

ADDRESS OF RETIRING PRESIDENT,

Dr. E. M. WHITTEN,

DELIVERED AT THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE  
NEBRASKA STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY, AT NEBRAS-  
KA CITY, JUNE 3D, 1879.

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*“Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Nebraska State  
Medical Society:*

According to the rules of this Society, the President, on retiring from office, is required to deliver an address upon some subject connected with our profession—a duty, gentlemen, I now attempt to perform, and I most candidly ask your attention and sympathy rather than challenge your criticism.

I have chosen no new and strange topic, hoping thereby to lead you into unexplored fields of science and dazzle you by brilliant experiments—but I will in a retrospective way examine our position as a profession with reference to its influences and duties. I will also consider the comparative value of medical systems, contrasting the merits of those founded in truth from observation and experience with the merits of systems that are but the conceptions of individual hobbyists.

Gentlemen, we are engaged in a profession ancient and honorable, and deserving by its very nature a position as *one* of the three chief callings in life. Among these it has been ranked first, second and third, according to the lights and shadows prejudice has thrown upon it.

If there is any calling, the office of which is more noble



and the duties more important than that of guarding the life and health of the children of men; more benignant than that of relieving their pain and giving sweet, refreshing sleep to their weary eyes; or more beneficent, than restoring to them health and reason when lost, than that calling of a truth is greater and nobler than ours. One has said, 'In nothing so much do men resemble the gods, as in giving health to their fellows.'

If it be true, then, that the duties of our profession are of so sacred a nature, and the life and health of our fellow men rest in our hands, what manner of men ought we to be? There was a time, when to be a graduated physician was a sufficient guaranty of worth to give position and patronage. To-day it is not so; the rewards now held out to enter the billowy precincts of medicine are in proportion to the amount of energy and brains invested. That candidates crowd into the professions to obtain respectability and that they may get a living easily is deplorable. Well may the three leading professions be known as the three Black Graces, for they are defiled with the soot and cinders of society; especially is this true of the medical profession.

Colleges all over the land swarm with feeble, ambitious youths, who pass through these Æsculapian mills, coming forth with pretentious documents in their hands, with '*Omnibus ad quas literae praesentes pervenerint salutem in Domino sempiternam,*' etcetera, but portentous to the homes in which they are to minister.

This professional mania has spoiled many a good mechanic, done injustice to the hod and anvil, cheated the goose and spade out of their rights, and committed downright fraud and swindle on the corn and potato fields.

Young men receive diplomas who might achieve greater honors in dispensing corn and water to mules, than medicine to patients.

Can men be successful physicians who prescribe remedies of the therapeutic action of which they know com-

paratively nothing, for diseases of the pathology of which they know less. The wand of pretension has been tried and found wanting. Men of sound learning do not need it. 'Sound learning,' and 'faithful attention,' and 'love of calling' are time-honored maxims. These let us cherish; and let us ask for a just law to protect humanity from pretenders in medicine.

Gentlemen, our profession is an arduous one. It is full of trials and our lives are shorter than other men's, but as I look into the faces of this assembly, I see nothing that indicates regret of choice, but I do see beaming from every countenance a spirit speaking in language stronger than words, that you willingly assumed the responsibilities of the profession and endure its labors. It is *this* spirit alone that stimulates and sustains us in disappointments; that cheers us in our nightly vigils, and supports us amid the trying scenes of our eventful career. Were I compelled to point out the men of the purest and noblest motives; men of the greatest liberality and most untiring zeal; of the most incorruptible honesty and profoundest learning, I would not step without the precincts of our own profession. Where can be found greater magnanimity than is seen in the physician's life; his days and nights of unappreciated labor; his unflinching bravery, never shrinking from duty, when pestilence steals over the land and terror and death sit in every home, and other men flee appalled, but the physician, undaunted and perhaps alone, bends nightly over the sick and dying?

No profession has labored more earnestly in search of truth, or been bolder in combatting error and superstition. Dr. Draper says: 'Physicians, from their pursuits, were perpetually led to the material explanation of natural phenomena in contradistinction to the mystical. Far from being the determined antagonists of human knowledge, they uniformly fostered it and in its trials defended it.' In short, gentlemen, we may well be proud of our profes-

sion, of its influence and achievements. Though they are not just what we may wish; yet, when we consider that progress in a science like medicine must of necessity be slow, almost fortuitous, at first, observation and experience being our only guides through the fogs of ignorance and early superstition, we are rather surprised at its progress, than disposed to find fault that it has moved so tardily.

