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BY

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CLEVELAND HOMŒOPATHIC HOSPITAL COLLEGE, FEB.
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MR. PRESIDENT,—LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.—We are here assembled to witness the advent into professional life of those who are to-day the recipients of the latest honors of this Institution. To them, this day will be forever memorable, as marking an epoch in the life henceforth dedicated to the relief of human suffering; to us, as well as to those who are to receive their ministry, the day is equally auspicious, to all, the hour is pregnant with lessons of instruction. There is a law of compensation here as elsewhere. Just to the extent that man values life above all earthly possessions, is the obligation here assumed greater than that undertaken by the neophyte in other avocations, and to the same extent does man's obligation to the true physician rise above a mere market value.

Notwithstanding there have been laws enacted for the suppression of quackery, in spite of professional caste and standing attached to medical degrees, there are no doubt ignorant and unprincipled men in the medical profession, and yet if people were more in the habit of distinguishing between the charlatan and the true physician there would undoubtedly be fewer lives sacrificed to charlatany.

I am not certain that the law which provides that the medical practitioner shall have previously pursued the

study of medicine, attended medical lectures, and graduated at an institution legally authorized to confer the degree of Doctor in Medicine, ought not provide that those who require the services of the physician should also have been put through a preparatory process, to enable them not only to take better care of their health, but to judge also of the qualifications of their medical advisers.

If in our common schools, the time devoted to the dead languages, and some other departments of learning, were spent in the study of anatomy, physiology, and the laws of health, there would be fewer impositions practiced on society, and a notable decrease in mortality.

This demand for a more general diffusion of knowledge on these important subjects is being more and more realized, although but little definite action has as yet been taken. In the meantime, society seeks protection by guarding the entrance to the medical profession, and by rendering the initiation of the neophyte solemn and imposing. The standard of medical education is constantly being raised by the profession, and thus man's bodily welfare is being better secured.

The labors of the physician for the welfare of society being thus recognized and his relation thereto, one of reciprocal action, and mutual dependence, it necessarily follows, that whatever concerns the interest of the one, is of equal importance to the other. It will be readily admitted that the knowledge possessed by the physician for the relief of human misery, should be as ample and complete as possible, and coming as it does, from a great variety of sources,—in fact from almost every conceivable source—it follows, that whatever retards or hinders human progress in any department, hinders also the advancement of medical knowledge.

More especially is this true in relation to scientific advancement, and the advancement of science; for not only is the medical profession indebted to science for its most valued possessions, but the amelioration of the condition of man everywhere and his elevation above the condition of the barbarian, is due also to the advancement of science.

I have therefore chosen as the subject of the present address, THE CONSIDERATION OF THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES WHICH IMPEDE THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.

The progress of science has been from the beginning, a conflict with old opinions and prejudices. Men cling tenaciously to old opinions, and prejudices, and are loth to give them up, for things settled by long use, which, if not absolutely good, at least *fit well together*.

But science regards neither age, nor time, and ever prefers *new-born truth*, to *gray-haired falsehood*.

However respectable error may appear, whether it be clothed in kingly garb, or priestly cowl, it contains within itself the elements of its own destruction. Science is its destroyer; Science which demonstrates, analyses, or dissipates; Science which regards neither friend nor foe, but which as firm as fate, and as unyielding as the sphynx, refuses allegiance to anything but TRUTH.

Science is the hand-maid of truth. She is not a deity to be blindly worshipped, for she is herself a worshipper at the shrine of law.

She places evidence above all human authority, and insists, that in taking evidence, there shall be neither hindrance nor oppression.

Time and again has science overthrown the idols of superstition and ignorance, and erected in their stead the altar of truth, only to see her advocates perish by the hand of the people whom she sought to elevate.

We seldom fall into greater folly than the habit of prejudging matters concerning which we know nothing; passion, prejudice and human authority, are placed in the balance, where it is possible only, that fact and evidence can have weight.

Nearly all the topics upon which men to-day wage bitter and hostile warfare, are simply questions of evidence, for lack of which, the most that can be definitely determined, is that *from the evidence adduced*, the *probability* is thus, or so, and that future investigations shall not reverse judgement. No one has authority to affirm; in fact judgement is continually being thus reversed.

The court of appeal is always the enlightened judgement of succeeding generations. Few decisions of one age are received as final by the next, and truth will forever claim a new trial, so long as it remains under the law of error.

The most positive opinions regarding a given subject, are not generally entertained by those in possession of most evidence concerning it. He who positively asserts most is not generally he who knows most.

