

**WHY STUDENTS OF
MEDICINE SHOULD
SELECT THE
HOMOEOPATHIC SCHOOL**

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Why students of medicine should select the homoeopathic school by Thomas G. M'Conkey

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WHY STUDENTS OF MEDICINE SHOULD SELECT THE HOMŒOPATHIC SCHOOL.

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Every year over 5,000 young men and women decide upon medicine as a career. Among these there must be many who are undecided which school to select, with which to become identified, and who will be grateful for any suggestions that may aid them in making a decision.

This essay is written to present some of the reasons why the decision should be for the homœopathic school. It seems also fitting to speak of the importance of taking the medical course at the college avowedly teaching the homœopathic system; for it is well known that there are many students who believe in the doctrine, yet take their medical course in one of the old school colleges. Mere accessibility accounts for this in most cases, but this is of small moment when compared with the imperative necessity of a homœopathic medical education. By homœopathic medical education is implied the mental habit of thinking in homœopathic language, the *sine qua non* for successful practice. The fact that some of the most illustrious members of the school have been graduates of old school colleges does not militate against the foregoing. They became worthy disciples of Hahnemann in spite of their allopathic teaching rather than because of it.

Fifty years ago there were but two homœopathic colleges, and these with limited facilities and no prestige. Today there are twenty, each of a high standard, furnishing better facilities for obtaining a general medical education than the average old school college. There are probably few if any allopathic schools with superior resources and stronger faculties than have our homœopathic colleges. The American Institute of Homœopathy, which, since its organization in 1844, has exercised a singularly judicious control of homœopathic interests, and itself has grown from a membership of forty to more than two thousand, is

supreme in authority, especially in the matter of medical education. It was the pioneer in the movement for a four years' medical course, and for a high educational standard in the entrance and graduation requirements. The statement that the standard and teaching is of a higher average order than in the 123 allopathic schools is well within the truth. These twenty colleges are well distributed from Boston to San Francisco, and are, therefore, easily accessible. In addition there are in the United States eighty-four general hospitals, sixty-one private hospitals, fifty-eight sanatoriums, fifty-six dispensaries, all avowedly homœopathic, and sixty-six other institutions, State, municipal, etc., wherein homœopathic treatment is employed. Many of these 325 institutions, especially the general hospitals, require resident physicians or internes who are naturally chosen from the graduating classes of the homœopathic colleges. The motto of the new education, "We learn things by doing them," is observed in a medical course by the opportunities for clinical practice by the student. The smaller classes, besides ensuring a much closer personal contact with the professors on the part of the student, increase not only the chances for individual preferment during the course, but for hospital and other appointments on graduation.

While the commercial spirit is not compatible with the sacred and philanthropic character of the medical calling, it is not only proper for the student to consider the bread and butter aspect of the question but his duty as well. If the field is already overcrowded, he owes it to himself, as well as to those in it, to choose some other calling. To the question: Is the medical profession overcrowded? there can be but one answer. If we take the total of all schools there is a great surplusage of graduates every year. As a consequence, many are obliged to abandon the practice in spite of the great expenditure of time and money in fitting themselves for it. Many others with an income less, and more precarious than that of a skilled workman in almost any industry, eke out an unsatisfactory existence. This is especially true in the cities. But in spite of this recognized excess of physicians of all schools, there seems to be an actual dearth of homœopathic physicians. It was of sufficient importance to be taken up

by the American Institute of Homœopathy at the Cleveland meeting in June, 1902. The following quotation from the Transactions is pertinent:

"The demand for homœopathic physicians throughout the United States far exceeds the supply. Thousands of small cities, towns and villages are unable to secure the advantages afforded by the homœopathic system of medical practice. Demands for graduates of this school of medicine are constantly reaching our twenty medical colleges. The demands for physicians come from every State in the Union. Especially is this true of the Southern and Southwestern States, into which thousands of people in quest of pleasure, health and business are going every year. The American Institute of Homœopathy, mindful of her obligation to the public, not only calls attention to this public need, but also to the fact that there are twenty medical colleges in the United States, thoroughly equipped effectively to teach all branches of medicine and the science and practice of Homœopathy. These colleges earnestly solicit and will welcome young men and women of good, moral, physical and mental endowment, possessing a high school education, or its equivalent, with an elementary knowledge of Latin. Those who come from districts having but few homœopathic physicians will be especially welcome."

In view of the general impression of the overcrowded condition of the medical profession, this appeal will come as a surprise to most people. But a little reflection will explain this seeming anomaly. There are in round numbers 125,000 practicing physicians in the United States, according to Polk's Register. Estimating the population at 80,000,000, this gives one physician to 640 people. Of this 125,000 about 15,000 are of the homœopathic school, or one to 5,333 people. In some communities where Homœopathy has been adequately represented it is not unusual to find fifty per cent. of the population patrons of Homœopathy. And what is very significant there will be a larger proportion of the educated, travelled and moneyed classes among these. This is a matter of observation only, but it is probably a conservative statement of the case.