The science of medicine has advanced with rapid strides within the last century, but yet there remains a large field unexplored. It has been said, if a young man has superior talent, he should choose law or divinity, but if possessed of indifferent ability, medicine. This position is false. The medical profession calls for the best talent in the land. It demands vigorous bodies because its duties are arduous; strong minds because no other field of labor invites such boundless investigation with promises of so great reward.

As cheap doctors are the order of the day, we will dwell for a moment on the method of making them.

In every considerable town in our land are found ambitious men united to form what they call a Medical College 'to meet the great and growing demand of the profession.' This reminds me of a domestic story: Farmer Jones had company one evening to tea, grace had been said, the biscuits passed round and every face seemed happy; when John, tearing a biscuit in two and suspending one half on *nothing*, called out, 'mother, here's a hair in the bread!' 'Oh! La! Now! that's nothing but a corn silk.' 'Well, may be 'taint; but if that's nothing but a *corn* silk, I'd like to know how that *nit* came on it.' That expression, gentlemen, 'to meet the great and growing demand, etc., is a nit, a genuine nit, and the genius of these men have only instituted a device for hatching it. In other words, it is an advertising dodge, by which they evade the code of medical ethics and tell the world of a wonderful skill which otherwise must sleep unknown.

These generous instructors, 'solely to meet the great and growing demand,' open cheap schools and dignify cheap men with cheap honors. It is surprising to learn how much some of these cheap professors know! This surprise is only transcended by the knowledge of what cheap timber many of them are made and how rapidly their untutored candidates for degrees are polished off with sheep skins. 'No qualifications are required!' only '*a certificate of good moral character!*' to enter these institutions. Who ever knew a young man, who did not carry one of *these stars of virtue* in his pocket? We protest against this growing evil. We greatly need a law in this State to regulate the practice of medicine; and if a united effort were made by this body in connection with other medical men of the State, it might be obtained. It is true, efforts have been made in the Legislature to secure such law, but their failures should teach us concert of action and to better marshal our forces before making the attempt again. The people must first be enlightened as to the needs for such a law and understand the nature of that law, and be shown their abuse by quackery, as well as be assured that such law is to be non-partisan; that it will restrict the practice of medicine to certain qualifications, without favoring forms or systems; that it is essentially a measure for the people, to protect them, and not in the interests of any particular school.

We, as a profession, do not ask or expect any special privileges from such a law, and we want none. The sole object is to prescribe a remedy by which the people may be protected from ignorant medical pretenders. When the people are convinced that we only ask for it because we feel it our duty—the responsibility resting upon our shoulders—and when the fact is known that the *more* quacks in any community, the more business there is for skilled physicians, then the people will come forward and vindicate their own rights by wise and judicious legislation. Each

school of medicine should have an equal right to treat patients according to its own methods, and prescribe its own remedies; but every physician of whatever name, should be well grounded in the fundamental principles of the science of medicine. Incorporated in this legislation should be a provision for a commission composed of five of our most eminent physicians to examine and pass upon the qualifications of all candidates for admission to practice in the State of Nebraska. This commission should constitute a State Board of Health, and should at once become authorized to investigate the cause of all epidemic diseases, and report the same, and recommend suitable sanitary legislation; in fact, perform all the duties usually assigned to State Boards of Health. But until we find some wise legislation on this subject in our statutes, the large army of quacks will invade our State, and I shall briefly refer to some of the principal reasons why quacks are employed.