The weak side of an argument is often fortified, with the array of authority by which it is supported, and thus obtains the sanction of a majority of mankind. But when all this fails, and it is urged that the evidence seems to point in another direction, and both the right and the duty of free and earnest inquiry is urged, we are warned that in that other direction, lie quicksands of destruction, and that only "infidels" and "materialists" dare go that way; that it is downright presumption on our part, to undertake the investigation of questions already so comfortably settled. The fact is entirely overlooked that time has only added a little soil, and made a little firmer the position, now denominated respectable,

while beneath it lie hidden the forbidden ground and slippery places of a former generation.

When we reflect how small a thing has often unsettled and revolutionized nearly every department of human knowledge, we shall be careful in taking for granted, positions in the establishment of which evidence is not even claimed as a factor. The swinging of a lamp, the falling of an apple, the ligation of a blood vessel, have led to mighty results.

“Who would have believed,” says Dr. Draper, “that the twitching of a frog’s leg, in the experiments of Galvani, would give rise, in a very few years, to the establishment beyond all question of the compound nature of water, separating its constituents from one another—would lead to the deflagration and dissipation in a vapor, of metals that can hardly be melted in a furnace—would show that the solid earth we tread upon is an oxide—yield new metals light enough to swim upon water, and even seem to set it on fire—produce the most brilliant of all artificial lights, rivalling, if not excelling in its intolerable splendor, the noontide sun—would occasion a complete revolution in Chemistry, compelling that science to accept new ideas, and even a new nomenclature, that it would give us the power of making magnets capable of lifting more than a ton, cast a light on that riddle of ages, the pointing of the mariner’s compass north and south, and explain the mutual attraction and repulsion of magnetic needles—that it would enable us to form exquisitely in metal casts all kinds of objects of art, and give workmen the means of performing silvering and gilding without risk to their health, that it would suggest to the evil disposed the forging of bank notes, the sophisticating of jewelry, and be invaluable in the uttering of false coinage, that it would carry the messages of commerce and friendship

instantaneously across continents, or under oceans, and 'waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.'

"Yet this is only a part of what Galvani's experiment carried out by modern methods, has actually done."

In latter times we have the discovery by Count Rumford of the mechanical equivalent of heat and motion, and the resultant principle of correlation and conservation of force.

The apparatus employed by Count Rumford was even more simple than the frog's leg used by Galvani, and yet it would require volumes to record the revolutions in nearly every department of knowledge that have resulted therefrom.

The value of an idea, the estimate of a discovery, evidently depends upon the relation which it bears to the welfare and happiness of man; consequently the discovery of laws, which, while they have a strictly scientific value, are also related to the every-day affairs of life, is of inestimable benefit to mankind, and yet they are not generally so regarded. On the contrary, we shall find, in relation to most scientific discoveries, the breadth of the relation to man's highest interests, the measure of the opposition with which it is met. Men of science are apt to regard the discoveries announced by other scientists with great complacency at least, well knowing that angry denial cannot devour like the fires of the crucible, and that "bell, book and candle" can never exorcise the spirit of truth.

So long as the investigation of force was confined in its application to the physical universe, it met with comparatively little opposition, but, no sooner was the inquiry raised, "What relation does this principle of molecular motion bear to organic life?" than the time-worn, blood-stained banners of opposition were unfurled; and when, step by step, the investigation proceeded from

the life of plants to that of animals, a threatening sound, like distant thunder, came up from the host arrayed against the new doctrine, but when the investigation proceeded from the body to the brain of man, and both were declared to be governed by one universal law, originated by the Infinite Father "when the morning stars sang together," the scene could not be mistaken for "the sons of God shouting for joy," but reminded one of that other army, once driven, howling, from celestial abodes into outer darkness.

Truth must indeed be immortal to survive the hostility of man.

The discoveries to which I have referred were but the enunciation of nature's laws, simple in statement, mighty in result.

Hahnemann's discovery was of a similar nature, and has met the same opposition.

The announcement that the *law of similars* is a law of nature, and a part, therefore, of the organic nature of things, and that drugs administered upon this principle for the relief of the sick, produced definite results, and a decrease of mortality, would seem to be the greatest boon to suffering humanity.

I have already referred to the manner in which scientific men regard scientific discoveries, viz: by submitting them to rigid and impartial examination. But medical men as a class do not generally so treat medical discoveries. Whenever ridicule has failed to silence the new doctrine, they have sought to crush it out by persecuting and ostracising its advocates.

