

**VIEWS OF HOMŒOPATHY: WITH
REASONS FOR EXAMINING IT
AND
ADMITTING IT AS A PRINCIPLE
IN MEDICAL SCIENCE. PP. 3 - 47**

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Views of Homœopathy: With Reasons for Examining it and Admitting it as a Principle in Medical Science. pp. 3 - 47 by Daniel Holt

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DANIEL HOLT

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VIEWS

OF

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HOMŒOPATHY;

WITH

REASONS FOR EXAMINING AND ADMITTING IT

AS A

Principle in Medical Science.

By DANIEL HOLT, M. D.

"A certis et exploratis potendum esse prasidium."

NEW HAVEN:

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1845.

PREFACE.

It is not designed in this essay to give even the general outlines, either of the principles or practice of the Homœopathic system of medicine; but to state some of the points of distinction between this and the ordinary practice—and to make some comparisons between them. This has been undertaken with a view to see whether the Homœopathic doctrine in medicine is founded in truth, and therefore entitled to the standing which it claims as a science, or fundamental law of nature; or whether it is really quackery, as it has sometimes been accused. In doing this, the aim of the author has been to give it an impartial, though critical examination, and to satisfy himself, has spared no pains either in the practical application of the medicine on this principle, or in the examination of what has been written upon the subject.

For the impartial aid of the most distinguished men in this country, of both schools, the author is under the highest obligations; and reviewing, as he has, the principles of medical science generally, he trusts the conclusions to which he has arrived, are founded on a substantial basis.

The main argument is designed to give the essential points of the doctrine, and to meet the principal objections which are urged against it; I have designed this part for the common reader espe-

cially. In the Appendix, a few cases are stated from my own early application of the medicine, followed by some observations which are strictly of a medical character, designed more especially for the profession; still I have endeavored to avoid technical terms, so as to render it intelligible to the common reader.

From repeated solicitations from many medical brethren of both schools, and from others, the views which I entertain upon a subject now of general interest to the community, are given to the public.

NEW HAVEN, August, 1845.

D. H.

VIEWS OF HOMŒOPATHY.

It is sometimes the case that there are circumstances in the life of an individual, which render it not only expedient, but even a duty which he owes to his friends and the public, to give an exposition of the views which he entertains upon a particular subject, especially so, when that subject is one which is intimately connected with the welfare of society. This rule may hold good, whether it is applied to a subject which is strictly scientific or not.

It is no new idea, that subjects which are comparatively new, and are not properly brought before the public mind for a critical examination of the principles upon which they are based, are looked upon with suspicion, especially so, when they seem to conflict with long established opinions. That it should be so to a reasonable extent, no one will deny; otherwise we should be liable to fall into errors, and embrace doctrines which are untenable and *false*; especially is this the case upon subjects of a medical character; and the reason why, in medical science, there are some points which are strongly contested, and which it is certainly difficult to settle, is because of the nature of the subject. The necessary uncertainty which exists, and must always exist to a greater or less extent, when we arise as it were *above* the circle of the *exact* sciences, which are governed by mere physical laws, and have to do with laws which are endowed with life, where there are contingencies in the present state of our knowledge, and probably always will be, over which we have not complete control; and hence arises the distinction between the certain or exact, and uncertain sciences, the former embracing the mathematical and strictly physical sciences, ending where life begins, and the latter, commencing with organization, and running through all the departments of organic and animal life. All the principles in the three professions, and in political and moral philosophy of course belong to the latter. And hence we see the reason why, upon certain subjects, there is such a general agreement, and while upon others such a diversity of opinion; one belongs to the former, and the other to the

latter. From this fact we should be cautious in adopting hastily new doctrines; but we should endeavor to avoid the other extreme. And as the uncertain sciences are progressive, or in other words, our knowledge of their laws, and the various changes which are induced by external circumstances, are becoming more advanced, we are in danger of being too much settled in old opinions, on the one hand, or too anxious to adopt new ones on the other. And we can all safely adopt as our motto, in the investigation of truth, "every new doctrine, whether in physics, in politics, or in morals, should be rigidly scrutinized, that we may not embrace error on the one hand, or reject truth on the other."

The subject which I have been led to investigate, and which lead to these observations, it need not be said is looked upon in a very different light, both in and out of the medical profession. Within the profession, at this time, it is looked upon as something out of the way, as not strictly *orthodox*. Some even have entertained the idea that it is all quackery; and there are indeed nearly as many opinions as there are men, though professional opinion is becoming much more favorable toward an investigation of the subject. Investigating the subject as I have, and entertaining the views which I do, I am perhaps bound to give them to my professional friends and the public. I have often of late been met with inquiries like the following, both by my professional brethren and others, "What is Homœopathy?"—"I understand Dr. ——— has become a Homœopath!"—"In what respects have you changed your medical views?"—"What are the fundamental distinctions between Homœopathy and Allopathy?" so called.—"*Isn't Homœopathy Quackery?*" &c., &c.