Illiterate people employ uneducated physicians, because they believe them educated. There is nothing remarkable in this, you say; but why do cultured people employ them? This certainly looks extraordinary; but I think it arises from the fanatical spirit which permeates all classes of society; that there is something magical in the knowledge and cure of disease. This weird spirit is the offspring of barbarous times when healing was shrouded in delusion. When the people are freed from their superstitious belief and the mystical shall have passed away, it will be considered as rational to send a gold watch to a country grist-mill to be cleaned and regulated, or to call in a blacksmith with his sledge and anvil to tune a piano, as to secure the services of a quack in a family, or patronize a traveling specialist who scatters his cards at your door. One fruitful cause of this frenzy is the influence of the press. Weekly and daily papers all over the land foster medical delusion. The family newspaper is gorged with the fulsome flattery of quacks and their abominations. Even the pages of Christian peri-

odicals, that are perhaps trustworthy in other matters, are defiled with lengthy testimonials of quack nostrums, and the portraits of their authors. Thus the Christian press of the nineteenth century cultivates superstition, disseminates error and sends blight into households of almost every community. We are not willing to believe that those journals are conscientious in this matter of advertising quackery. It is done for pay, regardless of consequences. Quacks, appreciating the fact that Christianity will give their lies the semblance of truth, pay liberally for advertising. This is the secret of the adornment of religious papers with the cards and portraits of quacks. That worldly papers should be thus tarnished is to be deprecated; but that these religious evangelists should be thus defiled, is contemptible.

Think of a paper like the 'St. Louis Presbyterian' devoting an entire page to advertise that filthy relic of barbarism, the Holman Liver Pad! It is an abomination! a burlesque on Christianity and an imposition on humanity. It is a crying shame and disgrace for such a swindle to be thus whitewashed with religious respectability. A score of similar cases could be cited, were time cheap enough.

I also see prescriptions advertised as free to invalids by persons purporting to be ministers of the Gospel, some of them rooming in Bible Houses! You send for this gratuitous boon, and it proves to be a jumble of fabricated terms, not found in medical nomenclature. The marginal reference reads 'If not obtained at the drugstore, we are prepared to fill the prescription when you remit twenty-five or fifty dollars.' An ingenious and rascally method of 'confidencing' under the cloak of Christianity. The names of ministers and Bible Houses sent broadcast over the land in a Christian newspaper to cheat the poor Christian invalid and steal his money! This is too much. We will denounce this prostitution of Christian influence to such nefarious business. It is a burning putrid sore on the face

of Christianity. Great ingenuity is manifested in the method of advertising. The pith of the advertisement is often in the postscript and is terribly venomous in character; for example, a bottle of medicine is put up with directions how to be used, and a marginal reference is added, warning women not use it 'during pregnancy as it will surely produce abortion.' This marginal warning is what they trust will sell the drug.

Another is headed 'Important to married and unmarried females.' The sequel is a book, full of filth and error, teaching young ladies to be wise as 'mothers,' mothers how to prevent family increase, and the methods of producing miscarriage. What a fund of information for modest wives and daughters!

'Houses of refuge' are advertised, where women find cheap homes for a few months; children provided for.' Homes! This reminds me of what Virgil said about getting into hell; you remember it was easy to get in, but what about getting out? Though there is great ingenuity in these methods of advertising, we do not believe editors so dull as not to comprehend their import. They choose to serve mammon rather than God.

There is still another method of disseminating blight and darkness. The land is infested with traveling dead-beats, whose special duty it is to give private lectures to women. The error that is taught is lamentable, a recapitulation of what is found in the books already referred to, but often much grosser. The aggregate result of these teachings is, not only to foster medical delusions, but to undermine moral principle. The alarming frequency of foeticide is an outgrowth of this morbid instruction, and is producing a gradual moral and physical degeneration of our race.

We must appeal to legislation to check the advance of these sources of sin, and let the light of truth and reason,

aided by wise and judicious statutes, drive out superstition and error.

It seems to me that quackery is now at its meridian, and that this frenzy must soon sink into the haze of oblivion. Hope already glimmers. Some of the States have passed laws regulating the practice of medicine; others are agitating the question. The late law of Illinois compelled no less than thirty-six hundred pretended physicians to leave the State or desist from practice. Among this number was one who made a specialty of rheumatism. His card showed that he had treated thirty thousand cases, and not failed in one instance. This Æsculapian hero being cited before the examining commission was found to have no knowledge of his specialty and admitted his advertisement was false and fraudulent; and these very men who have been driven out of Illinois and other States are allowed to practice their nefarious business in our State, unmolessted; and the people not only look on with complaisance, but employ these quacks. Let us not only hope, but vigorously strive for a wise legislation next winter upon this subject.