The discovery of Hahnemann has met the opposition of the sectarian, and its advocate the ridicule of all classes, while it seldom seems to have occurred to its opposers that the surest way of exploding the so-called "humbug" is to submit the law to the usual scientific

test. Even among homœopathic physicians the discovery seemed not to have been made that open and free discussion is ever the handmaid of truth, and that evidence is superior to authority.

But silencing forever the orators of the American Institute will not prevent a full examination—even by physicians—of “Man’s true relation to nature,” any more than the murder of the innocents thwarted the mission of the Messiah.

The science of medicine, in the old school, like some promissory notes, is valuable chiefly on account of its collaterals, for when we have assigned to anatomy, physiology, botany, chemistry, and the like, those facts which are collateral to medicine, but which belong specially to these several departments, we shall find little remaining save conjecture and contradictory experience. At the only point where this so-called science of medicine is related to man’s bodily welfare, viz : therapeutics or the treatment of disease, the whole superstructure crumbles like ropes of sand, leaving the unhappy victim of disease too often a prey to experiment, caprice, ignorance or cupidity, and not unfrequently to all combined. The question may well be asked, is Homœopathy destined to endure, or will it follow in the wake of the thousand-and-one isms, and pathies, which have preceded it? As a separate school of medicine it will exist just so long as the necessities and abuses which called it into existence remain, but its cardinal principle, its law of cure, is one of nature’s eternal entities. All else in the new system is subsidiary to this law. The medical man has the power if he have but the will to select, not by guess or hap-hazard, but with scientific exactness, the remedy for our many infirmities; and yet, strange as it may appear, many of the men foremost in the advocacy of this law, are also

foremost in opposition to those principles to which they must inevitably look for its verification.

The question to be decided in the investigation of any new doctrine, is not whether it accords with the prevailing sentiment of mankind, nor is its conformity to the interpretation put upon other revelations, whether of religion or science, a matter of the first importance. The question is not one of likes or dislikes, to be settled by consulting the feelings, as to what we would prefer. The sole question to be determined is *whether it be true*, and this question is to be decided by the weight of evidence brought to its support. The advancement of science is constantly impeded by allowing authority and prejudice to weigh against evidence, and by the selfishness with which we view, and the reluctance with which we yield, our cherished opinions, and when we seek to force these opinions upon others against their convictions, and against evidence, and to prevent the full investigation of all evidence bearing upon the the question involved, by terrorism and ostracism, we are guilty of most unwarrantable assumption and arrogance. Truth is ever modest, and though she may be brave she is never arrogant. If, therefore, in the legitimate pursuit of our investigations, we are warned that the tendency of such inquiry is toward the antipodes of heaven, we have but to reflect that he who affirms this of investigations concerning which he may know nothing, and who appears to be on such familiar terms with the will and judgment of the Almighty, is a man like ourselves, without patent or vicegerent authority, and sometimes without common honesty.

Since truth is truth, and nothing else but truth, he who seeks it diligently, whether in rock or blade of grass, in body or brain of man, is quite as likely to recognize it when found, and wherever found, as he

who having his mind fixed on the conceited image of himself till his pur-blind eyes can see nothing else, imagines the Creator of worlds to be fashioned after his own puny pattern. That grown up men and women should be frightened by bug-bears, which certainly would have been powerless in days of pinafores and short frocks, seems strange indeed, more strange by far than that the same spirit of intolerance which has burned witches and Quakers, and truth-seeker, and truth-speaker, should still persist in making faces, and calling names, because, forsooth, they have grown too cowardly and contemptible to do more.

If one push his investigations a little closer to physical relations than these people deem respectable, he is a "*Materialist*," or if he study into phenomena relating to man in the beyond, he is a "*Spiritualist*," terms which seldom have a greater significance to those who thus apply them, than simple epithets of reproach, or imagined disgrace.

The mind of man is a jury of peers impaneled by the Almighty to take evidence on the trial of Truth. Reason is foreman, and every juror is not only entitled to a vote, but by presence and obligation is bound to try the case *according* to the evidence. Insufficient evidence begets doubt and warrants a new trial. Before this jury come the special pleaders to whom I have already referred. They coax and wheedle, and brow-beat and bully, till we almost wonder why the Supreme Judge does not call them to order, and fine them for contempt of court. The stolid jurors sit unmoved and undaunted, and cry with one voice, and that the voice of Reason, "*give us the evidence* ; we neither know nor care for your authority ; the Judge will take care of that. Give us the proof in this case."

Deny it who will, this is to-day the natural and

healthy attitude of the mind of man, and this method of free and untrammelled investigation of both sides, and of all sides, is of far more consequence than any immediate result can possibly be.

