

**THE EARLY ANNALS  
OF HOMŒOPATHY  
IN NEW YORK**

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The Early Annals of Homœopathy in New York by John F. Gray

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**JOHN F. GRAY**

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THE  
EARLY ANNALS  
OF  
HOMCEOPATHY IN NEW YORK;

A  
DISCOURSE

BEFORE THE HOMCEOPATHIC SOCIETIES OF NEW YORK  
AND BROOKLYN,

On the 10th of April, 1863,

THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTHDAY OF HAHNEMANN.

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BY  
JOHN F. GRAY, M.D.

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1863.

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1918

## ADDRESS.

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*Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Society :*

Cheerfully obedient to your request, I will endeavor to sketch for your archives as many memoranda of the introduction of Homœopathy into this city and State as are remaining within my reach. You will surely pardon all deficiencies in the narrative I shall offer you, on reflecting that it is drawn almost wholly from personal recollection of events and circumstances covered by the lapse of more than thirty years.

A retrospective glance at the vast changes which physiology (ever the basis of rational medicine) has undergone during the last half century, furnishes an easy clue to the nature of medical practice, and the state of the art of healing, at the time our late deeply lamented and revered colleague, DR. GRAM, brought the knowledge and practice of Homœopathy to this hemisphere.

The enormous development which has taken place in all the sciences pertaining to human physiology, during the period named, may be strikingly exemplified by comparing the half poetical, half scientific treatises of Haller and Blumenbach with the grand achievements of Oken, Müller, Reichenbach, Legallois, Wilson, Philip, and Liebig, in physiology and vital chemistry. Semi-scholastic speculations and *a priori* assumptions have given place to positive knowledge in histology and embryology; science, severely modest and divested of all dangerous prepossessions, heralded

and followed by its manifold and ever prolific forms and facts of experiment, has fairly crowded off the stage of art and almost out of all human observation the works of Cullen, Brown, Darwin and their French successors, which retained standard relations with the institutes, schools and practice of medicine, to the very year and hour of GRAY'S arrival in America, namely, 1825.

At that time, in this country, for example, Thomas' Practice was in vogue, with its quaint mixture of Cullen, Darwin, Brown, Heberden, Fordyce and their technics; and the soi-disant "institutes of medicine" were a confused jumble of principles, conjectures, arguments and testimony from these, and a thousand elder and equally conflicting sources. Novel and ever conflicting nosologies and novel nomenclatures, foreign and domestic, were projected, from Rush and Hosack down to Mason, Good and Rasori.

As it was here, so, with very little if any greater approximation to unanimity or certitude, was it throughout the old world, maugre their superior culture in language and in the natural sciences. The practice of the art, here and there, consisted, with no really scientific exceptions, in a heroic combat with the two mythic demons of medicine, the strong and the weak,—inflammation and debility—by means of emetics, cathartics, venesections, vesicatories, sedatives, tonics and stimulants. The "principles" upon which this terrific practice was founded were all deduced from the poor basis of the physiology of the last century; and that, without having interrogated their physiology as to the real powers of the vast drug apparatus they used, either specific and direct, or reactive and revolutionary. Nothing was scientifically known of the action of any drug, by any physiological test; none other than the



little derived from its empirical use in disease, and from the scanty and unarranged memoranda of toxicology.

Thanks to the application of the chemists' reagents and the microscope, and the otherwise progressive encroachments of positive science into the danger-ridden dream-land of medicine, the use or rather abuse of the revolutionary powers of drugs is every where receding, and going to its eternal resting place with the effete and noxious errors of the dark ages. To this good result of the general progress in science, Homœopathy has certainly contributed not a little, by showing how physiology could subserve the art of healing, and by demonstrating that the specific powers of drugs, administered within entirely harmless limits, are at least as efficacious in the saving of life, as are their drastic and always dangerous revolutionary powers. The better class of allopathic practitioners have, by our results, been emboldened to drop the lancet and forego the emetic and cathartic, and to adopt the expectant method; whilst their less reflecting and conscientious colleagues have been forced by our influence with the public to abstain from their indiscriminate use of violent and unsafe doses and expedients.

But the profession, even at the period of which we are treating, were, as their literature now and then discloses, by no means satisfied with the uncertain principles and destructive processes of their therapeutics; there were not wanting in all countries men who looked for as great and radical a reformation in the healing art as had already occurred in the sciences of astronomy and chemistry, or as great a change as had taken place in the art of navigation. Nearly all, indeed, outside the walls of mercantile cliques and colleges, were discontent with the principles evulgated in medical schools

and books ; but not looking in the direction of pharmacology for the new truths waited for, each earnest man repeated the old method of excogitating a new theory, or of compounding an eclectic art from the multitude of extant hypotheses. Accordingly, there were almost as many sects as there were professors of theory and practice ; sharp controversy abounded ; certainty and progressive force of criticism, a positively scientific method, were nowhere found. The discovery of the circulation of the blood and the immortal contributions to physiology by which that discovery was soon followed, had left not a single monument of progress in therapeutics beyond the chance achievements of empirics, as in the case of the Peruvian bark and mercury.

In 1810, Hahnemann struck the keynote for an entirely new method in medical logic ; and, as soon as his "Organon of Rational Therapeutics" was published, and with it the first fasciculus of his physiological tests of the specific powers of drugs, entitled "Pure Materia Medica," there came to his assistance several members of the profession, and many other able and educated persons, all of whom joined in the drug tests and nobly seconded and enriched his imperishable records. The work of collating from all the annals of medicine the scattered fragments of the purely physiological powers of drugs, and of combining these with the new provings, occupied the great reformer and his early disciples till 1821, when the last volume was complete and given to the world. Down to this period, the practice of Homœopathy was necessarily limited to the few who had access to Hahnemann's manuscript materials and enjoyed the great advantage of his personal resources and records in the new method. But thenceforward it was possible for any educated physician

who was master of the German language to test the great questions involved in the Organon for and by himself, without extraneous assistance. Moreover, a journal was started at that time by Ernest Stapf, M.D., of Leipsic, the first and in all ways the ablest convert and contributor to the new method. It was entitled Archives of Homœopathy, and was regularly published till the decease of the venerable Stapf, covering over thirty years of the history of the system.

With the publication of the *Materia Medica* and the opening of Stapf's Archives, came the dawn of Homœopathy outside the precincts of the master's dwelling and personal sphere of practice. True it is that Hahnemann had discovered and rough-hewn the great corner-stone of Rational medicine, pure pharmacodynamics, many years before, having published his "*Fragmenta de viribus medicamentorum in sano corpore humano observatis*" as early as 1805; but the laying of that stone and the formal inauguration of the new temple of Therapeia took place at the publication of the *Materia Medica* in 1821.

During all the space of time from his translation of Cullen's *Materia Medica*, in 1793, till the publication of the last of the six volumes of his own immortal work, Hahnemann had been profoundly engaged in gathering the proofs of the truth of his great maxim of our divine art, and in placing within reach of the profession the world over, and for all coming time, the faithful and safe apparatus of that art. At the very least, by his physiological provings and the elimination and classification of the elder materials, and the accidental observations, the *obiter dicta*, of the profession of all the ages concerning the qualities and powers of drugs,