Can it be said that the profession has done all in its power to brush away the causes of this delusion and to enlighten the people? I fear not. True, we have ever treated empirics with contempt, and covered the name with epithets of disgust, but I fear the spirit in which this chastisement has been administered has prejudiced the people, they believing it to spring from jealousy or spleen, rather than from solicitude for their welfare. In the future, let cool reason take the place of sarcasm and kindness that of acrimony. The profession has been too reticent. I remember a remark of my mother's, when but a boy, 'I dislike to ask the doctor questions, as he always acts as if he considered me meddling, but I do wish he would explain how the medicines are expected to act.' The spirit that

repels the inquiries of the friends of the sick is unjust, and deserves condemnation. In this respect we need reform.

As theories and systems have played an important part in the history of medicine, we may be profited by dwelling a moment to consider their merits. If we look along the highway of medical progress from the earliest time down to the day of Hippocrates, we find but a succession of irrational theories and practices. Even the teachings of this great man were marred by absurd theories. Ten centuries later, Stahl contended that instead of disease being the result of morbid substances in the system, it arose exclusively from a spiritual cause. After Stahl came Hoffman, Sydenham, Boerhaave and Brown, *eminent* in their day, but each hugging his own dreamy theory. Cullen and Haller were careful observers and investigators, but even their writings contain much that is hypothetical. Indeed every age has abounded in hobbyists and been full of theories, each theory for the time has been claimed by its advocates as the '*sine qua non*,' and each has cried 'Eureka.' Have these theories been of benefit? It is true they serve as way-marks along the tortuous road by which medicine has advanced, like warning skeletons, silently speaking truth by pointing to errors. It is true there has been a little truth in some of these theories, but it has been, generally speaking, but a kernel of wheat in a bushel of chaff.

Cullen happily discovered one fact, not by theorizing, but by observation; that there is a power hiding behind all theories and remedies that accounts largely for the cure of disease and for the success of the irrational systems of practice, for the efficacy of Bishop Berkeley's tar-water, Bacon's weapon-salve and Martin Luther's dried-toads. It is the power of nature to restore. The search after truth often pursues a tortuous route, running into the by-ways and hedges of error, plucking what seems truth, cherishing it, teaching it and believing it until it proves a myth, and then discarding it only to repeat the process at another

point, driving a stake here, placing a stone there, cutting a niche in the solid rock, or placing a flag on a quick-sand or a warning buoy to mark the shoal of error. The early history of medicine is but a record of such search. Homœopathy, as established by Hahnemann, has lived long enough to prove whether it be false or not. This theory was not a conception of Hahnemann but a revamped doctrine taught and practiced by his Pagan forefathers. His aphorism, '*Similia similibus curantur*,' is not a logical one and is hugged by his followers with little ardor. It is in keeping with '*Non causa pro causa*.' The idea impressed on my mind is best conveyed by the learned parson's darkey, when asked if he had shot the deer, why he didn't bring him home. '*Non comatibus, sir, in swampo*' was the earnest response. This also forcibly illustrates the predicament of those who to-day have espoused this theory, and they, appreciating their situation, in swampo, a dilemma from which they are struggling and floundering to devise laudable measures for escape, are passing new laws and establishing new rules for their administration of medicine. Here in our own county I have seen Dover's powders given by them in ten grain doses, quinine in anti-periodic quantities, while aconite has been exhibited in doses that would not be considered safe in regular practice. Why is this, if homœopaths believe what they pretend? This discursive practice proves they do not believe in their system, which teaches 'the smaller the dose the more potent the effect.' Their name is but a subterfuge from behind which to cry, 'If we do no good, we can do no harm,' and to howl round like quacks in general at the regular profession. If a patient is dangerously ill and I, administering a little mint-water, say, 'If it does no good it will do no harm,' and the patient dies, when a judicious administration of medicine would have saved his life, have I done my duty? No competent physician would give utterance in such a dilemma to the homœopathist's defence.

Homœopathy is dying of its own prescriptions, infinitesimal as they are, and I quote from their own journals to further substantiate my position.

Accessions to our ranks are derived from only *two* sources: those who are educated under homœopathic auspices, and converts from the so-called regular school. Of the first class named, those who have graduated from our own medical schools, there were the present year only three hundred and nineteen, a number so small as to be scarcely sufficient to fill the places made vacant by death and other causes. It is plainly apparent, therefore, that recruits from this source must be largely increased, or else we must depend chiefly on the second class mentioned, viz., converts from the so called regular school.