Whether the world was made in six literal days, or in six millions—whether man descended from an angel, or ascended from a monkey—whether protoplasm be the common dust of all life, or whether, as the boy had it, negroes are made from coal dust, and white men from chalk—all these questions sink into insignificance beside the freedom of thought and untrammelled investigation through which alone man ever has, or ever can perceive a truth.

Somewhere in the universe of God is the truth concerning all these things, not one jot or tittle of which any human will, or human authority, fire, faggot, or persecution can change, or any human doubt, denial or unbelief alter. If, then, our belief concerns only ourselves, assisting us to adjust our relations to the eternal entities, is it not the part of wisdom to seek to comprehend these entities before considering any adjustment final?

Science to-day transcends all other departments of human knowledge—not intrinsically—not relatively—but in the attitude of its cultivators toward unrecognized truth. If, therefore, there is a subject upon which there is no evidence, let us bow in humility, and confess that there is One wiser than man, but so long as there is a particle of evidence to be adduced, or testimony to be examined, let us hesitate in regarding any conclusion as final, and let us remember that the truth when found, and wherever found, is none the less truth, whether in our poor judgment it spiritualizes matter, or materializes spirit.

The cause of dissensions and disagreement among men is not in the subjects themselves so much as in the

diversity of mind which perceives them, although we are in the habit of attributing it to them, and of regarding our own peculiar view the only one entitled to consideration.

Mankind are generally united in things certain, in relation to which there is, through the operation of the senses, a full complement of evidence. "We must," therefore, "draw a line of demarcation between propositions that can be verified, and those that cannot, and separate by an inviolable barrier the world of phantasy from the world of realities. When we come upon a subject in the estimation of which the judgment of men is divided, we may very safely conclude, either that the evidence is incomplete, or that it is of such a nature as not to be readily appreciated, and correctly interpreted by the average intellect, and the effort to force conviction by terrorism, or persecution in any form, and to supplant evidence by dogmatism, can never further the cause of truth.

It is generally conceded that in no department of human affairs is there greater diversity of opinion than in matters of religion; and while it is true that the sects in religion outnumber those in medicine, there is probably no greater diversity of individual belief in the one case than in the other. Diversity of religious belief, in civilized countries at least, arises from the habit of confounding religion with theology, the one relating to man's earthly existence, is based on self evident propositions, verified continually, the other—theology—relating to the unknown cause, and the future of being, presents propositions difficult, if not impossible of solution. Medicine offers the same common ground of union as religion, in both, the practical test, scientifically applied, is the criterion. Man's moral nature does not always conform to his intellectual developement; he

may be pure and upright in life, because he perceives that he is happier so, while his perceptions of the Creator and of the future, the existence of which he may even doubt, are false in the extreme.

So also in medicine, if we apply the practical test, and weigh well the evidence, we shall avail ourselves of the best known mode of relieving human suffering, whether it overthrow our cherished doctrines, wound, our vanity, or exclude us from our former associates or not.

In all matters of life, then, we should regard evidence as a matter of the first importance, and never manifest intolerance toward the opinions of others, or allow it to swerve us from the pursuit of truth.

To you who go forth to-day to heal the sick, a mission of love, second to none on earth, it is a matter of the first importance that you place a proper estimate on evidence, and that you claim for yourselves, and exercise toward others, that charity which is neither puffed up nor maketh afraid. Every faculty of the mind, like every member of society has a mission to perform, a duty both to itself and its neighbor. If you would rise to the full stature of your professional ideal you will lose no opportunity to increase your store of knowledge.

"Of all great branches of human knowledge," says Lecky, "medicine is that in which the accomplished results are most obviously imperfect and provisional, in which the field of unrealized possibilities is most extensive, and from which, if the human mind were directed to it, as it has been during the past century to industrial inventions, and especially to overcoming space, the most splendid results might be expected." "He who raises moral pathology to a science, expanding, systematizing, and applying many fragmentary observations that have been already made, will probably take a place

among the master intellects of mankind" and yet the men who are devoting the best energies of their lives to this problem, are stigmatized as "infidels," and "materialists," whom especially the young and thoughtful student are counselled to shun, as they would the breath of contagion.

Galileo, Harvy, and Jenner were declared infidels in their day, and even the Son of God was accused of blasphemy, even so hath it been from the beginning.

Tho' we crucify truth daily, tho' we plant with thorns its brow,
 Scourge it, spit upon, revile it, and crown error here, and now,
 Still in God's own time, His angel comes and rolls away the stone,
 And we find but dust, and ashes, where we knelt before a throne.
*In the cycles of the ages, truth comes up uppermost at last,
 And the Saviors of the present, are the martyrs of the past.*