In 1901 there were 230 graduates from the homœopathic colleges. This number is not ade-

quate to make up the loss by death and retirement from various causes among the 15,000 practitioners. Recalling the fact that there are thousands of communities in the country, especially in the South and West, that is virgin soil, as far as Homœopathy is concerned, the official appeal quoted should not occasion surprise. Let no one suppose that this appeal was prompted by any feeling that Homœopathy is on the decline. It has an aggravating way of disappointing its enemies in this respect. During its century of existence it has been the unwilling but unperturbed patient of learned doctors, pronouncing audibly the gravest prognoses, times without number; and yet never before has its influence been so potent or the attitude of its enemies so respectful. What is to be feared is a partial acceptance of the doctrine resulting from a superficial study and a desire to engraft it on old school therapeutics. There is a hygienic use of medicine and a palliative use of medicine that is perfectly compatible with the homœopathic curative use of medicine. But so-called "rational therapeutics" and homœopathic therapeutics are not compatible. He who attempts to combine them betrays at once his unacquaintance with the spirit of the homœopathic doctrine. An authority in the school in materia medica and therapeutics has said: "The college must take the lead in presenting Homœopathy, like any other natural science, as a series of independent doctrines, as a philosophy. I deem it more important that the student should be thoroughly grounded in the underlying principles than in acquiring a stock of keynote symptoms, important and essential as this is."

It will be interesting and profitable to critically examine some of these underlying principles enunciated by Hahnemann in the light of our present knowledge. First a few words concerning Hahnemann and his medical environment. He was a regularly educated physician of great learning and very uncommon general culture and literary attainments. Sir John Forbes, one of his old school critics, said of him in 1846, three years after Hahnemann's death, when the opposition to Homœopathy was most bitter:

"No candid observer of his actions, or candid reader of his writings, can hesitate for a moment to

admit that he was a very extraordinary man, one whose name will descend to posterity as the exclusive founder of an original system of medicine, as ingenious as many that preceded it, and destined, probably, to be the remote, if not the immediate, cause of more important fundamental changes in the practice of the healing art than have resulted from any promulgated since the days of Galen himself. He was undoubtedly a man of genius and a scholar, a man of indefatigable industry and dauntless energy."

Hufeland, the Nestor of orthodox medicine in Germany, spoke of him in 1801 as "one of the most distinguished physicians in Germany." Jean Paul Richter, a contemporary, speaks thus: "Hahnemann, that rare combination of philosophy and learning, whose system must eventually bring about the ruin of the ordinary receipt-crammed heads, but is still little accepted by practitioners, and rather shunned than investigated."

Hahnemann by general consent had attained a position in the profession which entitled him to criticise prevailing methods. While realizing that prevailing methods in general did more harm than good, he was impressed with the fact that there were certain remedies used in certain diseases with such results as left no room for doubt that in these cases at least real cures were effected. This he observed in the use of mercury in syphilis and Peruvian bark in malaria, or "marsh fever," as it was then called. Hahnemann, like Bacon and Boyle and Sydenham before him, realized the immense importance of increasing the number of these "specifics." A casual observation in Cullen's *Materia Medica*, which he was translating, gave him the clue to his discovery as the falling apple did to Newton. From this observation it occurred to him that provings of drugs upon healthy persons might furnish a knowledge of their specific properties; and that the administration of drugs in cases presenting symptoms similar to those the drug produces in the healthy subject might be the law of the application of specifics. His hopes of rendering the medical art more simple and certain were raised, and he set himself with "his dauntless energy and indefatigable industry" to collect from the writings of ancient and modern medical authors all the in-

stances bearing upon the subject, and to verify by instituting experiments first upon himself and then upon other healthy persons whom he could persuade to join him in these self-sacrificing labors. The further he advanced in such investigations and inquiries the more he became satisfied of the extensive application of his therapeutic law.

From 1790 to 1805, fifteen years of the prime of his life, were devoted to constant, exhausting labors of this nature, "for when we have to do with an art whose end is the saving of human life any neglect to make ourselves master of it is a crime." Actuated by that noble sentiment, sure of the truth of the great principle he had discovered—with all the incidental testimony of history to support it—with the positive results of a long experience to confirm it, he presented his views and the results of his labors to the profession in an essay of wonderful logical power, of the utmost moderation in expression, full of almost tender persuasion, and of the noblest enthusiasm.

The treatment of Hahnemann by his colleagues for attempting to give certainty and precision to therapeutics forms a melancholy chapter in the history of medicine, but it does not stand alone. Harvey was denounced as a quack and even held to be demented because he demonstrated the circulation of the blood. His book announcing his discovery was unable to pass censorship in England, and, therefore, appeared in a foreign country. Sydenham also was calumniated for efforts to improve the medical art. Hahnemann's teaching was even more revolutionary than either Harvey's or Sydenham's, for its success meant the annihilation of all the cherished methods of traditional medicine. He begged his colleagues to investigate it, and if it were found better than the old method to use it for the good of mankind and to give God the glory. Instead, they called him an impostor and attacked his character and his motives.

Time has shown that Hahnemann was right in his condemnation of the practices in vogue in his time, for they have all been abandoned or are in process of abandonment. Up till the year 1840, seldom did an anti-homœopathic work appear which did not violently reproach Homœopathy for its rejection of