On even a cursory examination in this direction, the result is exceedingly unpromising. Those of us who were participants in the contest between the two principal rival schools can vividly recall the scenes which occurred twenty and even fifteen years ago. Then there were constant accessions to our ranks from those of our opponents. Desertions were so numerous as to impair the strength of allopathic legal organizations, and, in some localities, seriously threaten their existence. At the present day the exodus has nearly ceased. The comparatively few converts who are willing, openly, to admit their belief in homœopathy, may be numbered by tens, while formerly there were hundreds.

Whatever the influences have been which have checked the outward development of homœopathy, it is plainly evident, that the homœopathic school, as regards the number of its openly avowed representatives, has attained its majority, and has begun to decline both in this country and in England."

The February number of the London monthly *Homœopathic Review* contains the following significant statement: 'The number of those who are ready to assert

their confidence in homœopathy may not have increased of late years, it may possibly have diminished,' etc., etc.

Dr. Drysdale, in the *British Journal of Homœopathy*, writes very despondingly: 'Our numbers are not only not increasing in proper ratio, not even increasing at all, nay, even *actually diminishing*.

The cause of this decline is that the practice is unsatisfactory. By a resolution adopted at a meeting of one of the leading homœopathic associations last year, all but three of the whole fraternity in the great State of New York were willing to drive another stake to mark the final resting-place of another exploded theory, and on this guide-board they painted in unmistakable lettering, that henceforth they would recognize bleeding, blistering, purgative remedies, indeed any and all remedies they may think proper to employ, as legitimate measures in homœopathic practice. Thus while they have taken a step forward, their old props fall. The cry of a safe system will come from them hereafter with bad grace. With the bars thus thrown down we may well ask upon what platform they now stand.

We cannot doubt but that Hahnemann and his followers made some correct observations, but that rational deductions were made from those observations there are very grave doubts. The phenomena recorded as evolved from the administration of infinitesimal doses of oyster-shells were either outright imaginations or the result of mental impression on the patient. Abundant evidence may be adduced in support of any theory by accrediting to medicine the workings of nature or imagination. A frenzy to found a new system greatly aided Hahnemann in his search for data, as enthusiasm helps men to find what they seek and zeal sharpens the imagination. Now that this over-weening heat has cooled off it is not strange that the system declines, being founded in error. If it was false, why did it live so long? The same inquiry might be made

of the humoralistic theory of Hippocrates which survived two thousand years and was finally found to be entirely erroneous.

The Hahnemann theory after living seventy years died by a wise act of its representatives in 1878. There is nothing remarkable in this. The system of Ptolemaic astronomy existed for fourteen hundred years, though it was the embodiment of error. The first taught that disease is cured by that which also produces it—(not the real meaning of *similia similibus curantur*)—and that the power of remedies is increased by dilution; the other that the earth is the central object of the universe, and that the spacious concave of heaven revolved about it. Ptolemy gave the semblance of truth to his system by ingenious calculations, Hahnemann to his by abundant imaginary data. Long before Hahnemann, the nurses and attendants on persons suffering from small-pox were clad in scarlet livery, and beds and rooms were draped in this significant color. This was continued until after the redness of the skin disappeared, but during the period of dessication pulvis æthiopicus, or, in less pretentious phraseology, pulverized toad, was brought into requisition. These measures were held in high esteem and the indications for their use, you will readily see, if you have a homœopathic eye, is found in the significant axiom '*Similia similibus curantur.*' Numberless examples of similar symbolical remedies and methods might be cited, but this is enough to prove Hahnemann not the originator of the theory. There have been ingenious theories to prove what was false, and false theories to prove what was true, but of all medical theories in ancient and modern times the one Hahnemann brought forth is the least tangible. The Æsculapian mouse was small, homœopathically small, gentlemen, and the twist in his infinitesimal tail microscopic, but his wet-nurses need close watching.

We will now spend a few moments in contrasting some

of the earlier delusions with the vagaries of the present day, with the view of seeing what advancement has been made in the medical profession.