These I hold to be important inquiries, and such as demand an answer. The truth is, that the medical profession generally, have not rigidly examined the principles upon which the distinction between the two schools is founded. Most of them honestly acknowledge this to be the fact; they have supposed it to be like many other humbugs of the day, unworthy of investigation; that it will soon be over, &c. Others are unfortunately more determined in their opposition, owing, perhaps, to circumstances in which they are placed; or the difficulty in bringing their minds to entertain an idea contrary in any degree to pre-conceived opinions; or they have committed themselves against it, and are unwilling to retract their assertions. Indeed, there is in our profession, as well as out of it, in the minds of a certain class of men, and it is probably mainly owing to their mental constitution, a disposition to cling to their old notions with a deadly grasp; to settle in their own minds never to change

their opinions; which, in their views, is virtually to acknowledge they have been wrong: this holds on other subjects, and I have found it rather to increase with age; and have sometimes thought, that on scientific subjects, it is almost as hard to see new truth, and thereby displace pre-conceived opinions, as it is for old transgressors to cease from sinning. It is unfortunate for such men, and for the world at large, that they are engaged in a profession, or a department of science, which is progressive, which is eminently true of medicine; (though, unfortunately, it is admitted that in some of its departments, the progress has been scarcely visible for some time); still medicine is a progressive science, as is chemistry and geology. This class of men do better in those sciences where there are more settled and fixed principles, as in mathematics, and other exact sciences. In practical life, and in morals, they are correct in their views upon immutable principles, upon laws which are unchangable; upon institutions in society which are permanent; and upon precepts which are of perpetual obligation;—but upon those subjects where a change in circumstances produces a corresponding change in institutions, they are in fault. Such men have in general an ultra veneration for the past,—they cling too much to the dogmas that were in vogue when they *finished their studies*. They are apt, especially as they become advanced in life, to look with suspicion upon *all* new things, imagine that the whole world is running a race with itself, and that every body is driving Jehu's *chariot*. On the other hand, we should avoid the extreme; we should, perhaps, as often check the excessive ardor of youth, as avoid the cautious philosophy of age. There are, especially in medicine, many dangerous shoals and quicksands, and many a wreck may still be seen; theories proving “but the but-terflies of the day,” not sustained by facts; and again, “more false facts than false theories.” We should shun them both. There is on many subjects at least, “a golden mean” in the investigation of truth, one which avoids Scylla on the one hand, and Charybdis on the other.

An investigation of the subject under consideration, I hold will do no injury, unless a man is incapable of distinguishing between truth and error. I hold, considering the wake that Homœopathy is making in the world, that its principles *should* be investigated. It claims to be true, founded in scientific principles, and applicable to the relief of mankind suffering from disease; and further, that in certain respects it is a superior system. On the other hand, it is denied, and by some even denounced without an investigation. Now I hold that if it is true, the medical profession are bound to examine it

and apply it in practice. If it is all quackery, and those in and out of the profession who are engaged in it, are all "knaves or fools," then are not the profession under the strongest moral obligation to investigate and remove the great evil, or use their influence in doing it? The fact that it is a difficult system to investigate or apply in practice, is not a sufficient argument, if it is more successful, so long as we have powers which are capable of applying it. If it requires years of study, and in the present imperfect state, will not allow us time, labor, and expense of investigation, it seems to me that those who know nothing of it, either in practice or principle, can have nothing to say. If *all* are to wait to see whether any doctrine is true, the progress of truth will be indeed slow.

What then are the fundamental principles upon which the Homœopathic practice is founded? It is not that there are two separate and distinct schools, as some might suppose. Most of the preparatory studies, and what are absolutely necessary, are the same in both. Anatomy, or the study of the system, is the same of course. Physiology, or the natural and healthy performance of the functions of the different organs, is the same. Pathology, or the unnatural or diseased actions of the vital organs, is essentially the same. Therapeutics, or the application of remedies to this diseased condition, is different. Here the two schools separate. They hold alike also, on many other points, especially those which lead to a fundamental distinction between science and real quackery, viz. : that there are certain substances which are naturally beneficial, or necessary to the system in health, which we call nutriment, while there is another class of articles which are uniformly injurious in health, and poisonous when given so as materially to effect the system; these are called medicines, and by a change of the system in a diseased state, these substances, before injurious, now become remedial agents, in other words, tend to restore health, either by removing the diseased action, or otherwise: so that all scientific physicians agree that all remedies are such, not from their intrinsic virtues, but from the change in the system, from health to disease, they being properly applied become beneficial; though they are all evils in themselves, and always so in health, still in disease become remedies. Quackery, on the other hand, claims that their favorite remedies, are remedies or beneficial as well in health as in disease, good at all times, friendly to the system, &c., and hence it cries out against every thing which is a poison. Ignorance supposes that what is a poison under any circumstances is so under all. That it is the duty of the physician