such like, but simply asserted the above law of cure. Hahnemann, however, lived more than forty years after his announcement of homœopathy, and during that period he added a great many theories, which have become so mixed up with the original formula, that many superficial inquirers have concluded that they essentially belong to the doctrine, and, in controversy, have repeatedly declared that any homœopathist who deviates from the latest teaching of Hahnemann is acting dishonestly. But, Sir, it must never be forgotten that homœopathy is one thing and Hahnemannism is another. There are very many practitioners who are staunch homœopathists who never were Hahnemannians, in the strict sense of the term. Homœopathy is simply a law of cure—a rule for the selection of drugs. Hahnemannism adds to this the doctrine of the infinitesimal dose, and a peculiar theory of chronic diseases, and a variety of other dogmas, all of which may be very good, but are

most unquestionably not essential to homœopathy. Let "Medicus," therefore, understand that *treatment by similars* is the essence of homœopathy, and that every other assertion, by Hahnemann or his followers, may be accepted or refused by the homœopathic practitioner without disturbing the purity of his practice.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

HENRY R. MADDEN, M.D.

MELBOURNE; July 11.

Another allopathic champion now took up the quarrel in the following strain :

Sir,—Will you allow me to make a few remarks on the subject of homœopathy, believing myself to be at least as free from prejudice as my contemporaries ?

Why is it that the term "allopathy" is so frequently used by the followers of Hahnemann as a sort of nickname for all who do not give drugs according to the theory of *similia similibus curantur* ? Why is it they are perpetually sneering at the "old system ?" I have never met nor ever heard of any one in modern times who taught or practised "allopathy" as a system; and what they refer to as the "old system" is about as often met with in England as a stage-coach, or any other relic of antiquity. If to be an old system is a term of reproach, homœopathy deserves the imputation far more than rational medicine, as taught in the schools of London and Paris; for the former has run on in the same old groove for the last sixty-seven years, since the days of Hahnemann, while the latter has been yearly reforming itself, and taking higher ground. If any sect can be rightly accused of dogmatism and illiberality, it is the homœopaths. They fell down and worshipped this idol of "like cures like" last century, and remain prostrate before it to-day, and shut their ears to all arguments against it. These are the words of Hahnemann, the great priest of this faith—"He who does not walk on exactly the same line with me, who diverges, if it be but the breadth of a straw, to the right or left, is an apostate and a traitor, and with him I will have nothing to do!" Rational medicine, on the other hand, does not tie itself down to any fixed law or dogma (knowing that the nature of disease and the variety of constitution utterly preclude the possibility of any fixed law in the administration of