The following was recommended for the bite of snakes or rabid animals: 'Take the secundines of a woman of sanguine complexion, brought to bed of her first child, being a boy, dried and cleansed from the membranes, an ounce; roots of white peony, and seed of the same, of each half an ounce; shavings of a man's skull, put to a violent death, shavings of a unicorn's horn, hoof of an elk, mistle-toe of the oak, roots of wild valerian and swallow-wort, of each three drams; pearls and coral prepared, contrayerva stone, white amber and seed of goat's rue, each two drams; oriental musk and ambergris, of each one scruple; mingle them and make a powder for use.'

Serapion recommends the following as an antidote in epilepsy: 'The brains of a camel, the rennet of the sea calf, the excrement of the crocodile, the heart of the hare, the blood of the turtle and the testicles of the wild boar.' I am sorry to say, gentlemen, the complexion of the crocodile was not specified or the sex of the sea calf. I hope it did not make any difference in the victim of the remedy.

For chills, 'make a cake of barley meal and the warm urine of the patient and give it to a dog.' The dog is immediately seized with a vicarious chill and the patient is healed. This was termed transmigration, doubtless.

For jaundice, 'make seven cakes of wood ashes, mix with the warm urine of the patient and bury in a dung hill.' This method was called transplantation, and Robert Boyle vouches for its efficacy. It is to be regretted that, as the disease was transmitted to the medium in which it is buried, the symptoms of the medium are not recorded.

For rickets, says an ancient author, split a tree and draw the afflicted child through it, let the tree be immediately bound up and as the tree is repaired the malady is healed. This was the sympathetic cure of 'split-sticks.'

Says Elias Ashmole, 'I took a dose of elixir and hung three spiders about my neck and drove away my ague, thank God.' What the elixir was I am not informed, but I am inclined to think it was the veritable '*elixir pro*' of which Dr. Holmes tells us Rip Van Winkle's grandson drank too freely. If my conjectures are correct this accounts for the spiders, and throws some light on his religious mood.

Lord Gilbourne gives an account of the anointing of an ax, wrapping it in a cloth and hanging it in a warm dark closet, giving immediate relief to a wounded man. By accident, however, the ax was thrown down and the ointment thus removed. The pain immediately became intolerable and the wound inflamed, but on the cause being discovered, the ax re-anointed, wrapped, and again suspended as before, the unfavorable symptoms instantly disappeared. To apply ointment to a weapon that inflicted a wound was very popular at one time, and to this day nurses and others, who would warmly resent the charge of ignorance, will grease and burn the needle or nail with which a baby has been pricked. That the healing process from this method was more rapid will not seem so very improbable when you understand that the wound in this case was washed, the edges brought into apposition and left to be repaired by natural powers, while by the previous method the wound was smeared with a vile compound of human fat, mummy, moss from the human skull, the blood of bulls, etc.

It was once a matter of heated discussion whether the moss from the skull of any other than a convict could be used, and if not stirred with a murderer's knife should it be considered a regular pharmaceutical preparation. Placing blood-stained garments in water in which sulphate of copper had been dissolved was another method of sympathetic cure. Sir Kenelm Digby endeavored to account for this upon scientific principles in a speech at Montpelier.

Says one, 'It would be a waste of time to enter fully upon a narration of the eccentric method employed by Sir Kenelm, to detail his conjectures in regard to the emanation of light, the action of impinging rays, etc.; the formation of wind; but his inferences from these and the application of them to Mr. Howell's case may be abridged thus: Mr. Howell receives a wound upon his hand; great inflammation follows; his garter is taken and covered with blood from the wound and steeped in a basin of water in which a quantity of vitriol is dissolved; the basin is kept in a closet exposed to a moderate heat of the sun, and at night in the chimney-corner so that the blood upon the garter is always in a good natural temperature. The light of the sun will attract from a great distance the spirits of the blood which are upon the garter, and the moderate heat of the hearth will throw off numerous atoms from it. The spirit of the vitriol being incorporated with the blood will make the same voyage together with the atoms of the blood. The wounded hand, in the meantime, exhales abundance of spirits which rush forth from the inflamed part and the wound will naturally draw in the air which is next to it in the manner of a current around the wound; with the air is found an incorporation of the atoms of the blood and the vitriol, and those atoms finding their proper source and original roots whence they spring, remain there in their primitive receptacles, leaving the air to evaporate away. The atoms of the blood and the spirit of the vitriol then jointly imbibe together within all the fibers and orifices of the vessel about the wound, which is accordingly comforted and *in fine* imperceptibly cured.' How the air is evaporated away he does not explain, and I am sorry to say to me it still remains a mystery. Who wonders that Dr. Walter Carleton in speaking of Sir Kenelm Digby should eulogize him 'as a noble person who hath built up his reason to such a transcendent height of knowledge as may seem not much beneath the state of man in innocence.'

Primeval innocence indeed! The man with this transcendent genius, doubtless, would be able to give an explanation for the following method on purely scientific principles.

Pierius tells us for the sting of an asp the patient 'must take a brisk ride on an ass, with the face to the tail of the



beast, which he must seize with both hands, like as he should the rein, when the venom and pain will be transmitted from the patient to the excited brute.' Gentlemen, I am happy to state our artist did not fail to furnish a sketch of this method of transmigration in time for exhibition here to-day. You will perceive by looking on the picture that it is performed by a retrograde gymnastic movement. Sir Kenelm Digby would give the rationale of his cure thus:—The ass had been kept from the sunlight

by day and close in the warm stable by night. Therefore the blood of the ass was tempered for the occasion, the weight and position of the man attracted the spirits of the blood of the ass and elevated his posterior pedal extremities, which impinged on the sun's rays and threw a shadow on the man's intentions. The man being incorporated with the ass, they make the journey together. The man in the meantime exhales abundance of hot air which rushing from his expiring lungs, passes by the ass in the manner of a current, and is inspired by the ass, whereupon the ass suddenly evaporates away leaving the man in mid-air, and the air also evaporates away leaving the restored man resting upon the earth and the ass is seized with the malady.

The most renowned quack of early times was Thesalius Trallianus. He flourished before the Christian era. His egotism was unbounded; but we have men of to-day who are the analogues of this noted boaster, and whose pretensions are not surpassed by their early empirical brother. Thesalius heaped the grossest epithets upon his predecessors, arrogating to himself all knowledge and wisdom, and boasting his ability to make the most ignorant person more skillful than the whole medical faculty in six months. The theory of Thesalius was, that relationship must be restored between the corpuscles and the pores, and when the signs of the '*strictum et laxum*' fail, a third indication must be met, which he termed metasyncrisis. To convey any idea of his teachings we should be obliged to use the logic of Digby. In the sixteenth century Paracelsus burned the writings of Galen and Avicenna publicly, boldly announcing himself the genius of medicine, and asserting that there was more knowledge in his beard than there was in all the universities of Germany. Yet this man, who maintained that the human body was composed of only three substances, salt, sulphur and mercury, and that disease was the result of their ill proportions, enjoyed a high reputation among the common people, though he

died at the age of forty-four, notwithstanding his panacea that had the power to prevent death. Paracelsus, appreciating the value of a name, upon entering his profession changed his from Hockener to that of Philippus Aurelius Theophrastus Bombastes Paracelsus.

Systems also are dignified with ponderous names for the purpose of stimulating reverence and exciting curiosity. Thus we have Hydropathy, Homœopathy, Chronothermatism, *et cetera*. Worn-out systems are revamped by new names. The manual exercise becomes Animal Magnetism, Mesmerism, Psychology or Anthropomagnetic Healing. To show the credulity of people I will give one more illustration. The State of New York paid one thousand dollars for the following prescription for hydrophobia within the present century:—‘The jaw-bone of a dog, burned and pulverized; the false tongue of a newly foaled colt, dried and pulverized; one scruple of verdigris raised from old copper by lying in moist earth, (coppers of King George preferred): must be mixed and applied by a maiden.’ Should not the people of a State blush for such a stupid transaction with a quack when at that day there was abundant medical talent in the State? Valentine Greatrakes practiced in the time of Charles II. by stroking with the hands, Bishops Wilkins and Patrick tell us, but John Leverett was the champion of the manual exercise, declaring that if he but curried down forty or fifty patrons a day he felt fatigued, so much goodness went out of him. A veritable Paul Castor of Keokuk, Iowa.

The virtues of the Perkins Tractors in their day were highly extolled. Hundreds of certificates were secured in testimony of the brilliant cures performed by drawing them over the diseased part. It was claimed they passed electrical currents, but when Drs. Falconer and Hogarth tested them and found there was no electrical current about them, and wooden ones painted and made to resemble them answered the same purpose and secured a large

amount of testimony certifying to their virtues, they exposed the fraud, and this put an end to the Perkins Tractor.

To-day, Galvanic Belts, Plates, Plasters and Charms, and Galvano-therapeutic Baths hold the place once occupied by Tractors, all of which are equally worthless. In former times men hung a blood-stone about their neck to cure piles; to-day they hang Boyd's Electric Charm for the same purpose. With equal benefit, a sapphire was worn by the ancients, as it is said: 'It preserveth the members and maketh them lively.' To-day, the horseshoe that was once hung upon the bedpost to drive away nightmare reappears in Pulvermacher's Electric-conducting Suspensory usurping the function of the sapphire. This instrument is applied as you behold in this drawing, and 'penetrates the uttermost recesses of sexual dilapidation.' In early medicine, for jaundice, we find the following recommended: 'Boil two full-grown toads, (two bull-frogs will do) put them in a silk sack and suspend them over the affected part.' The remedy acted on the hypothesis of absorption. The modern 'Liver Pad' is a revision of this ancient remedy, though this late monstrosity is far less elegant, the sack being made of a coarse cotton fabric, and the interior less healthful, being composed of poisonous leaves, saturated with a pernicious compound of pyroligneous acid, creosote, etc., rendering it not only a bundle of filth and disgust, but an instrument dangerous to health and life, and a stench in the nostrils of not only the wearer, but of all who come within reach of its pestiferous odors. The antitype was a jewel compared to this festering mass of rotteness.

When we consider how ridiculous were many of the ancient methods of cure, if we may dignify them by the name *methods*, the question arises in our minds, if such cures were performed, to what agency was it due? Was it through the curative influence of agents employed directly or through secondary or relative influences? It must have

been from the fact that these methods stimulated hope, and hope stimulated the heart and lungs to more vigorous action; thus the whole human economy became energized. Cures wrought, however, by these irrational methods to-day are few, and those only upon ignorant or fanatical subjects or those mentally weakened by exhausting cares or afflictions.

When we consider the limited knowledge of pharmacy and therapeutics of ancient times, it was far preferable for them to rely on charms and amulets than to administer the crude nostrums of that day, as this left nature to restore herself. As the homœopathic adage has it, 'If it did them no good, certainly it did them no harm.'

Dr. Biddoes having conceived the idea from the teachings of Hahnemann that nitrous oxide must be a specific for paralysis, called in Sir Humphry Davy to assist in its administration. The patient, though never doubting of the success of the measure, knew nothing of its *modus operandi*. Before administering the gas, Davy, wishing to test the temperature of the patient, thrust a thermometer under his tongue. The patient, believing this the veritable agent by which the cure was to be wrought, at once stated that he felt a powerful influence extending from the instrument throughout his whole body. Davy being quite willing to test the effect of the imagination encouraged the deception. Time after time this was repeated, the same symptoms recurring, and the patient finally recovered; the only cure on record by this remedy. It is scarcely necessary to add that the thermometer effected more with the aid of the imagination than the nitrous oxide ever did. This ought to teach us that even observation may lead us astray if not critical and philosophical.

Gentlemen, we represent the profession of medicine in a new but great State. The vast fields uncultivated and uninhabited which stretch away in weary indolence towards the West will soon be filled with human lives committed,

so to speak, to our care. Our interests and duties are not limited by the boundaries of this great commonwealth, but are as broad and boundless as the wants of humanity. As a society we are young and vigorous, and our duties are manifold. To ourselves our duty is to preserve a harmonious unity and community of sentiment. To the people of this great State our duty is broader and more imperative. We should push forward into the unexplored fields of science, garnering truth for the use and benefit of those of our brethren who shall come after us, and for the benefit of humanity.

In conclusion, gentlemen, before laying aside the duties of this office to which I was honored by your ballots one year ago, I thank you for the generous support I have received. I trust that any failure on my part may not be attributed to want of appreciation of your kindness or indifference to the success of our Society. I would also reiterate my sanguine hope that these reunions may serve to unite us in purpose and stimulate us in the search after truth. May we move steadily forward, turning neither to the right nor to the left, guided by the light of observation and experience. Please accept my hearty thanks for your forbearance and attention at this hour."